Proceedings

of the

89th Annual National Convention

of

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Reno-Sparks Convention Center
Reno, Nevada
August 28-30, 2007

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PROCEEDINGS

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of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

…At 8:00 a.m. the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, the organist.

…At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the 89th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

The 89th National Convention of The American Legion will come to order.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise as the National Championship Color Guard from Post 49, Tilton, New Hampshire presents the Colors and remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem by Mrs. Lynne Heller of Carson City, Nevada.

…At this time the delegates saluted the flag and remained standing for the signing of the National Anthem by Mrs. Lynne Heller.

For the Invocation, I call upon the National Chaplain, Rev. Stan J. Gruneich, Flandreau, South Dakota. Ladies and Gentlemen: please uncover.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GRUNEICH: A story worth retelling is grounded in South Dakota. A little boy wandered from his home some years ago. The parents couldn't find him. There were deputies from the county, Boy Scouts, neighbors and others who joined in the search for that little boy. For three days, hundreds of people combed the prairies, hoping to find him, but they could not. The morning of the fourth day, one of the searchers said, "Lets get organized, one long wide line, let's join hands to make some sweeps. He can't have gone that far." They formed a line a quarter mile wide. They made an impressive sight as they began to comb the prairie. They had joined hands. On the third sweep they found the boy, but the cold prairie nights had taken its toll. The boy was lying dead in a ditch behind some bushes. Gently, they carried the boy's body back to the mother who was waiting. They put the dead boy in the mother's arms. There was complete silence. Then she looked up and said, "Why didn't you join hands sooner, why didn't you join hands sooner?"

Think of our veterans, our service personnel around the nation, our wounded, our injured, families deep in depression, people who don't know about veteran's benefits, youth needing encouragement. They look at sad attendance at post meetings. Participation is poor at the local level. We have gaps in our line. Those needing help are saying, "Why don't you join hands sooner, why don't you join hands sooner?" We can't do it here, we won't do it at home, please join hands, as I pray.

Invocation
Stanley J. Gruneich, South Dakota, National Chaplain

Let us pray. Be present Lord. We need to acknowledge you as our God for we are Your people. Continue to give wisdom and guidance to our President and bless the other leaders of our nation. Protect our servicemen and women around the world. Use us to bring hope to the injured and wounded. Now, direct our minds so that we come together, hand-in-hand to service God and country. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you, Chaplain Stan.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Ladies and gentlemen, the National Sergeant-at-Arms, Joe Steen, will lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

…At this time, the Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman, Foreign Relations Commission
'Doc' Simon, Vermont, Vice Chairman, Foreign Relations Commission

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now we pause to remember those who are listed as Prisoners of War or Missing in Action from the wars in which we have been engaged.

We in The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing, and continue to work for an accounting of all those missing.

I now call on the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, Michael D. Helm of Nebraska and 'Doc' Simon of Vermont, Vice Chairman of Foreign Relations Commission, to place the POW/MIA flag on the empty chair and ask that they remain for another presentation.

…At this time the POW/MIA flag is placed on the Empty Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Fold the flag open.

The Killed In Action flag is a reminder each day that we live. It provides us with an opportunity to honor those who have given their lives for freedom. Please observe the colors and the symbols on the flag. The color red represents the blood of our fallen heroes. The circle is for the circle of brotherhood our military men and women share. Notice the soldier running over the line toward the rifle and helmet. This represents the line that our brave soldiers, without hesitation, knowingly cross every day, the line where brothers and sisters have fallen before him and yet our soldier goes. The helmet, atop a rifle, symbolizes those who have fallen in the field. The Killed In Action flag is a reminder for all Americans to recognize on a daily basis those of us that have fallen heroes in our family, that all gave some, but some gave all.

I now call upon Mike and 'Doc' again to place the Killed In Action flag on the other empty chair.

Preamble to The American Legion Constitution
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

Legionnaires, please join with me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals of which our great organization, The American Legion, was founded by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution.

…At this time, the Delegation recited the Preamble.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and Gentlemen, the Carson Chamber Singers, under the direction of Mrs. Judy Monson, accompanied by Nancy Mielke.

Music Selection: *America the Beautiful*; *Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

MR. JAMES McEACHIN: On days of remembrances past, I have borne in mind that last full measure of devotion of which Abraham Lincoln so eloquently spoke at Gettysburg. From shadowed lanes and far-away roads, I have looked off and I have seen the symmetrical obedience of numberless headstones that stand, like dwarfed sentries for the honored dead. Oh I say to you, Mr. And Mrs. America, Legionnaires, and all who are privileged to be within these borders, one cannot help but be touched by the price of our liberties, humbled by graves that stretch from coast to coast.

On this day of tribute and remembrance, lo a day backed by the trembling winds of yet another war, strident voices of doubt and dissent have pushed me to a place beyond the site of graves. And I find myself now moving along stark, sobering corridors, dedicated to the living who have sacrificed much for democracy because. I find myself in a hospice for the American veteran.

Swept amid remnants of wars old and new, the sorrowing consequences of battle all too evident I pray, oh, how I pray, there never again be this need for war. But if in the final hour, war we must, let it be for the principles for which our forefathers stood, for the freedoms for which this God-anointed nation has been ordained to stand. And then when in observance of the toll of war, or whether in ceremony of the great gift of freedom, of victory, it is to those strident voices of doubt and dissent to whom I shall first look, and I will pray to my God that we unite as one, and that over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over again, we give thanks to the American veteran, defenders of freedom.

And holding dear the memory of the dead and the unaccounted for, I shall further pray that none among us forget those whom I see here in this place, and in walks and hospices the country over, those who once stood tall for democracy, for the precious right to speak freely, but are now moving, infirmly or without grace, down the long, long corridors of duty, honor, and gallantry; going their separate ways; silent, I say silent of deeds and sacrifices, yet ever and ever in a special kind of way, still giving their all to say to us all, no veterans, no democracy, no America.

Music Selection: *Armed Forces Salute* by the Carson Chamber Singers.

ANNOUNCER: Please welcome a Korean War Veteran, Silver Star and multi-wound Purple Heart recipient. He's an actor, an author, a current U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador and fellow Legionnaire, Mr. James McEachin.

Voices—A Tribute to the American Veteran
James McEachin, Los Angeles, California

Greetings. It is, indeed, an honor to be here. I also bring greetings from a couple of people who have seen the light in Hollywood, such as Gary Sinise, Tom Selleck and Jon Voight. So the bottom line is that there is some hope.

Now, my fellow Legionnaires, my fellow veterans and comrades, as you well know, we are gathered here for our 89th National Convention. It really is hard to believe, isn't it, that we are nearly ten decades into our service to America. Since our first Caucus in Paris, France at the end of the war—the war to end all wars—back in 1919 and contrary to what some people may think, I was not involved in that war *[laughter]*, we came together with a common purpose and that was to make sure that our comrades, returning from war, were taken care of and that the widows and orphans of those who didn't return were also taken care of. Now this was supposed to be a temporary assignment, but here we are, still here, still meeting and still together and, above all, we are still serving America.

There are those who say we're needed now more than ever. I'm not quite so sure about that. This glorious nation has needed us pretty desperately in the past. And to our great credit, to The American Legion's great credit, we've delivered, magnificently, forever changing the course of world history and had an impact, a positive impact, on the lives of millions upon millions of our fellow citizens. That is a pretty strong claim to be sure, but I want you to think about this. Where would we be, where would this country be, had we not pushed for the formations of the Veterans' Administration and later the Department of Veterans Affairs? Consider the impact of the research they've conducted, paid for or supported in the areas of the Agent Orange and PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Then consider the impact of the GI Bill. Many of you went to school under that bill, you bought homes under that bill. The GI Bill was incredible. It changed the very makeup of our nation and it continues to impact us over sixty years after its passage. We did that, my friends, The American Legion did that. *[Applause.]Hello*, can you hear me? The American Legion did that. *[Applause whistling and cheering.]*

And we're willing to do it again. More often not, not only were we there, but we were leading the charge. As we pass Legion posts all across the country, we see evidence of our impact on young people through programs like American Legion Baseball; Boys and Girls State; the Oratorical Contest and our support of Scouting.

You will be meeting some of these fine people in a few moments, people whose lives you've changed forever. You have given them opportunities, you've given them experiences, skills, values that will last them for the rest of their natural days. In those same Legion posts, you will find comrades from the greatest generation to the latest generation, working side-by-side to care for our injured, the widows and widowers and orphans of today. You see, the point is, we are needed today, just as much as ever, and that is why we convene here today.

Let me introduce to you some of the people you have served in the past, a few individuals whose lives have been touched by what you do in your posts and in your communities across the country. Here to greet these outstanding young Americans is your National Commander, Paul Morin. *[Applause.]*

Let us introduce you to the 2007 Youth Champion. First, welcome, the 2007 Boys Nation, President**,** Ben Wallace from Hockessin, Delaware. This young man represented his state as governor and went on to be elected by his peers to lead Boys Nation. He's undecided on what college he wants to attend, but his desire is to study law, which we will not hold against him. *[Laughter.]*

The American Legion Youth Champions

2007 Boys Nation President
Ben Wallace, Hockessin, Delaware

On one of the first evenings at Boys Nation, the 98 Boys Nation senators were taken to some of the memorials around Washington, D.C. We were let off the bus and given free roam around the Vietnam, Korean and Lincoln Memorials. It wasn't long before many of the boys found their way to the Lincoln Memorial. Now, there were about 25 Boys Nations senators, assembled on those steps and in a moment of spontaneous patriotism, these 25 young men began to sing *God Bless America*. It wasn't long before many of the tourists and other citizens there, stood looking proudly on these young men, some even joined in the singing. But this display of patriotism was interrupted when a Park Ranger came up and asked about a permit for a demonstration. Luckily, we had the National Commander with us that day. He flew up those steps like an Olympic sprinter, let me tell you. *[Laughter.]*

Upon further reflection, I realized this is what Boys Nation is all about, The American Legion protecting the youth of America from the apathy that pervades our society, The American Legion standing up, setting an example, teaching the youth of our nation to stand up for what we believe in, to stand up for what is right, and most of all, to stand proudly in front of that flag.

Now, along with the opportunity to visit the memorials, we were given many other wonderful opportunities, from an audience with the President of the United States himself in the White House to speaking with Supreme Justice Samuel Alito. Generally, it was a week filled with opportunities that we will never get again and that we will never forget. Most of all, it was one tremendous opportunity to forge relationships with fellow delegates, with The American Legion itself and with our great nation. It is for this opportunity, this wonderful week and the week I spent in Dover, at Delaware Boys State, that I come to thank you today. I come representing the 98 Boys Nations senators and all the gentlemen at their respective Boys States, offering our sincere and heartfelt thanks. Thank you for your interest in the youth of America and for understanding the pivotal role that my generation will play in the upcoming years, as the problems of today become the concerns of tomorrow. It is an honor to be here with you today and a privilege to serve as your 2007 Boys Nation President.

MR. McEACHIN: I think he has a good future in law; he did that extemporaneously.

Just a few weeks ago, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, our next youth champion earned the title Junior Shooting Sports Champion. He's a 17-year old high school senior from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He also participated in the South Dakota Boys State Program. Welcome the 2007 Shooting Sports Champion, Dempster Christenson.

2007 Junior Shooting Sports Champion
Dempster Christenson, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

I appreciate your scholarship you offered. It is an honor to be here, to thank you personally. Look past me to all the other kids who tried to be here. Understand how important it is to have the chance to compete, to see your teammates go to the national competitions, to know that someone else besides you in this sport prepares for the future. We won't be famous. Our name won't appear on a line of designer clothes, we won't appear on a box of Wheaties™ or on TV. The only people who will watch us are our parents and you. As shooters, we are just athletes who know that steadiness, patience, focus and determination will serve us and our country well. Thank you for the scholarship and the chance to talk to you. Thank you for supporting this sport and thank

you for supporting the kids in countless shooting clubs around the nation whose lives will be changed by the encouragement that your programs offer them.

2007 Eagle Scout of the Year
Welland Burnside, Garden City, South Carolina

MR. McEACHIN: Our next youth champion could not be with us today, unfortunately. He is the 2007 Eagle Scout of the Year, Welland Burnside of Garden City, South Carolina. He earned his honor because of his involvement in conservation and restoration efforts at Myrtle State Park and for establishing the non-profit organization, "Suitcases for Kids" which is now active in all fifty states. In addition to his title, Mr. Burnside received a $10,000 scholarship. Let us congratulate Mr. Welland Burnside, the 2007 Eagle Scout of the Year.

Our next youth champion who is present is from Jacksonville, Florida. In April of this year, he received a college scholarship for $18,000 and the title, National High School Oratorical Contest Champion. You should really be proud. By the way, this young man also participated in the Florida Boys State Program in 2006 where he was elected governor. Welcome to our stage, Mr. Co'Relous Bryant.

2007 1st Place Winner National Oratorical Contest
Co'Relous Bryant, Jacksonville, Florida

As I stand before you here this morning, I cannot express to you how unworthy I feel. It's an honor to be able to speak in a room full of men and women who have dedicated their lives so that I can live in a better and freer America. I can't express to you what that means to me. Many of you have never met me, many of you had never heard my name before this, but that has never stopped you from sacrificing your life for me. I thank you for that.

I have a background as an actor and as an actor my job is to tell a story, as was brilliantly done before us here today. My story is a simple one. I was born in Perry, Florida, a rural town with lots of trees and cows and dirt. Not much there. My mom is a single parent who decided that in order to have her kids have access to a better future, she would move away in search of a better opportunity. Because she was in America, she didn't have to look very far. We moved to Jacksonville, Florida where I graduated from a prestigious high school. I am now headed to New York University. These opportunities would not have presented themselves were it not for an organization such as this one. I've never known my father. I don't know his name, I don't know what he looks like and I don't say that to garner sympathy. I say that because it doesn't matter. You made it not matter. You stepped up and the men and women in this organization have shown themselves fatherly to me. You have been the role model and the father figure for me, my whole life. I thank you for that.

In the spirit of Reno, I've had a blast this past week. We are full of casinos and the spirit of gambling is in the air, so I want to give this thought to you. As to the youth of America, often you might feel that we don't quite appreciate what you do. This one does. I completely understand and fully acknowledge the service you've given this country. When you invest and gamble on me, I will spend my life trying to get you your jackpot. They actually work and do change lives. God bless America and God bless you. Thanks to you, The American Legion, my dad.

MR. McEACHIN: Boy, I think we've got a winner here. *[Applause]*

That's just marvelous. Co'RePous, I can't help but go back to an old show biz story, and I know Duane is going to say, "What the heck is he doing taking this time going back to this show biz stuff?"

But, there was a young man about your age who wanted to be on stage. He went to the director and said, "Listen, if I can just get a line in this show, everything will be all right." The director said, "Okay, listen, can you do this line, 'Hark, is that a cannon I hear?'" And the guy said, "Oh, yeah, I can do that." The director really wanted him to put it out there. And so the guy went around the stage saying, "Hark, is that a cannon I hear? Hark, is that a cannon I hear? Hark, is that a cannon I hear?" All of a sudden, something went boom. He said, "What the hell was that?" *[Laughter]*

Sorry Duane. And that's not you, sir, because you've got a future, pal.

The 2006 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year was selected, not just for his abilities on the playing field, but also for his citizenship, his volunteerism, and his strong character. He played for Post 79 in Weymouth, Massachusetts. He did that for three years and he still had time to earn Eagle Scout honors and finished in the top five percent of his class. That is absolutely great. Welcome the 2006 American Legion Baseball Player of the Year, Joseph M. Walsh.

2006 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year
Joseph M. Walsh, East Weymouth, Massachusetts

My years playing Legion baseball have served as an opportunity to not only grow as a baseball player, but, more importantly, as a person and a contributing member to society. There is so much more to baseball than just the game itself. There are the struggles, the victories and the defeats, but more importantly, there are the lessons, the life lessons which have helped me grow as a person. Ingrained into the Legion Baseball Program is The American Legion code of sportsmanship. I will keep the rules, keep faith with my teammates, keep my temper, keep myself fit, keep a stout heart in defeat, keep my pride and honor in victory, keep a sound soul, a clean mind and a healthy body. This code, read before every game, is a constant reminder, much like the Ten Commandments. In a sense, it is a set of morals by which one should model one's life after. I imagine any who live their lives under these circumstances will, in turn, be successful contributors to society. While American Legion baseball is a great tool for building better young men, to support a family, coaches, teammates, the Legion post is integral in the process.

First, I'd like to thank my local Legion Post 79 who sponsored my team for all four years that I played. I would especially like to say a huge thank you to the National American Legion for my unforgettable trip to Cooperstown. Also, I owe a lot to my coaches and teammates. Since I first started playing T-Ball, when I was four years old, right through Little League, Babe Ruth, high school, Legion and now college, they have always been more than just coaches and teammates. It has always been more than just baseball. Whether on the field or off, I knew I could always count on them.

More than anything, I would like to thank my family. All my life they have been there for me, to nurture me, to guide me in the right direction and always support me. Without their support and guidance I would never be where I am today. Finally, I would just like to say how much of an honor this whole experience has been to represent my family, my teammates, coaches, town, state, region and the entire country. It is such an incredible honor. With the continued support of the Legion Baseball program by local Legion posts, the program will only continue to grow and produce upstanding young men to better our country.

MR. McEACHIN: Ladies and gentlemen, these are your 2006-2007 Youth Champions! Pretty good selection, don't you think? You did that, The American Legion did that.

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards

When we talk about The American Legion's service to America, we often refer to ourselves as veterans still serving America. I want to introduce you to a group of individuals who are serving and they are serving again. They are the 2007 Spirit of Service Awards recipients. They are our comrades on active duty who have been nominated by their individual services to receive an award based on their volunteerism and commitment to their communities while still serving in uniform.

Joining Commander Morin in presenting these awards is General Charles C. Campbell, Commanding General of United States Army Forces Command.

Our first recipient is a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is currently a recruiter in Towanda, Pennsylvania, where he is currently collecting eye glasses for the Lions Club, cell phones for the Cell Phones for Soldiers Program, and helping with the Operation Holiday Morale. That campaign is to show support for his comrades deployed around the world. He is also a Little League coach and during the course of his Army duties, he met and referred eighteen prospects for membership in The American Legion.

The 2007 Spirit of Service Award winner representing the United States Army is Sgt. Korey W.Chandler.

SGT. KOREY W. CHANDLER: I'm proud to stand before you this morning to accept this beautiful award. My thanks must and foremost go to God for without His blessings, there is nothing that could be possible. I would also like to thank my command, the United States Army Recruiting Command, Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania. My commander and the non-commissioned officers I work with on a daily basis make my job that much easier. I would also like to thank my family, my daughter, Mariah, who has always stood behind me in her thirteen years; my dad, Jim; and my mother, Joyce; and for Texas, my pride and of my source of patriotism.

Speaking of family, I must tell you that The American Legion, especially my home Post 42 in Towanda, Pennsylvania has been my second family. When I was a stranger in a new town, on my first week of recruiting duty in Pennsylvania, there was a Legionnaire who walked up to me on the street and invited me to visit them at the post that evening. I took him up on his offer. I'm very glad I did because that evening, I joined The American Legion. I was surrounded by such true patriots, such as yourselves and the ones back in Pennsylvania. That always reminds me of why I choose to serve America in the first place.

In closing, I ask that you please pray for our troops in harm's way. Your support makes us unbeatable in a face of any threat. God bless America and God bless America.

MR. McEACHIN: Our next recipient fulfilled a life long dream when he joined the Navy to become a jet aircraft mechanic. While he was stationed at the Navy Base Coronado in San Diego, California, which obviously was hard duty, he devoted countless hours of volunteer service with the Armed Forces YMCA, Special Olympics, tutoring children at the Malcolm X Library and was involved in a local city and beach cleanup committee. He was born and raised in India and became a naturalized citizen while he

was on active duty. Representing the United States Navy is Petty Officer 2nd Class, Gaurav R. Patel.

PETTY OFFICER 2nd CLASS, GAURAV R. PATEL: First of all, I'd like to thank everybody for this opportunity. It's a one-time thing for somebody like me, coming from India. I was born in India. It is something that a person can only dream of and which my dream came true because of people like you. I thank The American Legion, my command which is in the United States Navy at Fleet Readiness Center Southwest, my Commanding Officer, Capt. Fred Cleveland, my Chief, who is actually one of you guys and he is with me representing my command. Without him I wouldn't be here, so I really like to thanks each of you for this opportunity.

MR. McEACHIN: Our next recipient was described by his commanding officer as not only an outstanding non-commissioned officer in the Marines, but also a remarkable member of our society. He has truly made an impact on the town of Rome, Georgia, where he is stationed. Now he is a mentor and role model to local youth and is the champion for the homeless and the less fortunate. Our 2007 Spirit of Service recipient from the United States Marine Corps is Sgt. Matthew W. Stone.

SGT MATTHEW W. STONE: It wouldn't be right, right now if I didn't start by thanking the Lord. Without the sacrifice and redemptive power of Jesus Christ, everything I do would be meaningless. Next, I would like to thank my family at home. My mother couldn't be here today. She's recovering from a bone morrow transplant. My two sisters have supported me from the day I came home and said, "I joined the Marines." I thank them for all their support over these years and love them very much.

To Commander Morin and The American Legion, thank you for this award, this opportunity, this trip. It's been unbelievable. Ever since I've arrived in Reno, I've had many of you walk up and shake my hand and say, "Thank you for your service." It's very humbling, because I feel like I should be thanking every one of you for your service. You have set the legacy for us to live up to.

I would like to thank my command, the inspector in charge and Staff Detachment 1, Ammunition Company, 4th Supply Battalion, for nominating me for this award, for giving me the opportunity to get out here, get out of the office for a few days. It's been fun. I'd like to thank Chief Warrant Officer 2 Harrelson and First Sergeant Whittington for coming here and seeing this. Finally, I'd like to thank my beautiful fiancée, Dorin, down in the front row there, because I can honestly say that without her, I wouldn't be standing here accepting this award. She's helped me open up so many doors to opportunities that have led up to this point. She is she truly my treasure. Dorin, I love you very much. Thank you for this award.

MR. McEACHIN: Thank you, Sergeant. That was getting pretty close to a proposal. If you'd like to take it one step further, I'm certain the commander will allow me another minute. *[Laughter.]*

SGT MATTHEW W. STONE: Too late! Two weeks, we're married.

MR. McEACHIN: Congratulations, she's getting a winner.

Petty Officer David Edelson has racked up an impressive total of over 150 hours of volunteer time and nearly $3,000 in fundraising for at least nine different organizations over the past year. He brings joy to sick children through the "Coast Guard Teddy Bear Program," and by supporting numerous health awareness programs. He supports his fellow citizens through the "Habitat for Humanities Program," and many other charities.

Representing the United States Coast Guard, the 2007 Spirit of Service Award is presented to Petty Officer 2nd Class, David B. Edelson.

PETTY OFFICER 2nd DAVID B. EDELSON: First, I thank The American Legion for allowing me to be here today. It has been truly overwhelming, the support and the whole convention. As the sergeant said, ever since I've gotten here, people come up to me and shake my hand. They have thanked me for my service. It's quite overwhelming and it's great. I appreciate it. It is truly an honor.

I'd like to thank the National Commander and all the distinguished guests for allowing me to be here today. I'd like to thank from the Coast Guard Cutter CGC *Edisto* Lieutenant Meece, Lieutenant junior grade Lynch, and Chief Wilcox, for the support and for allowing me to be here today. Their support has truly been overwhelming. I'd like to thank MSST [Maritime Safety and Security Team] Lieutenant Anderson, Lieutenant Lindgren for putting me in for this award. I have the honor of having Lt. Anderson here today. She has been overwhelming with her support, and I thank you very much.

I have my good buddy, BM2 Denny Chase, who has been a great friend. He's helped me out and it's an honor to have him here today. I thank my family who have been most supportive of me since I've been in the military. They are everything I could ask for in a family. They are always there for me and supportive. I have to thank my wife who is the most important person to me. She has stood by me during my military career. She sacrificed her time and put up with my schedule, being away from home. She's everything I could ever ask for. I love you. And I thank the great state of Texas.

Thank you to The American Legion. This award is awesome.

MR. JAMES McEACHIN: Senior Airman Robb Hulet stands out as a member role model through his support of Boy Scouts and a mentor in his church. He volunteers his time to support Special Olympics, the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and many organizations in his community, in and around Alaskans, Elmendorf Air Force Base. He exemplifies the term Spirit of Service. Representing the United States Air Force is Senior Airman Robb Hulet.

SENIOR AIRMAN ROBB HULET: What an amazing honor it is to stand in this great body of people. I'm humbled by the great power of men and women who are assembled here today, that they have to do good for mankind. Everything that The American Legion stands for is helping others, as it states in our Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion: to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness. What an amazing statement that is. How wonderful the things that The American Legion does for mankind.

It is with deep gratitude that I accept this great honor. I'd like to thank our National Commander, Paul Morin. Also from The American Legion, the Director of Public Relations, Joe March as well as his assistant Debra Murrell and Marti Wooden who made it possible for me to be here today.

I'd like to thank the United States Air Force and my squadron commander, Maj. Raymond Platt, who made it possible for my family to be here with me today. Thanks also to my flight chief, Sr. MSGT John Edwards, who is here and who nominated me for this award. Also with us are the two people who made me who I am today, my wonderful loving parents, Craig and Renon Hulet. My mother- and father-in-law are here, Ken and Gladys Ware. I'd like to thank the person who puts up with me, day in and day out. I'm never home, either with the Air Force or with church or doing volunteer things. She is my wonderful, beautiful, loving wife, Mychel. Last but not least, I'd like to thank the men and women who are in this assembly today, who selflessly served when called upon to do

so and who are now choosing to serve the American people, the men and women of The American Legion.

MR. McEACHIN: Ladies and gentlemen, your 2007 Spirit of Service Award winners.

We have a relatively new program in The American Legion: "Heroes to Hometowns." This program is all about, as they say in show biz, "cutting to the chase." It cuts through all the red tape and takes care of our wounded heroes as they return home from the battlefield. Okay, we've actually done that since the very beginning, but we've given it a new structure and a new title to help provide you with the tools and guidance to help our injured comrades and their families with their homecoming experiences.

Richard 'Sunny' Ferrand knows what it means on the streets. He knows what it is to be helpless and hopeless. He's been there, done that. He's lifted himself from the bed of the homeless at the La Mesa United Methodist Church. There he became the shelter's coordinator in 1997. Today, Mr. Ferrand is retired and he is back on the streets in San Diego. Ah! But not as a homeless veteran, but as The American Legion's champion in San Diego for "Heroes to Hometowns." Since a year ago in June, Ferrand has played a pivotal role, working to coordinate assistance for more 100 military returning families, veterans and others. He is the true advocate for the "Wounded Warrior Program." Please welcome to Mr. Richard Ferrand.

MR. RICHARD FERRAND: Thank you for allowing me to be here to present this "Heroes to Hometown Program" to you. "Heroes to Hometowns" was assigned by Commander Tom Bock in January of 2006 as a Memorandum of Understanding to organize the outreach for our severely injured veterans in this war on terror. Since that time, The American Legion's "Heroes to Hometowns" project in San Diego has assisted approximately 100 veterans with some sort of outreach. It has taken the community to assist us in this: the VFW and the Lions Club. The Lions Club has allowed us to name one of our clubs in Chula Vista for one of our fallen heroes. It is the Chula Vista Doc Mendez Memorial Lions Club. This Lions Club is in support of "Heroes to Hometowns," no matter where it's at with any Lions Club within the world—and I mean within the world. I am proud to say that we are going to do more of these throughout the United States. Wherever there is a "Heroes to Hometowns Program," there will be a Lions Club in support, named after one of our fallen heroes. And as was said, without Jesus Christ helping us along, we would have never made this project work. Don't ask me how it worked, only God can tell you.

It is The American Legion that has taken hold of this program and made it work. I understand the rest of the community has joined up. I'd like to see us all help them at home. If you go to "Heroes to Hometowns" [www.heroestohometowns.org], there is only one town there in California. We not only take care of them when they are home, but we have to take care of them when they first get here from the war zone. We have to make sure that they have what they need, when they come here [in California]. Then, when they are ready, we make sure there is a seamless transition and that they get the help that they need at that time when they go home.

I beg you to join this program, anywhere throughout your country. This program is very much needed. Support them in everything that they do because these returning troops are our heroes.

MR. McEACHIN: On November 9, 2006, life changed forever for Alroy Billiman, a twenty-seven year old Native American from Window Rock, Arizona. Shrapnel from an

IED detonated along an Iraqi road ripped through the Army's Specialist's Humvee and cut off his arm. Billiman was transported first to Landstuhl in Germany and then to Walter Reed Hospital where he underwent a series of surgeries. By Thanksgiving, he was transferred to San Diego for rehabilitation. The Navy provided housing for Billiman, his wife and baby girl, but the family had little or no future. A counselor advocate got in touch with 'Sunny' Ferrand and Ferrand got busy. He made arrangements to provide many of the much needed basics for the Billiman family. Please welcome an American hero, our comrade Alroy Billiman of the United States Army.

ALROY BILLIMAN: I'd like to thank The American Legion for inviting me here and also to thank 'Sunny.' He definitely helped me out the one time when I really was in need. I'm really proud to be here. I'd like to thank God for being here, for my family, my fellow soldiers, for the comrades I served with in Iraq. This is definitely a true honor and I'm just proud to be an American.

MR. McEACHIN: My God, I just saw my Commanding General Stokes over there. Sorry, sir, if I made a mistake, but when you're already a private, there isn't much lower than you can get. *[Laughter.]*

So my friends, we have met here at the beginning of our convention, and, too, in the next few days, some great people. We'll talk and listen, and when it's over, we'll begin a new year, with a new commander and a new batch of resolutions to guide us in our work. But our mission and our resolve must remain the same as it was in 1919. And here, I'm going to stray just a bit.

A few years ago, I was a member of the Academy [of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences] in Hollywood. I was trying to get the Academy to give a couple of tickets to two of our soldiers, just to be at the ceremonies, not necessarily to walk down the red carpet and put the camera on them. Just to have two American soldiers in uniform to say that they were there, were part of this great country and would like to see the stars and everything like that. Well, they had something like thirty thousand seats, I can't remember how many they had. But I was unable to get two American soldiers at the Academy Awards. I should be careful here, because we have a film, *Old Glory,* which is up for nomination. Once they get word that I'm lambasting them, they certainly won't vote for it. So, today, it's a no biggie, because they didn't even show the film here at The American Legion Convention. I'm inclined to believe that the next time we're facing some conflict on foreign shores, we should not send American soldiers, we should send Hollywood. *[Applause and laughter.]*

So, we have work to do, my friends. America is at war again, and again she needs our help. Our comrades and their families serving today need our help. Our values and our way of life are under attack. Our flag, this glorious banner of freedom, needs to be protected from physical desecration. *[Applause.]* This is America and we can never give up a fight to make sure that those who have born the course of battle are treated with respect and dignity. Our nation's children need our support to make sure that they know the responsibilities of citizenship and that the great gift they have been given by those who fight and those of you who have fought to keep America free.

When we leave here and return to our posts and our districts and our departments, it is incumbent upon us to go with a renewed resolve, that we will continue to fight, that we will continue to serve these fine people whom we've honored here today, as such as Specialist Alroy Billiman. We will care for our comrades in harm's way and their families, because we know how important that mission is. And we will support and defend our flag, the American flag, one of the greatest symbols the planet has ever

known. As old and ancient as most of us are, or some of you are, we will defend it again in a heart beat and our Constitution and our way of life must be preserved because we believe, nay, we know that this America is the best country on earth. We, The American Legion, made it that way, we, The American Legion, will keep it that way, because that's who we are. *[Applause.]*

*[*It's Who We Are *video by Michael Peterson is shown to the audience.]*

MR. McEACHIN: Please welcome country music star, Michael Peterson.

Michael Peterson, Entertainer

I've traded hats here today. I got a new cowboy hat. I look at this film and I get nostalgic. I don't know if you're like me, but I went recently to my 30th high school reunion and found out that there is a reason why they say nostalgia is often a longing for a place that you'd never move back to. *[Laughter.]* But nostalgia at its best does more than remind us of our past. It inspires our future. Sitting in this room today, I see an undeniable legacy of leadership and the seeds of a spotless future. But I think it was Thoreau who said it best, "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

In this room today, and in this organization, is the unquestionable power to shape the future of nature and our world, without question. There are many programs and organizations you could belong to that have programs, but I am proud to be here today, as part of The American Legion because you have authentically demonstrated over and over again that it's not just something that you do. It truly is who you are. The future counts on me and you and who we are. *[Applause.]*

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I thank Mr. James McEachin, a member of Post 142 in the Department of California, for a stirring tribute in sharing his incredible talent with us today and to Michael Peterson for his continued support of The American Legion and The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Thanks, also, to the Carson Chamber Singers under the direction of Ms. Judy Munson and a special thanks to General Campbell for joining us today and assisting in the presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards. The General will address us a little later this morning.

…There is a pause of a few minutes in the proceedings.

Hail to the Chief music is now heard.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: All four million members of The American Legion family are honored today by the appearance of our special guest. Throughout our history, The American Legion has stood firmly behind the brave men and women of the armed forces. We have supported the President and his administration in an ongoing effort to bring an end to the evils of terrorism and tyranny. We are privileged that he comes again before a joint session of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary as well as The Sons of The American Legion. It is an honor to introduce the President of the United States, George W. Bush. *[Applause.]*

George W. Bush
President of the United States of America

THE PRESIDENT: Commander, thank you very much for the invitation to come. I'm honored to be here. I'm honored to represent Post 77 of Houston, Texas. I hope my fellow Texans behave themselves here in Reno. *[Laughter.]* You won't? Okay, well—

I appreciate the fact that nearly every community in America has been enriched by The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. I appreciate the work that you do to remind our citizens about the blessings of America. You have the profound gratitude of the President and the people of this country. Thank you for your service.

I particularly appreciate the work you do with our country's young. I like the fact that you have an oratorical competition that, according to your organization, helps Americans communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. Paul suggested I might want to sign up. *[Laughter.]* I appreciate the fact that through Boys and Girls Nation you teach young people who are interested in public service about how Washington really works. I'm not going there. *[Laughter and applause.]*

We meet today at a critical time for our country. America is engaged in a great ideological struggle—fighting Islamic extremists across the globe. Today I want to talk to you and to the American people about a key aspect of the struggle: the fight for the future of the Middle East. I'm going to explain why defeating the extremists in this troubled region is essential to our nation's security, and why success in Iraq is vital to winning this larger ideological battle.

I do want to thank your Commander. It's been my pleasure to work with Paul. He's been in the White House a lot, along with the Executive Director, John Sommer. He's represented you well, and he's served with distinction.

I thank JoAnn Cronin, the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. I appreciate Bob Spanogle, the National Adjutant of the American Legion. I want to welcome the Governor of the great state of Nevada with us today, Governor Jim Gibbons. Mr. Governor, thanks for coming. The Congressman from this district is the fine representative named Dean Heller. His wife Lynne sang the National Anthem. Thank you both for being here today.

I'm honored to be in the presence of those who wear our nation's uniform. I thank General Charles Campbell, Commanding General U.S. Army Forces Command, for joining us. Major General Gale Pollock, Acting Surgeon General of the U.S. Army. And for all those who wear the uniform, thank you for volunteering to defend this nation in a time of peril. I'm proud to be your Commander-in-Chief.

For nearly a century, presidents have looked to The American Legion to provide an example of vision, valor, and love of country. In times of peace, you counseled vigilance. In times of war, you counseled resolve. And in every era, you have carried the well-being of our men and women in uniform in your prayers and in your hearts. We're grateful to your service.

You have an appreciation for how special America is because you have defended her. You know how fragile freedom is because you have seen it under attack. And you know the pain of war because you have lost friends and family members on distant shores—including those whose fates are still unknown. We must not, and we will not, end our search until we have accounted for every member of our Armed Forces from every war and every corner of the Earth.

I appreciate your efforts to honor the American flag. There are those who say the flag is just a piece of cloth. That's not the view of those who bled for it and saw it drape the caskets of some of our finest men and women. It was the American flag that we planted proudly on Iwo Jima that first graced the silver surface of the moon. The country is careful to protect many things because of what they symbolize. Surely we can find a way to show equal respect for the symbol that our soldiers and sailors and airmen and

Marines and Coast Guard men and women have risked their lives for—the flag of our nation. So today I join the Legion in calling on the United States Congress to make protection of the flag the law of our land. *[Applause.]*

I also thank you for your strong support of our nation's veterans. We share a common goal: to make sure our veterans have all the help they need. We have worked together to achieve that goal. The budget this year that I submitted is nearly $87 billion for our veterans. That's a 77-percent increase since I took office. It is the highest level of support for veterans in America's history. *[Applause.]*

I know health care is a concern of yours, and that's why we've extended treatment to a million additional veterans, including hundreds of thousands of men and women returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. We're building new VA facilities in places where veterans are returning *[sic]* so more veterans can get top-quality health care closer to your home. We've expanded grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. My point is this: The veterans were there when we needed them and this administration will be with the veterans when they need us. *[Applause.]*

Perhaps the most important duty that Legion members undertake is to serve as living reminders that a great country has great responsibilities. Once again, America finds itself a nation at war. Once again, we're called to assume the mantle of global leadership. And once again, The American Legion is walking point. I thank you for your fervent and enthusiastic defense of our men and women in uniform as they take the fight to the enemy in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and across the world. They're the finest military on Earth and we are right to be proud of them.

Many people in this country are asking whether the fight underway today is worth it. This is not the first time Americans have asked that question. We always enter wars reluctantly, yet we have fought whenever dangers came. We fought when turmoil in Europe threatened to shroud the world in darkness. America sent its military to fight two bitter and bloody conflicts—we did what we had to do to get the job done. We fought when powers in Asia attacked our country and our allies. We sent Americans to restore the peace—and we did what we had to do to get the job done. And we responded when radicals and extremists attacked our homeland in the first ideological war of the 21st century. We toppled two regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq that gave harbor to terrorists, defied the international community, and threatened the security of our nation. And now we're working to help build free and secure societies in their place and, like the past, we will do what we have to do to get the job done.

We've learned from history that dangers in other parts of the world, such as Europe and Asia, directly affect our security here at home. On September the 11th, 2001, we learned that there's another region of the world that directly threatens the security of the American people and that is the Middle East. America has enduring and vital interests in the region. Throughout our history, the American people have had strong links with this region through ties of commerce and education and faith. Long before oil and gas were discovered in the Middle East the region was a key source of trade. It is the home to three of the world's great religions. It remains a strategic crossroads for the world.

Yet the hope and prosperity that transformed other parts of the world in the 20th century has bypassed too many in the Middle East. For too long, the world was content to ignore forms of government in this region in the name of stability. The result was that a generation of young people grew up with little hope to improve their lives, and many fell under the sway of violent Islamic extremism. The terrorist movement multiplied in strength, and bitterness that had simmered for years boiled into violence across the world. The cradle of civilization became the home of the suicide bomber. And resentments that

began on the streets of the Middle East are now killing innocent people in train stations and airplanes and office buildings around the world.

The murderers and beheaders are not the true face of Islam; they are the face of evil. They seek to exploit religion as a path to power and a means to dominate the Middle East. The violent Islamic radicalism that inspires them has two main strains. One is Sunni extremism, embodied by al-Qaida and its terrorist allies. Their organization advances a vision that rejects tolerance, crushes all dissent, and justifies the murder of innocent men, women, and children in the pursuit of political power. We saw this vision in the brutal rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, where women were publicly whipped, men were beaten for missing prayer meetings, and young girls could not go to school.

These extremists hope to impose that same dark vision across the Middle East by raising up a violent and radical caliphate that spans from Spain to Indonesia. So they kill fellow Muslims in places like Algeria and Jordan and Egypt and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to undermine their governments. And they kill Americans because they know we stand in their way. And that is why they attacked U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, and killed sailors aboard the USS *Cole* in 2001 *[sic]*. And that is why they killed nearly 3,000 people on 9/11. And that is why they plot to attack us again. And that is why we must stay in the fight until the fight is won.

The other strain of radicalism in the Middle East is Shia extremism, supported and embodied by the regime that sits in Tehran. Iran has long been a source of trouble in the region. It is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism. Iran backs Hezbollah who are trying to undermine the democratic government of Lebanon. Iran funds terrorist groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which murder the innocent, and target Israel, and destabilize the Palestinian territories. Iran is sending arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan, which could be used to attack American and NATO troops. Iran has arrested visiting American scholars who have committed no crimes and pose no threat to their regime. And Iran's active pursuit of technology that could lead to nuclear weapons threatens to put a region already known for instability and violence under the shadow of a nuclear holocaust.

Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere. And that is why the United States is rallying friends and allies around the world to isolate the regime, to impose economic sanctions. We will confront this danger before it is too late.

I want our fellow citizens to consider what would happen if these forces of radicalism and extremism are allowed to drive us out of the Middle East. The region would be dramatically transformed in a way that could imperil the civilized world. Extremists of all strains would be emboldened by the knowledge that they forced America to retreat. Terrorists could have more safe havens to conduct attacks on Americans and our friends and allies. Iran could conclude that we were weak and could not stop them from gaining nuclear weapons. And once Iran had nuclear weapons, it would set off a nuclear arms race in the region.

Extremists would control a key part of the world's energy supply, could blackmail and sabotage the global economy. They could use billions of dollars of oil revenues to buy weapons and pursue their deadly ambitions. Our allies in the region would be under greater siege by the enemies of freedom. Early movements toward democracy in the region would be violently reversed. This scenario would be a disaster for the people of the Middle East, a danger to our friends and allies, and a direct threat to American peace and security. This is what the extremists plan. For the sake of our own security, we'll pursue our enemies, we'll persevere and we will prevail.

In the short-term, we're using all elements of American power to protect the American people by taking the fight to the enemy. Our troops are carrying out operations

day by day to bring the terrorists to justice. We're keeping the pressure on them. We're forcing them to move. Our law enforcement and intelligence professionals are working to cut off terrorist financing and disrupt their networks. Our diplomats are rallying our friends and allies throughout the region to share intelligence and to tighten security and to rout out the extremists hiding in their midst. Every day we work to protect the American people. Our strategy is this: We will fight them over there so we do not have to face them in the United States of America.

In the long-term, we are advancing freedom and liberty as the alternative to the ideologies of hatred and repression. We seek a Middle East of secure democratic states that are at peace with one another, that are participating in the global markets, and that are partners in this fight against the extremists and radicals. We seek to dry up the stream of recruits for al-Qaida and other extremists by helping nations offer their people a path to a more hopeful future. We seek an Iran whose government is accountable to its people instead of to leaders who promote terror and pursue the technology that could be used to develop nuclear weapons. We seek to advance a two-state solution for the Israelis and Palestinians so they can live side by side in peace and security. We seek justice and dignity and human rights for all the people of the Middle East.

Achieving this future requires hard work and strategic patience over many years. Yet our security depends on it. We have done this kind of work before in Europe. We have done this kind of work before in Japan. We have done this kind of work before, and it can be done again. The future course of the Middle East will turn heavily on the outcome of the fight in Iraq. Iraq is at the heart of the Middle East. And the two dangerous strains of extremism vying for control of the Middle East have now closed in on this country in an effort to bring down the young democracy.

In Iraq, Sunni extremists, led by al-Qaida, are staging sensational attacks on innocent men, women, and children in an attempt to stoke sectarian violence. Their operatives have assassinated those seeking to build a new future for the Iraqi people. Their targets include everyone they consider infidels, including Christians and Jews and Yezidis and Shia, and even fellow Sunnis who do not share their radical distortion of Islam. Their ranks include foreign fighters who travel to Iraq through Syria. Their operations seek to create images of chaos and carnage to break the will of the American people. These killers don't understand our country. America does not give in to thugs and assassins and America will not abandon Iraq in its hour of need.

Shia extremists, backed by Iran, are training Iraqis to carry out attacks on our forces and the Iraqi people. Members of the Qods Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps are supplying extremist groups with funding and weapons, including sophisticated IEDs. And with the assistance of Hezbollah, they've provided training for these violent forces inside of Iraq. Recently, coalition forces seized 240-millimeter rockets that had been manufactured in Iran this year and that had been provided to Iraqi extremist groups by Iranian agents. The attacks on our bases and our troops by Iranian-supplied munitions have increased in the last few months despite pledges by Iran to help stabilize the security situation in Iraq.

Some say Iran's leaders are not aware of what members of their own regime are doing. Others say Iran's leaders are actively seeking to provoke the West. Either way, they cannot escape responsibility for aiding attacks against coalition forces and the murder of innocent Iraqis. The Iranian regime must halt these actions. And until it does, I will take actions necessary to protect our troops. I have authorized our military commanders in Iraq to confront Tehran's murderous activities.

For all those who ask whether the fight in Iraq is worth it, imagine an Iraq where militia groups backed by Iran control large parts of the country. Imagine an Iraq where al-

Qaida has established sanctuaries to safely plot future attacks on targets all over the world, including America. We've seen what these enemies will do when American forces are actively engaged in Iraq. And we can envision what they would do if they were emboldened by American forces in retreat.

The challenge in Iraq comes down to this: either the forces of extremism succeed, or the forces of freedom succeed. Either our enemies advance their interests in Iraq, or we advance our interests. The most important and immediate way to counter the ambitions of al-Qaida and Iran and other forces of instability and terror is to win the fight in Iraq.

Together our coalition has achieved great things in Iraq. We toppled one of the world's most brutal and dangerous dictators. This world is better off without Saddam Hussein in power. *[Applause.]* The Iraqi people held three national elections, choosing a transitional government, adopting the most progressive and democratic constitution in the Arab world, and then electing a government under that constitution. Despite endless threats from the car bombers and assassins, nearly 12 million Iraqi citizens came out to vote in a show of hope and solidarity that we should never forget.

In 2006, a thinking enemy struck back. The extremists provoked a level of sectarian violence that threatened to unravel the democratic gains the Iraqi people had made. Momentum was shifting to the extremists. The Iraqi people saw that their government could not protect them, or deliver basic services. Many Shia turned to militias for security. Many Sunnis did not see a place for them in the new Iraq. Baghdad was descending into chaos. And one of our military intelligence analysts wrote that Anbar Province—al-Qaida's base in Iraq—was lost to the enemy.

Given the stakes in Iraq, given the fact that what happens in Iraq matters in the United States, it became clear that we needed to adjust our approach to address these changes on the ground. So in January, I laid out a new strategy. This strategy was designed to help bring security to the Iraqi population, especially in Baghdad. It was designed to help clear the terrorists out of Iraqi cities and communities so that local governments could retake control, resume basic services, and help revive businesses in their communities. It was designed to give the Iraqi security forces time to grow in size and capability so that they can ultimately bring security to their country. It was designed to provide a secure environment in which national reconciliation could take place. And it was designed to encourage more members of the international community to recognize their interest in a free and democratic Iraq and to do more to help make that possible.

The central objective of this strategy was to aid the rise of an Iraqi government that can protect its people, deliver basic services, and be an ally in this war on terror. And we understood that none of these goals could be met until the Iraqi people feel safer in their own homes and neighborhoods.

To carry out this new strategy, I sent reinforcements to Baghdad and Anbar Province. I put a new commander in place, General David Petraeus, an expert on counterinsurgency. Those reinforcements have been fully operational for just over two months. Yet there are unmistakable signs that our strategy is achieving the objectives we set out. Our new strategy is showing results in terms of security. Our forces are in the fight all over Iraq. Since January, each month we have captured or killed an average of more than 1,500 al-Qaida terrorists and other enemies of Iraq's elected government. Al-Qaida is being displaced from former strongholds in Baghdad and Anbar and Diyala provinces.

We've conducted operations against Iranian agents supplying lethal munitions to extremist groups. We've targeted Shia death squads and their supply networks. The Prime Minister of Iraq, Prime Minister Maliki, has courageously committed to pursue the forces of evil and destruction. Sectarian violence has sharply decreased in Baghdad. The

momentum is now on our side. The surge is seizing the initiative from the enemy, and handing it to the Iraqi people.

Our new strategy is also showing results in places where it matters most, the cities and neighborhoods where ordinary Iraqis live. In these areas, Iraqis are increasingly reaching accommodations with each other, with the coalition, and with the government in Baghdad. This reconciliation is coming from the bottom up. It's having an impact in the fight against the enemy and it's building a solid foundation for a democratic Iraq

In Anbar, the province that had been thought to be lost to the enemy, is increasingly becoming more peaceful because members of local Sunnis are turning against al-Qaida. They're sick and tired of the dark vision of these murderers. Local sheikhs have joined the American forces to drive the terrorists out of the capital city of Ramadi and elsewhere. Residents are providing critical intelligence, and tribesmen have joined the Iraqi police and security forces. People want to live in peace. Mothers want to raise their children in a peaceful environment. The local Iraqis, given a chance, are turning against these murderers and extremists.

Many Iraqis who once felt marginalized in a free Iraq are rejoining the political process, and now it's the enemy of a free Iraq that is being left on the margins. Last month, provincial officials reopened parts of the war-damaged government center with the help of one of our provincial reconstruction teams. Similar scenes are taking place all across Anbar, the province once thought lost. Virtually every city and every town in the province now has a mayor and a municipal council. Local officials are forming ties with the central government in Baghdad because these Sunni leaders now see a role for their people in a new Iraq. And in an encouraging sign, the central government is beginning to respond with funding for vital services and reconstruction, and increased security forces.

In other provinces, there are also signs of this kind of bottom-up progress. In Diyala Province, the city of Baqubah reopened six banks, providing residents with capital for the local economy. In Ninewa Province, local officials have established a commission to investigate corruption, with a local judge empowered to pursue charges of fraud and racketeering. These are signs that our strategy to encourage political cooperation at the grassroots level is working. And over time, as the Iraqis take control over their lives at the local level, they will demand more action from their national leaders in Baghdad. That's how democracy works. And that's why the encouraging developments at the local level are so important for Iraq's future.

At the moment, our new strategy is showing fewer results at the national level. Iraq is overcoming decades of tyranny and deprivation, which left scars on Iraq's people and their psyche. The serious sectarian violence of 2006 and early 2007 further tore at the fabric of Iraqi society, increasing distrust between Iraq's ethnic and religious communities. In the midst of the security challenges, Iraq's leaders are being asked to resolve political issues as complex and emotional as the struggle for civil rights in our own country. So it is no wonder that progress is halting, and people are often frustrated. The result is that it has been harder than anticipated for Iraqis to meet the legislative benchmarks on which we have all been focused.

In my weekly consultations with Ambassador Crocker we discuss these challenges. We also discuss the signs of hope. We're encouraged by the agreement reached Sunday night by the top leaders in Iraq's government. They agree on several draft pieces of legislation that are at the core of national reconciliation and are among the benchmarks identified by the United States Congress. For example, the draft law on de-Baathification reform addresses the question of how Iraqis will deal with their past. The draft legislation on provincial powers tackles how Iraqis will map out their future. These measures still have to be passed by the Iraqi parliament. Yet the agreement shows that Iraq's leaders

can put aside their differences, they can sit down together, and they can work out tough issues central to the fate of their country.

The agreement by Iraq's leaders was significant for another reason. It thanks the coalition for our sacrifices and recognizes the importance of maintaining a coalition presence in Iraq. It also calls for the development of a long-term relationship with the United States. I welcome this invitation. I've committed our government to negotiating such a partnership soon. This long-term relationship need not require the level of engagement that we have in Iraq today. But it can serve the common interests of both Iraq and the United States to combat terrorism and to help bring stability to an important country and region.

Iraq's government still has more work to do to meet many of its legislative benchmarks. Yet it's also important to note that many of the goals behind these benchmarks are being achieved without legislation. Here's an example: We believed that an equitable sharing of oil revenues would require the Iraqi parliament to pass an oil-sharing law. In fact, the national government is already sharing oil revenues with the provinces despite the fact that no formal law has been passed. Iraq's government is making gains in other important areas. Electricity production is improving. The parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation, including a $41-billion budget. Despite the slow progress in the Iraqi parliament, here's the evidence: Iraq as a whole is moving forward.

Our strategy is also showing results at the international level. The United Nations and Iraq—with support from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and nations from around the globe—have finalized an International Compact for Iraq that will bring new economic assistance and debt relief in exchange for aggressive economic reforms. So far, the Iraqis have made significant progress in meeting the IMF's economic benchmarks. The Iraqis have convened a Neighbors Conference that's bringing together nations in the region. The goal is to help the Iraqis through specific security and economic and diplomatic cooperation.

As part of these diplomatic initiatives, Prime Minister Maliki has met with counterparts in Turkey, Syria, and Iran to urge the support for his nation. Saudi Arabia is looking to open a new embassy in Baghdad. The United Nations Security Council has decided to expand its mission in Iraq and is seeking to help with local elections and reconciliation. The United Nations will soon name a new high-ranking envoy to Iraq to coordinate the UN's expanded effort to that country. Here's what I'm telling you, the international community increasingly understands the importance of a free Iraq. They understand a free Iraq is important for world peace. And that is why we'll continue to rally the world for this noble and necessary cause.

All these developments are hopeful—they're hopeful for Iraq and they're hopeful for the Middle East, and they're hopeful for peace. In two weeks, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to deliver an interim assessment of the situation on the ground and the prospects for the future. This status report comes less than three months after the surge became fully operational. It will likely assess what's going well in Iraq, and what needs to be improved, and what changes we need to make in our strategy and force deployments in the months ahead. Congress asked for this assessment. Congress should listen to it in its entirety. And I ask members of the Congress to withhold any conclusions until they can hear these men out.

Unfortunately, some who had complained about a lack of security in Iraq are now attempting to change the terms of the debate. Their argument used to be that security was bad, so the surge has failed. Now their argument seems to be security is better, so the surge has failed. They disregard the political advances on the local level, and instead

charge that the slow pace of legislative progress on the national level proves our strategy has not worked. This argument gets it backwards. Improving security is the precondition for making gains in other areas.

Senator Joe Lieberman puts it this way: "While it is true there is no pure 'military' solution to the violence in Iraq, it is worth remembering that neither is there any pure 'political' solution." Security progress must come first. And only then can political progress follow—first locally, and then in Baghdad. So it's going to take time for the recent progress we have seen in security to translate into political progress. In short, it makes no sense to respond to military progress by claiming that we have failed because Iraq's parliament has yet to pass every law it said it would.

The American people know how difficult democracy can be. Our own country has an advanced and sophisticated political system in place. Yet even we can't pass a budget on time and we've had 200 years of practice. *[Applause.]* Prime Minister Maliki and other Iraqi leaders are dealing with the issues far more controversial and complicated, and they are trying to do it all at once, after decades of a brutal dictatorship. Iraq's leaders aren't perfect. But they were elected by their people. They want what we want, a free Iraq that fights terrorists instead of harboring them. And leaders in Washington need to look for ways to help our Iraqi allies succeed, not excuses for abandoning them.

The challenge before us is hard, but America can meet it. And the conflict has come at a cost, on behalf of a cause that is right and essential to the American people. It's a noble cause. It is a just cause. It is a necessary cause. I wouldn't have asked the young men and women of our military to go in harm's way if I didn't think success in Iraq was necessary for the security of the United States of America. I know it can be difficult to see sometimes, but what happens on the streets of Baghdad and in the neighborhoods of Anbar has a direct impact on the safety of Americans here at home. And that is why we're in this fight. And that's why we'll stay in the fight, and that is why we're going to win this fight. *[Applause.]*

One of the great blessings of this country is that our men and women in uniform understand it. One of those young men was Specialist First Class Stephen Davis of Fayetteville, North Carolina. Stephen came from a proud military family. His father and grandfather were veterans. His younger brother, his mother, and her father were all stationed with him in Iraq.

When Stephen was killed by an insurgent grenade on the Fourth of July, their hearts were broken. And yet, somehow this remarkable family found a way to put aside their grief and continue to serve our country. Stephen's mother said that Stephen was proud of what they were doing in Iraq. So six days after the funeral, she went back on duty as a medic. His father, Buck, a Gulf War veteran, says he wants to go to Iraq today. This family represents the best of the American spirit, a spirit that shows we have the grit and the will to defend the American people.

One day, years from now, another president will be in a room like this. That president will look out upon a sea of caps worn by those who show a quiet pride in their service. Some in that audience will include people who won the fight against fascism and Nazism and communism. You'll be joined by younger veterans who have fought in places like Kandahar and Ramadi. And just like you, the new generation of veterans will be able to say proudly they held fast against determined and ruthless enemies, helped salvage an entire region from tyranny and terror, and made a safer world for the American people.

To those future members of The American Legion, and to all of you, I offer the gratitude of our nation, and offer my prayers for a future of peace. Thank you. And may God America. *[Standing applause.]*

...The President leaves the stage.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Convention will come to order.

Legionnaires, we are fortunate to have as a spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund a great friend and loyal supporter of the veterans and of our troops. He is one of country music's star performers, a spokesman for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. He has produced a video to accompany his song, *It Is Who We Are.* He has pledged 50% of the profits from the sale of the DVD to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. Please welcome once again, a true friend, a member of the Sons of The American Legion, Michael Peterson.

Michael Peterson, Entertainer

I have been asked over the last six months why I'm so excited and so dedicated to The American Legion. The simplest way to explain it is to say that The American Legion is a great organization. Someone asked me to define what a great organization was. I don't pretend to know exactly everything that makes a great organization. I do know this, that the hallmark of every great organization is its capacity to renew its relevance over time.

Marketing experts around the world today will tell us that if you really want to reach people in the most effective manner, you have to recognize the fact that this generation of Americans is over-informed. How many of you would agree with me that we have too much information coming at us these days? *[Applause.]* And with a generation of the over-informed, we often combine that with the generation of the overworked. So, we have people that have too much information coming at them and not enough time. And the marketing experts are telling us like never before that mass media and advertising are less and less effective. They say that the most effective way to reach people is through relationships, good old relationships. I thought about the opportunity that I would have to speak with you today. I figured the best way for me to communicate what you mean to me and what the possibility is for this organization to renew its relevance over time and to express the value of the relevant relationship is that I would try to write a poem that would say it far better than I could if I had another hour.

In this poem, I referred to someone I called Grandpa Lester. Grandpa Lester was not my Grandfather. In fact, he's a composite of many men that I knew that influenced my life. My grandpa was Chester and my grandma was Gertrude, but to me Grandpa Lester in this poem is you, The American Legion.

Grandpa Lester

Grandpa Lester was the finest man I'll ever know.
He used to say, "A man is just a measure of his load."
He burned a thousand bridges, but he built a thousand more.
He hated liars, snakes and thieves, fences, locks and doors.
His beard was old and yellowed, but his eyes still had that spark
And he'd show you on his chest where someone's bullet left its mark.
And he'd say, "The road will not forsake you if you always give your best
Son, it's the mettle that you're made of, not some medals on your chest."
The road less traveled is the one I longed to find,
Give me the road less traveled every single time.
'Cause every dead-end that he ever came to he found a way around it.

He'd say, "It's kinda like a woman's love, you'll know it when you've found it."
He never took the beaten path or one that's paved or graveled
He marched to a different drum, that's the road less traveled.
I remember all the flowers when my Grandpa Lester died
And Grandma got a folded flag and everybody cried.
And I'll hold within me the wisdom he bestowed
And his voice before he left saying, "We'll meet somewhere down the road."
Yes, the road less traveled is the one I long to find.
Give me the road less traveled every single time
'Cause every dead-end that he ever came to, he found a way around it.
He said, "It's kinda like a woman's love, you know it when you found it."
He never took the beaten path or the one that's paved or graveled.
He marched to a different drum, that's the road less traveled.

Today in America there are few organizations that will take the stand for the four things that The American Legion has always stood for: protecting our national security, our veteran's rights, the mentoring of youth, and caring for the dignity of our flag. By doing just those four things, you have made yourself remarkable and will continue to be relevant. I know for a fact that my generation and the generation behind me and the generation behind them have grown up, many of us in single parent homes. If we ever knew our grandparents, it was probably by seeing them twice a year.

You've never been more relevant, more valuable, more important and irreplaceable than you are now to a generation that is hungry to see a living example of character and integrity, standing for something instead of falling for everything. So, I am proud to stand with you today, as you are a shining example of the road less traveled. God bless you. Thank you for having me here today and please come see me in the exhibit hall. Let's raise a bunch of money for the American Legacy Scholarship for those kids and help me to help you spread the word about the relevance of a timeless organization I've come to know as The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Our next guest has a most distinguished career as both a warrior and a teacher. After earning his commission through ROTC and Louisiana State University, he became an instructor at the Infantry Training Command (Provisional) United States Army Training Center Infantry, Fort Ord, California. After completing his Special Forces Training, he served in Vietnam as a Commander and as an instructor. His succeeding commands included: Combat Support Company in the 2nd Armored Division, Fort Hood, Texas; an armored battalion in the 3rd Armored Division, United States Army, Europe; and a heavy brigade in the 2nd Infantry Division 8th Army, Korea. He was Commanding General of the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado and the Commanding General of the 8th Army, Republic of Korea. Welcome General Charles C. Campbell.

Address: General Charles C. Campbell
Commanding General of U.S. Army Forces Command

What a wonderful day it has been. I can tell you, growing up in the Kinin Breaks and bayous of Louisiana, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, I would have never had imagined that I would ever have the opportunity to speak to such a wonderful gathering of patriots immediately after the President. I feel a little bit like, Elizabeth Taylor's sixth husband on

the night of their marriage. *[Laughter.]* You know where I'm going with this. I know what I'm suppose to do, I'm just not sure I can make it interesting.

Indeed, it is a wonderful day to be with patriots, people who have an abiding love for our country and who have an abiding love for those who serve our country, patriots who value that, which should be valued, God, country, family, friends, communities. Indeed, on this day there are a number of things I could talk about, but when American soldiers are answering our nation's call, when American soldiers in distant and dangerous places are in harm's way and when American soldiers are confronting the threats to our nation and our nation's interest on this day, I want to talk about the special relationship between the American people and the American military, specifically between the American people and the American Army. I want to talk about the threats that the American Army confronts and, lastly, I just want to say thank you for your support to those who serve American uniform.

You can be proud this day. Yet again a new generation answers our nation's call and they answered that call during a seminal period in our nation's history, when our nation is in a protracted conflict against a ruthless and determined foe. Thomas Payne's words, first published in the winter of 1776, apply now as they applied then, "These are the times that try men's souls" Clearly these are not times for the faint of heart, the frail of body, or the weakened spirit. These are not times for the "summer soldier and the sunshine patriot." These are the times for the resolute, the hardened, the determined, the perseverant and the bold. These are times that demand that the difficult and dangerous work of a free society be done and be done by men and women of courage, of integrity, and of character. Such men and women stand in our ranks today. They represent all of America in a mosaic of old and young, male and female, Hispanic, black, Asian, white and they stand together as one, confronting our nation's enemies. Importantly, they are bonded with their fellow Americans in ways that are unique to the American experience.

The bond between the American people and their Army was forged in the darkest hours of our newly birthed republic and has been sustained during our nation's greatest trials. It is a strong and enduring bond that has been a concentration of spilt blood of patriots from every American generation throughout our nation's remarkable history. Make no mistake about this, the United States of America is a remarkable nation, unlike any that has ever existed. Our Army is a reflection of that nation. Our Army is like no other because our soldiers reflect a nation like no other. There is no other Army and there are no other soldiers in the world capable of such fierce fighting and yet possessed of such compassion for their fellow man. And no nation except America can produce them.

America is a great nation, America is a good nation. It is a nation that from its founding has acknowledged its reliance on a sovereign God. It is a nation that is indivisible and a nation with justice and liberty for all. America and America's Army stand for what is right and for what is good. Throughout our history, as a nation and as an army, we have been willing to make enormous sacrifices to achieve that which is right and that which is good. Preventing people from being killed, freeing them from repression and horror and creating conditions so that they might live as men and women of free choice is something that Americans past and present willingly choose to do.

Americans who serve in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia, Korea and elsewhere throughout the world know the value of what they are doing and why it is important that they do it. These young men and women have willingly and selfishly stepped forward to confront the extremist and the terrorist who are hostile and hateful to all the values that we share and cherish. As soldiers, they suffer, they sacrifice and they endure and, as soldiers, they are prepared to go onto the breech, into harm's way, to confront the threats to our nation and nation's interest.

I will tell you that American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, animated by doing that which is right, have an abiding sense of purposefulness. It is a purposefulness that derives from faith, faith in their God, faith in their country, faith in their countrymen, faith in their leaders and faith in their comrades. And it is that sense of purposefulness that entails them to make the sacrifice, to leave their homes, their families and their communities, to put aside the instinct for self-preservation and to risk their lives in a fight with a determined and ruthless foe, to rise up as one and to do our nation's biding in the full knowledge that it may be their final act in this world.

What American soldiers are doing today in Iraq and in Afghanistan connects them with the purpose from these American soldiers to service members of previous generations. It connects them to you across a generational bond, a bond that is unbreakable. Previous generations of Americans fought to protect America and to preserve American freedom. In so doing, they generously gave the gift of freedom to those they had vanquished: the Germans, the Japanese and the Italians. They restored the gift to the French, the Belgians, the Dutch, the Danes, the Norwegians and others. Previous generations of Americans went to a land they did not know to defend a people that they had never met to preserve freedom for the South Koreans. Previous generations of Americans stood resolutely for more than four decades against the Soviet juggernaut and in so doing they won the Cold War and by winning the Cold War they secured the gift of freedom for the East Germans, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians, the Romanians, the Bulgarians and others.

More recently, Americans have sacrificed to provide the gift of freedom to the Bosnians and the Kosovos. Americans without precedent in history have asked for nothing in return, not oil, not wealth, not dominion, not glory, not even the enduring gratitude of those that they liberated. Americans have asked for nothing except for enough land to bury our hallowed dead. Ground covered now by silent white crosses in measured rows where the haunting echo of *Taps* has replaced the staccato of the machine gun, the crashing of the cannonade and the roar of the aerial bombardment, ground that is now sacred in places like France, Belgium, England, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Italy, North Africa and the Philippines, grounds sanctified by the blood and sacrifice of American service members. Know that America and Americans are special. I would ask you to give yourself a round of applause for yourself and like-minded Americans. *[Applause.]*

I hearken to the words of our two greatest presidents. First, President Abraham Lincoln, who on the eve our nation's greatest challenge said in the concluding words of his annual address to Congress on December 1, 1862, "We know how to save the Union. … In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free—honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth." This notion that the freedom of others is linked to the preservation of our freedom is also echoed in the words of President Harry S. Truman. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of West Point, he told the class of 1952, "We know we can't have lasting peace unless we work actively and vigorously to bring about conditions of freedom and justice in the world."

Pursuit of freedom for others is, indeed, a time honored American principle that continues to guide us in today's war on terror. Our strategy to protect America is based on a clear and enduring premise. The security of our nation depends on the advance of liberty and freedom in moderation in other nations. Accordingly, like those gone before, Americans today are sacrificing to give the gift of freedom to the Afghanistan's and to the Iraqi's. They are selflessly fighting to allow fledgling democracies to take root so that others can be men and women of free choice, so that they can enjoy political and

religious freedom and so that others can raise their children in a world where hope has replaced despair and generosity has replaced brutality, and peace has replaced conflict.

Americans are today confronting the evils of radicalism, terrorism, and extremism and this—as the President just a few moments ago suggested—is not new. Americans have done this work before. Earlier generations confronted fascism, totalitarianism and communism. The fight we have joined today is simply the most recent expression of an ancient struggle, the struggle between those who put their faith in dictators and tyrants and those who put their faith in people. The struggle is between those who seek to establish regimented regimes of oppression and brutality and those who seek to establish governments by and for the people. As we have done so previously in our history, we are fighting the followers of a murderous ideology that despises freedom, has territorial ambitions and pursues totalitarian aims. The enemy we confront is ruthless, he is determined, he wants no accommodation, he desires no compromise, he seeks no reconciliation, he asks for no quarter and he gives no quarter. Against such an enemy I don't think we can back down, I don't think we can give in, I don't think we can accept anything less than victory.

The United States is engaged in a struggle against violent extremist who use a selective interpretation of Islam as a means of pursuing political power in global influence. These Islamic extremists, these Islamic Jahadists are seeking to destroy Western culture and Western values. They are seeking to bring the United States and our allies to our knees, defeated in Iraq and Afghanistan. Expelled from the Persian Gulf and witness to the destruction of Israel, the foreign terrorist, the Jahadists, Bath Party sympathizers, the Islamic extremist, the radicalized militias, who wantonly kill Americans, who slaughter innocent people, who mercilessly kill women and children of every faith and ethnicity, who bomb and maim, are indifferent to the very existence of human life or count Americans to tire, to lose their resolve and to succumb to pressures to withdraw precipitously from Iraq and Afghanistan. They are counting on Americans to turn a blind eye to the proliferation of al-Qaida cells in Europe, in Asia, the wider Middle East, Africa and even in North and South America. And importantly, they are counting on their ability to win the internal struggle within the community of Islam, struggle that pits the extremist who espouses a radical or orthodoxy against the moderates who seek a reformation of Islam in an accommodation with secular representative governments.

In all of this, it is clear that the strategic objective is the political and moral will of the American people. They want to destroy American will and American confidence. They think they know us, they think we are morally weak and we will lose our resolve, but my view is that their knowledge is superficial and their understanding is shallow. To understand America and Americans, they need to understand Valley Forge in 1776, Gettysburg in 1863, the Marne in 1918, Midway in 1942, Tarawa in 1943, Omaha Beach in 1944, the Chosin Reservoir in 1950, the Iron Triangle in 1968, Anaconda in 2002, Fallujah in 2004. Our enemies are cunning, they are adaptive, they are determined and they are ruthless, but they are, in many respects, unknowing. They do not know with clarity the extent of our will, or courage and our character.

Frankly, we have communicated mixed messages to our enemy. I'm not talking about the useful dialogue within a free society, about strategic approaches or operational methods. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm not talking about the understandable and needed discussions of ways and means to achieve strategic ends that occurs naturally and appropriately in an open democratic society. That's not what I'm talking about. I am talking about the clear and unmistakable communication of American intent, commitment, will and resolve to win this war, the will to confront and defeat those whose seek America and the American way of life.

When Americans say, "We are going to win this war," we should mean exactly that. We don't mean a moral victory or victory in some abstract sense. The reality of more than 3,000 dead Americans in New York, Pennsylvania and the Pentagon does not allow for such nuances. When American say we are going to win this global war against extremism and radicalism, we should mean we are going to destroy those who would destroy us, wherever they are in this world. It should mean that we are going to go wherever we have to and stay as long as we need to. It should mean that we are going to be a nation at war, not just soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines at war, but a nation at war. It should mean that the most powerful, the mightiest nation in the history of the world is going to apply the full weight of its instruments of national power, with the full measure of resources to win this war. There should be no misunderstanding or mistake about our intent, or commitment, or will or resolve.

It is a tough fight to be sure, but it must be won and it can be won. In Iraq and Afghanistan, it can be won despite what the pundits may say. Clearly, it will not be won by the efforts of the American soldiers, sailors, Marines or airman alone. It will require more than a military solution. The solution set will necessarily have to have a diplomatic, political, economic and cultural component, but it will also have to have, in my view, an enduring military commitment.

To win in Iraq and Afghanistan will require that the Iraqi and the Afghan people and their elected governments do what they must do and do what they need to do, to deal with the divisiveness of sectarian violence, to reconcile tribal and religious differences, to mediate minority interest, and to establish a sufficiently secure environment to allow for reconstitution and revitalization efforts to take root and bear fruit.

The American soldier can create that opportunity, as the American soldier has done in the past, but the Iraqi an Afghan people must seize that opportunity. They must take the opportunity to reverse the drift toward more violence and polarization. They must take the opportunity to build governmental efficacy and inclusion. They must seize the opportunity to shape the future that they would have, not the future that others, notably Iran and Syria, would have them have.

I'm hopeful about the outcome in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is clear that the battle has yet been jointed again in progress is promising, but it irrespective of the outcome in Iraq and Afghanistan. You need to know that the struggle will not end there. There is a generational struggle, a struggle against al-Qaida, an enemy who has no state, no territories to defend, no national interest to protect, no need to be accountable to international law and no need to conduct themselves responsibly within the international community. The struggle will not end there. Indeed, if we were to withdraw precipitously, it may not be the end of a long effort, it rather might dramatically be the start of a new effort, in a much more difficult and dangerous effort to contain the forces unleashed by a premature disengagement.

It is to our peril if we forget of the lesson of 9/11, if we allow the horror of 9/11 to fade in our memories. That lesson is that we live in a world where a small number of people can kill a large number of people very quickly. The lesson of 9/11, if we as a nation and as a people have to learn it over again, is that the radical Jihadist will strike us wantonly and unhesitatingly in our homeland if given the opportunity. Not too very long ago, terrorists attempted unsuccessfully to strike our British allies within blocks of Piccadilly Circus, in Trafalgar Square in London. Do not think that for a minute that they will not seek to strike us in our homeland. The lesson of 9/11 is that the enemy we confront is persistent in the struggle we have joined and it will be protracted. But the lesson of 9/11 is also that the American people are resilient and brave. The lesson of 9/11 is that while buildings can be destroyed, values are indestructible. The lesson of 9/11 is

that while innocents may die, the belief and liberty never dies. The lesson of 9/11 is that while hearts may be broken, the faith of a better future is unbreakable.

There will be those in our society who have no stomach for a generational struggle, who will retreat to the false bastion, the false security of bastion America, who will seek neither to defeat the extremists on the battlefield, nor more importantly to undertake the efforts necessary to deligitimize their arguments, diminish their appeal, and create lasting divides between the radical and moderate Islamic communities. And of course there will be those in our society who seek gain by politicizing issues of national security. I don't know who will prevail in the middle of your American domestic politics, but I'm hopeful as I am sure you are hopeful that our elected leadership, irrespective of party, now and into the future, will arise above patrician politics and be equal to the challenges that we face as a great nation. I know that if we are to survive as a nation with our values intact, we will have to have leaders of both parties, now and into the future, who are willing to call upon all Americans to serve each other, to serve in our towns and in our cities and in our communities, to serve in our churches and in our schools and to serve in our military.

I'm not clairvoyant. I don't see the future with absolute clarity, but I can tell you this, with absolute certainty, that whatever may occur, you can be assured of one thing, that those in uniform will not be found wanting. The American soldier, sailor, airman and Marine will do all within their powers to protect America and the American way of life. They have endured long deployments, separation from family, and loss of comrades. They have fought boldly and courageously. They will continue to do so because they, like previous generations, attach value to valor, patriotism, competence, fidelity, duty, selfless service, honor and integrity. Make no mistake; those who by free choice stand in our ranks today are rendering splendid service to our country and to our countrymen. They are tough, hardened, competent, courageous and committed. They are spirited and they are proud. They are true to their colors, they are obedient to their orders, they are loyal to their leaders, they are steadfast friends to their comrades and they are selfless servants to those who have been placed in their charge.

If you remember anything from what I have said here on this day in Reno, Nevada, remember this: first be proud to be an American despite what others might suggest otherwise. America is not is what is wrong with the world. American is a force for good in the world. Second, and most importantly, remember this: soldiers are the American army. It is the soldier, well-trained, equipped and led, who is the embodiment of the capabilities that our Army provides our nation and it is the soldier with boots on the ground who is the ultimate expression of American resolve and commitment. I know you appreciate that your soldiers are on duty around the world and at home to protect this great nation and the people that they so selflessly serve. Thank you for your support to our army, thank you for your support to our navy, our air force and our Marine Corps. Thank you for your support to the families that so selflessly sacrifice to allow these soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines to serve our nation. May God bless the American soldier, may God bless those that love and support the American soldier, may God bless the United States Army, may God bless all our sister services and may God bless the Untied States of America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: It's our pleasure to have you with us General Charles C. Campbell, Commander of the United States Armed Forces Command. Thank you and on behalf of our organization, I present you the Commanders pen and pencil set.

It has been an absolute honor and a privilege to serve side by side with our next guest. She was elected the 86th National President of the American Legion Auxiliary in

Salt Lake City, Utah. Her theme, 'We Can Do It,' reinforced our 'back to the basics' approach in providing service to our veterans, our troops, our youth and our communities. She has held many offices in her years of volunteer service in the American Legion Auxiliary. We traveled the world together and I'm proud to announce that together, we did it! Welcome the leader of the nation's largest patriotic women's organization, a life member of Rock Memorial Unit 283 in Imperial, Missouri, National President JoAnn Cronin.

Greetings: JoAnn Cronin, Missouri, National President, American Legion Auxiliary

It is a real pleasure to be here this afternoon to speak to every one of you. On behalf of the 900,000 members of the American Legion Auxiliary, I would like to thank you for your service. As one of my department presidents put it, "I am free because of each and everyone of you," so thank you so much for your military service. Then as you took off that uniform—some of you were still in uniform—you joined The American Legion and continued to support those who needed our help. You're continuing to serve. Thank you for everything you do.

It has been a wonderful year serving with your commander. I want to thank you for electing him. I was so honored to be with him. As we traveled to the Far East and Europe or whether we were traveling in the United States, we walked together with our SAL Commander Earl as a family, promoting our programs of all three organizations. Special emphasis was put on the National Emergency Fund, the Veterans Creative Arts Festival and the Son's of The American Legion's Fisher House and the Child Welfare Foundation. We worked as a family. I have to thank you because as I traveled to many of your departments, I was fortunate to meet many of you. You were working together as a family and you let me join in that family and be part of that family. I appreciate it.

As the Commander said, my theme this year is 'We Can Do It' and we did it for our veterans. We were there in the nursing homes, VA hospitals, wherever we were needed, we were there to support our veterans. We were there for our military men and women. Many of our men and women have worked together with you in making those care packages and sending those letters and our juniors are right there helping. We can do it for our youth and we did it there, too. We presented scholarships to those young women and men, in some cases, who were going off to college this year. As I presented one yesterday, I saw the tears in the eyes of this young woman because this would help further her education. And that's what we do, we help those youth who need our help through our Girls State, Boys State, Girls Nation and Boys Nation. Then we do it for our community. We're right there when someone needs our help. We must continue to work as a family to do that.

Thank you so much for everything that you've done and thank you for giving me the opportunity to meet each of you and for your service to The American Legion family.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: On behalf of National Commander Earl of the Sons and JoAnn and myself, we say thank you to each one of you for the opportunity to serve you and the friendships we have made.

Just several weeks ago, National Auxiliary President JoAnn and the Sons of The American Legion Commander Earl, joined me in challenging The American Legion family and friends of our family to donate money for the wounded heroes recuperating at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany. It was made after President Cronin and I had the honor of visiting the remarkable young men and women there who sacrificed limbs, blood, flesh, but not spirit, of this war on terror. I set a goal of raising

$50,000 for "Operation Landstuhl" so that we can provide telephone cards as we have already done, DVDs, civilian clothing and other miscellaneous comfort items for the troops. The response has so far been tremendous.

Let me tell you about one donor from the state of Washington. She sent in a check for $200 and added an additional $75 from some friends. It was accompanied by a letter that stated, "My husband died suddenly one month ago. Two days before he died, he cut out your article in the *Washington Legion News.* He believed in supporting the veterans image." This lady lost her husband, but she still had the heart to donate to this cause that moved her late husband so much. You have an opportunity to make your contributions. Visit our Operation Landstuhl booth located in the lobby outside of this hall. By the way, we'll be accepting contributions for "Operation Landstuhl" immediately following the VA&R report on stage tomorrow around 2:00 p.m.

Next is another outstanding tribute of The American Legion family. I had the honor for three days prior to arriving here in Reno, to ride from Indianapolis to this wonderful city, to this convention, with members of The American Legion Riders. Much hours of hard labor was put into coordinating this ride. My personal thanks to T.J. Haynes and Uncle Dick Woods for all they did to make this ride such a success.

When people know what we do within The American Legion family, donations come easy. At one stop, I was standing at a gas station and an individual asked what was this all about and it was explained to him. He reached into his wallet and gave me a $100 bill. That same story happened at several other stops along the way. But it was evening when we were honoring at a VA Medical Center a fallen hero of the war on terrorism. A veteran of the greatest generation came forth and presented me a $5.00 bill and that $5.00 bill from that World War II veteran who was residing at the VA Hospital speaks of the importance of what this program is all about.

I now call on Larry Besson, Chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission for the purpose of an introduction.

LARRY BESSON: In a few moments we will have a special presentation by Terry Woodburn of the Department of Illinois and our Legion Riders, who just finished a grueling ride from Indianapolis to Reno to raise funds for The American Legion Legacy Fund. Lets start the short video.

…At this time, the delegates view a video.

LARRY BESSON: I now introduce Terry Woodburn from the Department of Illinois.

Presentation: Terry Woodburn, Illinois Department Adjutant
Representing The American Legion Riders

I'm honored to be asked to represent such a prestigious group of individuals, not only who are here but who also represent us throughout one end of the country to the other. This small organization started with a man and his wife in Michigan and a man and his wife in Texas, a short time ago. Now, from McAlester to Laconia, Sturgis to Daytona Beach, but especially Rolling Thunder from Washington, D.C. our numbers are expanding. We ride for cancer, we ride for children's hospitals, and we ride for veteran's activities.

But after about a 400 or 500 miles a day—I won't presume to speak for the rest of these individuals, but as for myself—when I put that kickstand down and try to astraddle that bike again, it's pretty tiring. As a matter of fact, you remember that when you turn off a car, and if your octane wasn't all that high, your engine kind of spits and sputters for

about another five or ten seconds. When I turn off my bike and finally get my leg off over from the other side, I hear that same noise, only it's not my bike but the bones in my body cracking. But we do it because what we do makes other people feel better. Tired or sore you get off, but then you think about why you're doing it. Your chin stands a little higher, your shoulders get a little straighter and you think to yourself, *damn* that feels good.

I want to talk about a movie. Anybody who rides a scooter will know what I'm talking about Anybody who rides a scooter has to see it if they haven't seen it already. I would encourage anybody else to see it who hasn't seen it. It's a movie called *Wild Hogs!* It's just an absolutely hilarious movie, particularly if you're a rider. I won't spoil the ending for those of you who may want to see it, but there is a rather famous rider who makes himself visible toward the end of the film. He looks at our heroes and says, "Hogs, remember one thing: ride hard or stay on the porch." I got to thinking about that as my wife and I were leaving the theatre. That pretty much applies to The American Legion. We heard our Youth Champions and heard the President talk about the American spirit. Ride hard or stay on the porch As we were leaving the theatre, I got to thinking that is pretty much the stamp of The American Legion. Through our leadership, through our history, every program we do through the history of this organization, we've ridden hard. I can't think of one thing we've done sitting on the porch as an organization and we can be very proud of that.

This Riders group will be no exception. It is probably the fastest growing program in the recent history of our organization. Mr. Commander, we started last year with a challenge, let's go to Salt Lake City, let's see what can be raised: how about $100,000? That's a nice round number. Man, that is a lot of money. But when it was all said and done, we didn't have $100,000, we had $180,000!

Great success leads to great expectations. Commander Morin had a more significant challenge in mind for us coming to Reno. He said, "If it was so easy for you to raise $180,000, let's see if you can raise $250,000." Well, Commander, I have to tell you your legacy as an outgoing Commander will be great. We will not have raised $250,000 for you. By the time you leave this stage, we will have committed to well over $300,000.

In two years of runs, what that amounts to is, by the time this is said and done, by the close of this year, these tired bones of so many riders will have raised over a half a million dollars for the Legacy Scholarship.

Mr. Chairman, before I turn this back to you, I know there is going to be some presentations made. I would like to ask our Past Department Commander Lois Gonzalez to come up to present you with the remaining envelope of Illinois donations. And while that's being done, I would like to thank Chairman Besson, the National Adjutant Bob Spanogle—who is a rider also and without his support this could not be possible—and our National Commander for allowing me the wonderful privilege and honor to have made this presentation.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KIRBY, Illinois: Commander, it gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Department of Illinois to make this presentation for $65,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let's hear it for Illinois!

This is a real vest that I have on, a little worn. I wore it for three days along with this mighty helmet. It was a great run. I may need another vest and helmet. Someday I'll get one. I wanted to ask at some point in this convention, for all you commanders, adjutants and finance officers to get in the huddle in the next couple of hours and see how much money you can put together. We are going to raffle this helmet and vest off as one-of-a-

kind, signed by your National Commander. So let's figure it out. Let's roll, I'm here! Bring on up those checks.

LARRY BESSON: Commander, we want to make a contribution. The Internal Affairs Commission met Saturday and Sunday and thought that we needed to make a contribution to the Legacy Fund. The Internal Affairs Commission donates $517.00.

...National Commander Morin thanks the following departments in turn after their presentation.

DELEGATE DELLINGER, South Carolina: Dollar amount $2100.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PETERSON, North Dakota: Through the efforts of our Legion Riders, we present $8,448.

DELEGATE WARNKEN, Kansas: Mr. Commander. I want to introduce you to Francis Swensen. She's known as our 'Biker Babe' for the Department of Kansas. She took on the challenge and rode on the back of the department adjutant's motorcycle in the parade. That's quite a challenge. She accumulated $1,592. We have a pledge from Garden City Post 9 for $1,000. The total contributions from the Department of Kansas are $16,662.24.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARNETT, Georgia: Commander on behalf of the Department of Georgia family, I want to turn in today $7,400 for this year, that gives us $18,750 with a promise of $2,000 more that's in the bank. That's going to put us over $20,000 from the Department of Georgia family.

DELEGATE COPHER, Minnesota: On behalf of The American Legion Family and the great state of Minnesota, we present you with a check for $500.

DELEGATE MARSHALL, France: Bill Marshall from the Department of France. When the National Commander was visiting us in Germany, I promised him that I would support this Legacy Run with a dollar for each mile that they rode, 2,100. That was accomplished and was accomplished so fast that it made my head swim. In turn, I turned around and donated $100.00 toward it. My chaplain donated $100 and our Auxiliary took the can out and got more money out of us for $124. We sent national a check for $2,424, but since I've been here I've been able to scrounge up a little bit more out of these people. I have a check from my affiliate China Post 1 commander for $500.

I have another check for $120.00 from one of our members, Robert Feuling and another $100.00 check from Lionel Morais. That comes to total of $3,149. I don't like that odd number, so I'm going to give another $1.00 to make it $3,150.00 for the Department of France and China Post 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAGGAN, France: Mr. Commander. Doug Haggan, Department of France and Secretary to FODPAL. At our FODPAL breakfast yesterday morning we took up a collection and in five minutes we collected $431 to go to this cause.

DELEGATE NEYLON, New Hampshire: On behalf of the Department of New Hampshire, I'm proud to give you a check for $2,553.00. And further from Post 63, home post of Past Department Commander Don Small, $2,500.00, which gives us over $5,000.00 for your project.

DELEGATE TURNER, Alabama: On behalf of The American Legion Riders and The American Legion Family of the great state of Alabama, I present a check for $7,130.01.

DELEGATE WRIGHT, Connecticut: Gerry Wright, Legion Riders, state of Connecticut. On behalf of the Legions Riders state chapter, North Grosvenordale, 4th District, and TSI Harley for getting me here and returned, I hope. I promised you in Indianapolis we had a check for about $12,000. We have grown on that a little bit. It was

an honor riding with you out here and look forward to another nice ride again next year. I present you with a check for $16,120.

Commander Morin, also when you attended Connecticut, I gave you the entire set of teddy bears that I had been using for our very serious program 'Heroes to Hometowns.' I got so much grief from the Legion Riders and the Patriot Guard since they wanted their own bear. I've been using this latest bear and it's only about a month old. So here it is and you're receiving one today.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILLER, Pennsylvania: On behalf of the Department of Pennsylvania, here is a check for $918.00 in addition to what the Legion Riders have donated which brings our total to close to $5,000.

DELEGATE HERBISON, Wisconsin: through the efforts of The American Legion Riders, Department of Wisconsin, here is a check for $5,000.25.

DELEGATE ROBERTSON, Virginia: Five riders came from Virginia with us. We've already given you $6,000 and as the first department commander in the nation ever to be at the controls to make the ride from Indy to Reno, we want to raise that for a total of over $10,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COFFMAN, Kentucky: From the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the Legion Family, we collected $2,227 in checks and cash. I got $18 from a waitress in Elco [Illinois?] and it meant some ever penny she got.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LANDKAMER, Nebraska: On behalf of the Department of Nebraska, American Legion Riders and the great people of Nebraska, I present this check for $8,000 an imitation check along with $1,500 we collected while in Grand Island. The contributions are still coming in, so this represents $9,500 from the Department of Nebraska.

DELEGATE STOKES, Ohio: Commander, on behalf of just the Legion Riders from Lake Milton, Ohio Post 737, $955; Akron, Ohio, Chapter 566, $6,000; Streetsboro Post 865 Riders, $500.00 and another donation at $228.65. I've got checks totaling $7,683.65.

DELEGATE MITRAS, New York: On behalf of the Department of New York, I'd like to contribute $10,000 to the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

MR. BAXLEY, Texas: Chuck Baxley, Director of the American Legion Riders Camilla Post 629, a town so small we don't even have our own zip code or a red light in our county. But we raised $500. Since June of last year, we have sent $15,000 worth of care packages to our troops overseas.

MR. HAYNES, Texas: My wife, Wanda Dakota Haynes, and I have a coin here for you from Converse, Texas. The coin says, "Where in the hell is Converse, Texas?" Well, we're going to show you. We have down there the William Randolph Post 593. They are near Fort Sam [Houston] and support the Heroes to Hometowns program. They ride every Patriot Guard and Patriot Guard Riders mission. In their spare time, they do a little fundraising for the Legacy fund. We started the year with 100, now have 150 riders. On behalf of the 593, I present you with a check for $20,000.

DELEGATE HORN, Alaska: On behalf of the Alaska Riders, I present to you checks totaling $2,950 at this time and there is more coming.

DELEGATE GUTZMAN, Nevada for Tennessee: It has been a distinct privilege to be able to be a host for the American Legacy Run when it came into my home state of Nevada with all the festivities for all the Legion Riders. Our department has already sent in money. I presented the check from my post when the Run came in. I was asked by one of the Riders who came across the country, but had to go home early, to present a check from his Post 88 Legion Riders from Donnelly, Tennessee, the great volunteer state. I'm truly honored that they asked me to do that.

DELEGATE MORMAN OHIO:. Is there anybody out there [in the audience] from the 'Buckeye' state? Can we hear you? *[Cheering.]*You heard Ray a few minutes ago give $7,000 from the Riders in two districts. I'm aware of over $12,000 that has been given by Riders from the other ten districts. Now, on behalf of the Charities, Inc. and all the posts in the great 'Buckeye' state, I'm presenting a check for $60,000.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Commander, several times when we stopped individuals, they gave us some money, just because we were Legion Riders. When I got to my hotel, I met a veteran of World War II who was a Higgins Boat Commander during Iwo Jima. Bob Madden from Fort Lauderdale, Florida donated $100 to Legacy Fund.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: As of this moment the total amount collected for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship, for those children of our fallen heroes since 9/11 together this American Legion family, with its most prominent American Legion Riders have collected $460,301.91.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Through his career he has fought for a strong national defense in an aggressive approach to combating terrorist. He also stands for increased parental control in educational choice and quality health care for Nevada's seniors and veterans. Raised in northern Nevada, he attended the University of Las Vegas and earned a Bachelors Degree from Oregon State University. He received his Doctorate of Veterinarian Medicine degree from Colorado State University. He has served the people of Nevada from his days as a veteran small business owner, a U.S. Congressman to his present role as the 24th Senator from Nevada. Join me in welcoming the Honorable John Ensign.

Address: The Honorable John Ensign
Nevada, United States Senator

I welcome you to Reno, Nevada. It truly is an honor to address such an esteemed group of Americans. Ronald Reagan once said, "Those who say that we are in a time when there are no heroes just didn't know where to look." I cannot imagine standing before a finer group of our citizens. You and those serving around the world for freedom today are my heroes and I thank you for that. I applaud your service, your patriotism and your continued commitment to this country. I also want to thank the members of the American Legion Auxiliary for their devotion to almost 90 years of service.

Every year, I attend Memorial Day ceremonies in southern Nevada at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Ceremony. It always is a moving ceremony, but this year was just a little different. There was a veteran in his eighties. He had almost no eyesight and he joined us at the end to play his bugle. He said that it was most of what he had left in the world and played *Taps* like I've never heard it before. Each note seemed to represent something. It seemed to represent a memory of his service, a comrade, or a feeling in his heart that he had for our country. It was an incredibly moving experience and something that I won't soon forget. It reminded me how special that our veterans truly are, how much they have sacrificed for this country and how much their lives were touched and changed forever. You don't just return from military service and leave those experiences behind; they become part of the rest of your life.

I've also heard from some of our newest veterans, those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. I had the privilege recently meeting a young man who had lost his leg in Iraq and returned home with shrapnel, literally, in several parts of his body. He earned four Purple Hearts during his missions while over in Iraq. I was overwhelmed by his patriotism and his courage. By the way, he comes from a family of thirteen, eleven of

who served in the military. He told me that he could deal with the physical challenges. He even said that losing a leg wasn't that big of a deal to him. But he said that it was the mental anguish that had been the hardest. And he's not alone.

That's why what we passed in the Senate the Diagnosed Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act It is so important. This legislation specifically addresses shortcomings in the treatment and care of our men and women in uniform, as well as those of veteran's status. It tackles the inconsistencies in Pentagon and VA disabilities ratings. It provides more money for the diagnosis and treatment of Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and it significantly strengthens support for the families of those injured. This legislation also required that an initial mental health evaluation be provided to the veterans or returning servicemembers no later than thirty days following a request for such an evaluation. These are all critical measures to provide our veterans with the best care possible. You absolutely deserve it.

I'm proud since 2001 when President Bush became our Commander in Chief. I happened to be a new senator since 2001. We in Congress have increased spending on veterans by 77% and we've increased spending on veterans' health care by 83%. You'd be hard pressed to find a United States Senator with a more fiscally conservative record than I have, but when it comes to funding veterans, there is no time for fiscal conservatism. It is time that we make sure that we give you what you have earned and what you have fought for.

I'm in the political world. I have the freedom to fight in the Unites States Senate for ideas that I believe in. Make no mistake about it, I would not have that freedom if it were not for the men and women who don the uniform of the United States military and for that, I thank you. We must also say thank you to our men and women who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, who are fighting to secure us here at home and to defend our freedom. They are engaged in a battle against a radical form of Islam. These Islamic fundamentalists who seek to destroy us, destroy our country, annihilate our citizens and convert the world to their way of life.

Unfortunately, not everyone in our country understands the threat that we are facing. We have leaders who think that it is a better idea to cut and run from Iraq. They want to withdraw our troops, run home and hide. Thank God, we have a Commander-in-Chief who isn't willing to stand down and we have a military that is willing to stand with him. He understands that if we leave Iraq today, the battle will move to our shores. Not only that, but I believe that it would be irresponsible for us to retreat from this threat, only to pass it along to future generations. That is not why you stood up to the Nazis, that is not why you stood up to the Communist or other forms of evil that have existed in the world. You stood up to protect us, to protect freedom and to protect our future and that is what we must do today. We should do it together. This is a time of war and we need to be united in a resolve. We should not be Republicans or Democrats or Independents. It is time for us to join together and be Americans.

We should be Americans who support our troops with more than just empty rhetoric. We must also support the mission. Right now, with the surge finally in full force our troops on the ground are making great progress. They have found and cleared IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs. Weapons caches are approximately 50% higher than last year, due in large part to effective increased tips from the Iraqi people themselves. The Iraqi police and security forces have stepped up and are making great improvements. Also, the number of Iraqi civilian causalities are significantly down this year, and in a few short weeks General Petraeus, one of the best generals that we have come along in a long time will provide Congress with a progress report on Iraq. I met with him in my office back in

January when he was up for his nomination. I believe it is irresponsible for leaders of this country to begin calling for troop withdrawals based on speculation about the report that he will make to Congress next month, especially since United States Senate, Democrats and Republicans alike, unanimously supported his nomination back in January.

I urged my colleagues to show the world that we as Americans can unite, that we can put party politics aside and forge ahead as Americans. We owe it to the men and women sacrificing their lives around the world and to their families whose contributions at home are immeasurable. We owe it to you, our veterans. You fought for this nation, many of your brothers and sisters died for this nation and we must carry the banner of freedom in your name, for the eighty-year old bugle player, the young veteran of Iraq with his physical and emotions wounds and for the proud members of The American Legion. I salute you and thank you from the bottom of my heart.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Our next guest knows what being a veteran is all about. That's because he is one. He is a former combat pilot and decorated veteran of both the Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars. He served in the United States Air Force from 1967 to 1971 and graduated from the United States Air Force Air Command and Staff College, as well as the Air War College. He joined the Air National Guard in 1975, obtaining the rank of colonel and served his units as vice commander from 1990 to 1996. He transferred from the Nevada Air National Guard to the Air Force Reserves where he served until 1998. Since the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, he has taken a leading role in securing American's homeland. Just one month after the attack, he authored and introduced bipartisan legislation that became the basis for the Homeland Security Act, which created the Department of Homeland Security. Welcome the Honorable Jim Gibbons, Governor of the State of Nevada.

Address: The Honorable Jim Gibbons, Governor of the State of Nevada

Yes, I am a Legionnaire. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the state of Nevada. As a fellow member of The American Legion, I commend you on your choice and decision to choose and hold your 89th National Convention in the great state of Nevada. As the governor of Nevada, I want you to understand our pride and our longstanding association with The American Legion. The Legion's close relationship with Nevada did not begin in 1963 at the 45th National Convention in Las Vegas. It even dates back beyond the early years when The American Legion Post 12, one of the first all women posts, was established in Reno. Our association began during the founding days of the Legion at the Paris caucus in 1919. Similarities have joined our organization and Nevada ever since.

We all know the story of the beginnings of The American Legion, but few people realize both Nevada and The American Legion were created during the final months of war. Nevada was created at the conclusion of the Civil War and The American Legion at the close of World War I. Even Nevada's nickname, 'Battle Borne' and our motto, 'All for our Country,' could very well have been adopted by the Legion as the Legion's motto. Nevada is also known as the 'Silver State' and it was a silver dollar minted in Nevada that helped make Legion history. For it was an 1879 silver dollar, carried by Nevadan Thomas Miller, that was used during the founding of the Legion in the Paris caucus. Miller, while temporarily presiding over caucus, used his coin as a gavel. He reprimanded a general officer, "You, sir, are out of line and if you do not take your seat, you will be removed from this hall." Well, that's a pretty audacious statement for a captain, even a colonel would have a hard time finding a challenge to say something like

that to a general, but it lead to a very important meaning. There is no rank among us. That was their goal.

In honor of both this heritage and today's occasion, I would like to present Commander Morin with a commemorative medallion. It was minted in the historic coin press Number 1 in Carson City, Nevada, in honor of this 89th Legion Convention. It is much the same size, much the same weight as that 1879 dollar carried by Honorary Past National Commander Miller. This medallion was struck to honor The American Legion's 89th National Convention and the Legion's long-standing legacy in Nevada and our country. Commander Morin, it is my honor to present to you coin number 1 from the medallion.

Your American Legion, my American Legion, is truly an American institution with a vision of America focused on a strong national security, taking care of our veterans, mentoring youth and promoting patriotism and honor. The Legion of today remains a corner stone of our nation. It is though your community support and through activities such as The American Legion's Rifle Shooting, Baseball, Boy Scouts and Boys State that you serve to educate and inspire the future leaders of America. Like thousands of others, I was inspired by the attendance at Boys State in 1961. Like many other young Americans, my son's future was changed by his attendance two years ago at Boys State. This American Legion legacy will endure for generations to come as will your leadership, both as individual Legionnaires and as an organization that serves as an example for all Americans. Throughout my public life as an elected official, I have known that The American Legion could always be found ready to support our troops and eager assist our veterans.

I am proud to be a member of the Legion, to support our troops deployed in the global war on terrorism and other military missions in other parts throughout the world. Our support of the American soldier has been steadfast since our founding. Joining us today are about fifty members of the Nevada National Guard who are veterans of the global war on terrorism. These young men and women have answered the call, the call to state and the call to nation to protect us all. Since 9/11 the Nevada Air National Guard has flown more than 1,000 sorties around the globe in support of the global war on terror. More than 350 Air Medals have been awarded or are being awarded today, to the Nevada Air National Guard, and since 9/11 the Nevada Army Guard has been awarded more than 200 Combat Action Badges and has safely driven more than 3 million miles in the Middle East.

These men and women deserve our unwavering support. They are following in our footsteps as warriors and heroes for today and tomorrow. We must make sure that their sacrifices are never forgotten today, tomorrow, ever. I would like to have these young men and women from the Nevada Guard stand for a moment so that we can express our token of our gratitude for their service.

As these young men and women become the veterans of tomorrow, I am confident The American Legion, our American Legion, will be there to support and assist them. For as Michael Peterson so eloquently told us in his song that we heard today, it is not just something that we do, it is who we are. We proudly wore the uniform and we will do our part because we love our country and it lives not just on our lips, but deep in our hearts. It is not just what we do, it is who we are.

Once again on behalf of Nevada's more than 300,000 veterans and every citizen in this state, I want to thank you for your service to our country, your membership in The American Legion and everything you do as Legionnaires to make our country great, to make our country safe, to make our veterans whole. Welcome to Nevada and have a wonderful convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: You might say that our next guest has lived several lives in one. He has over thirty-five years of entrepreneurial, executive and governmental experience throughout Nevada. He was elected mayor of Reno in November 2002. He has served as lieutenant governor of Nevada from 1982 to 1986. He is the Chairman of the Board of Cashell Enterprises, a Hotel/Casino/Resort Management Company and he owns Alamo Travel Center and the Topaz Lodge and Casino. However, it is his vision of economic development for Reno community that has become his trademark as a public servant. Give a friendly welcome to our host for the 89th Annual Convention of The American Legion, the Honorable Robert Cashell.

Greetings: The Honorable Robert Cashell, Mayor of Reno, Nevada

I am very thrilled and honored to be able to welcome you to the 'Biggest Little City in the World.' We want you to have a great time while you are here and hope you get outside these compounds that are in here and see some of the territory. Go up to historical Virginia City and you'll see a little bit of Lake Tahoe. Try some of our fabulous restaurants in the hotels around town. We have a beautiful museum of art that we hope you'll be able to visit. We built a white water rafting course. The Commander said, "Mr. Mayor, we might come to Reno, if you'll get in the kayak." Do you know how big a kayak is? I'm almost 70-years old, weight 270 pounds. Can you see me in a kayak? Luckily he didn't make me get in one.

Welcome to Reno and have a wonderful time while you're here. If there is anything we can do to help you, please let us know. Get out, see the scenery and take care of your business. We know you're doing great things. I'm tickled to death at what you've raised. I didn't know you were raising money today, so from Reno, Nevada, for your Legacy Fund, here is $500.00. *[Applause.]*

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: You can come back any time you want while we're here. Let me present you with the National Commander's pen and pencil set. Thank you and this community for being such gracious hosts while we are here.

Working with his fellow Legionnaires is his passion, whether working as the adjutant of Post 4 or to leading the post development and revitalization efforts as the department membership chairman or serving on the National Constitution and By-laws Committee. Our next guest is dedicated to improving the quality of life of our veterans, their families and their communities. Join me in welcoming the commander of the Department of Nevada, Tony Vaughn.

Greetings: Tony Vaughn, Commander, Department of Nevada

I had a wonderful time at the Commander's Reception the other night. I got Commander Morin aside and said that I had about a 45 minute speech. He said to cut it to two minutes and be quick about it so I've done that.

To the Legionnaires of the 'Battle Borne State,' to those Legionnaires who have borne the battle, a heartfelt welcome. It has been 45 years since Nevada has had the opportunity to host the National Convention that was in Las Vegas. This is the first time Reno has been able to host a national convention. We invite you to enjoy the myriad of unique benefits that we have in northern Nevada, from the pristine waters of Lake Tahoe, to the many historical sites, including the ruins at Fort Churchill, our ghost towns, and, if you get the chance, our museums.

We have at this time a very special flag of the United States flying over our State Capitol in Carson City, Nevada. This particular flag was flown over the United States Central Command in Baghdad, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, in June 2005. It was a gift from U.S. Army General Gerald Minetti to comrade Phil Brown and his wife Sylvia. Both General Minetti and Phil Brown are members of the Capitol Post 4 in Carson City. Sylvia Brown is a member of Unit 4 in Carson City, so you see here in Nevada, we do have a tie between our national service people and our American Legion. As our convention ends, this flag will come down and will be placed in its glass case and preserved. We wish everyone in The American Legion Family our best for a successful, productive, and enjoyable visit with us. It is our distinct pleasure and privilege to have you here. We thank you for our confidence in our great Department of Nevada for having us host this National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Our next guest's dedication to veterans and their families is his trademark. He has held just about every office at the post, district, department and national levels. His desire to serve our veterans, their families and their communities is as strong as ever. He currently serves as a Scholarship Chairman for the Department of Nevada. Join me in welcoming the President of The American Legion National Convention Corporation, Past National Vice Commander, Dale "Tiny" Salmen.

Greetings: Dale 'Tiny' Salmen, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Nevada

On behalf of the National Convention Corporation of Nevada, we are honored to be your host here in Reno. Nevada is the seventh largest state in the United States. We have much more in Nevada than just gaming. Nevada is a state that grows its own rodeo stock and its own cowboys. We have endless spaces with many stars, dust devils, wild horses, big horn sheep and view of antelope in our pastures. I hope you enjoy yourself during your stay in Reno. And remember, all our valleys are burning up here, so please keep Nevada green. If you need any help while you are here in Nevada, please talk to any member of the Legion family and have a wonderful convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: It is an honor to present to you the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. He is a member of the Leo F. Walsh Squadron 495, located in Indianapolis, Indiana. His tireless work has made a positive impact on membership and it has enhanced the image of the Sons of The American Legion. He believes we have a great resource in America's children and that we must move forward in educating our children about America and what it means to be an American. Welcome to our stage, Commander Raymond P. Giehll, Jr.

Address: Raymond P. Giehll, Jr., Indiana
Newly Elected National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

I brought with me an Auxiliary member, my wife of 31 years, Debbie, who is standing up here in front taking pictures. I also want to thank the Department of Indiana—I know they are out there someplace—for all the support they have given me this past year.

I also want to thank the Department of Indiana, I know they're out there someplace, for all the support they've given me this past year.

Proud possessors of a priceless heritage, that's how the National Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion starts out. And we are proud possessors of a priceless

heritage, and that heritage is you, the veterans of the United States and members of The American Legion.

Without your service—when you were called to service you went without question and served America when she needed you. Without your service there would be no American Legion and I would not be standing here today talking to you as a member of the Sons of The American Legion. For that much, without your service I might not be standing here today talking to you as an American. And I want to thank you for that service. I know you came home and you continued that service as members of The American Legion and I also want to thank you for that. As Sons of The American Legion we owe you a debt that I don't think any of us can live long enough to repay, but we can only thank you and try to repay the best way we can.

My theme for this year is "Making a Difference." I'm asking my members to go out and make a difference, especially with our veterans and their community and our children and youth. As Commander Morin mentioned, I do believe in education of our youth. They should find out what we know about America, all the programs of The American Legion has for our youth there to teach them what we know about America and why we love America, and I want my members to be able to go out and do that with your help.

When I was riding over here this morning I was thinking to myself about the friends I have who asked me of what relevance The American Legion is today. And I thought about that riding over here. I usually answer them and I think I answered them fairly well. But for the second time in Commander Morin's term this year the leader of the free world, the President of the United States, has taken time from his busy schedule to address The American Legion. If somebody tells you you're not relevant, you just need to tell them about that. If the president of the United States thinks you're relevant, we're relevant.

Again, I want to thank you for this chance to talk to you. Anything the Sons of The American Legion can do for you, feel free to ask us. We're here to help you. A year from now I hope I'm standing up here telling you all the great things that the Sons of The American Legion did in assisting The American Legion in all their programs.

Thank you and have a great convention.

Post Everlasting Ceremony

Eulogy: Past National Commander John M. 'Jack' Carey
By National Commander Paul A. Morin

America today is a little darker than it was on August 4th. It's darker because we lost one of our brightest lights—a visionary, a leader and a friend, Past National Commander Jack Carey.

In his acceptance speech in 1978 as National Commander of this great organization, Jack said: "We want our allies and all nations of the world to look upon the United States as a national that is a leader, and a leader to be greatly respected."

Well, Jack may as well have been talking about himself, because Jack was a respected leader in every sense. As a member of General Douglas MacArthur's Corps of Engineers, Jack was one of the first U.S. soldiers to enter Tokyo at the end of World War II.

As a Legionnaire, his commitment to veterans helped him to be a leader in the Department of Michigan, and ultimately, becoming the National Commander of The American Legion. Under his leadership, The American Legion fought for veterans' employment preference, a cause that was so controversial at the time that the United

States Supreme Court had to rule on it. And yes, thanks in no small part to Jack's personal efforts, veterans won.

More than two decades before America became engaged in the War on Terror, Jack warned against U.S. dependency on Middle East oil. This stance may seem obvious today, but it was far less apparent during his year of stewardship.

Although many Legionnaires were unhappy that a deadly lung disease bore the name of this organization, Jack used that occasion to declare war on Legionnaires disease. His compassion for others, especially the disadvantaged and those who desperately needed a helping hand led him to champion the Special Olympics.

We Legionnaires were not the only ones who recognized Jack's talent. The people of Grand Blanc, Michigan, often knew Jack was a hard working and dedicated leader. They elected him four terms as mayor and then re-elected him as mayor in 1981 after he had once again put on the 'blue cap.' He was a mentor to many veterans in Michigan and Florida, including Past National Commander Tom Cadmus who said that Jack always made time to talk with anyone. He was truly a gentlemen's, gentlemen. In his later years, Jack and his lovely wife of 59 years, Millie, moved to Plant City, Florida, a retirement community. Jack did not rest on his significant accomplishment. In typical Jack fashion, he made sure every resident in his community all had American flags to display in front of their homes.

Jack has now gone to Post-Everlasting after 82 years of service to America, his community and to his loved ones. He lives in our memory and we still feel the warmth of his friendship. We should rejoice that we were privileged to know John M. Cary, our comrade. The great poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was speaking of men such as Jack when he wrote, "The light he leaves behind him lies upon the paths of men."

As committed as Jack was to others, nobody was more special to him than the wonderful lady he met on a blind date in 1946. Millie was Jack's wife, constant companion, friend and the love of his life for six decades. We are honored to have Millie with us today. Jack, as a proud father of three children, often spoke of his family. We are pleased that their son John is with us today, also in the audience. Millie, we all love you and Jack. We will all miss Jack. Thank you for sharing him with The American Legion that he loved so much.

National Commander's Report to Convention
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts

Thank you for a great year in walking by my side in service to America. A special thanks goes to National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, Executive Directors Dan Wheeler, John Sommer and Ron Brooks and their staff for the support and commitment to The American Legion and especially to me. To my post and department, for their years of support, to a great slate of national officers, to my national vice commanders, national chaplain, my national historian, national judge advocate, national adjutant, national treasurer and national sergeant-at-arms and my aide, I say to each of you, thank you for a great year.

Without family support, I would not be standing here today. God has blessed Elaine and I with six wonderful children. We are so proud of them and they are here today. Our daughter Stacy, son-in-law Brian and grandson Jacob; son's Paul, Jim, Pat and daughter Pam. Our daughter Paige could not be with us, for she has just given birth on Friday evening to our second grandson, Joshua Paul. Thanks to two ladies, without their love and support throughout this life's journey, I am certain I would not have accomplished half as much. To my mother Lori Morin, to the love of my live, my partner, my advisor

and my best friend, Elaine, to all of you, thank you for giving so much to me and to The American Legion.

Thank you to the greatest anyone could ever ask for, two great leaders, Auxiliary National President JoAnn and the Sons of The American Legion Commander, Earl, for walking by my side this year. A special thanks to each and every department for all the courtesies extended to me this year. My motto this year was 'Back to Basics' and 'Together We Win.' You showed your support for that plan and by reinforcing our four pillars of our organization, we strengthened our combined voice to improve the lives of our fellow veterans.

As you know, the first pillar of our great organization is care of our fellow veterans. Through our strong perseverance, we have seen the return of joint hearings before the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. The House and Senate have passed the largest veterans health care budget in history, with over $3 billion increase that the President has promised to sign. You have continued to give by volunteering and by making donations to the VA and state veterans' homes. I commend each of you for this outstanding service. Together, we will continue to promote assured funding for VA health care, we will continue to support granting veterans the opportunity to use their Medicare card benefits at the VA and to revoke the suspension of enrollment of priority group 8 veterans in that system. For you know, as I know, a veteran is a veteran.

We now have a memorandum of understanding with Walter Reed Army Military Hospital, the first for any veterans' organization. The American Legion staff members operate an office on the campus of Walter Reed, serving as the eyes and ears of The American Legion, providing direct assistance to disabled servicemembers and planning in VA claims. We must demand from Congress a budget that is passed on time, not months after the beginning of the fiscal year. We have strengthened our efforts to assist veterans to find employment. What a better way to help our returning veterans than providing employment assistance.

That second pillar concerns the children of America. You once again answered the call to support the programs for the children of America though scholarship assistance, through The American Legion Boys State, The American Legion Auxiliary of Girls State, The American Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting, the National Child Welfare Foundation, temporary financial assistance and so much more. What you all do, everyday for the children of America!

The third pillar is a strong Americanism. You heard the President this morning. Yes, it has been a long battle. Hopefully, with his support, we will make those members of Congress understand more than ever, that a Constitutional Amendment to protect Old Glory from desecration should happen and it should happen now. *[Applause.]* We must continue to educate our children on the proper care and respect for our nation's flag. We will fight for the passage of the PERA [Public Expression of Religion Act], using our own resources, and with the help of likeminded organizations.

That fourth pillar is a strong national defense. You have stepped to the plate again. With the "Heroes to Hometowns" Program, we have an individual working in conjunction with the Pentagon, so that no young GI will ever go home without a buddy. I ask you and each post throughout America, that when one of those injured veterans returns to your community, be there to be his buddy, be there to welcome her home with great honor for her sacrifices, for America and this war on terrorism. Through our family support network, I've had the honor to read so many beautiful letters of what every one of you are doing for those families left behind. Whether it was putting a water heater in, adapting a home for handicapped accessibility, to painting a barn, to mowing the grass, baby sitting, you, the members of The American Legion, stood tall.

We must continue to stand by the President and advocate for adequate funding for our troops that is not contingent upon date of withdrawal or any other political rhetoric. Our support through Resolution 169 is unwavering. It must remain unwavering for those men and women serving in defense of America. I'm committed with you to raise $50,000 for the injured service members in Landstuhl, Germany by the close of this convention. I know that together we'll raise that ceiling much higher. We have signed a memorandum of understanding that partners us with the Army Reserves.

Immigration reform needs to be strengthened. We must not lessen our support until the laws and the books are enforced and our borders are adequately protected.

We must work to provide a GI Bill for the 21st century. Today's troops deserve an educational benefit as good as the one that was offered to you and I. Eliminate the $1,200 charged for the benefit and provide increased benefits to the members of the Guard and the Reserve. That is a challenge we must accept for those men and women serving today. We must not let our troops down. Please continue to be there when they leave by sending them off with honor and, more importantly, be there when they return to welcome them home with glory. We are standing tall with our troops and must not let anyone speak ill of them. If they do, we as an organization must demand an apology, because we have the brightest young men and women serving in an all-volunteer force, and they deserve our support.

You have answered the call in terms of raising funds for our many great programs, by raising over $1 million for the following programs: National Emergency Fund, $290,614; Child Welfare foundation, $619,457; Veterans Arts Festival, $118,000; the Legacy Scholarship Fund, including the donations up to now $406,301.91. It may sound like you broke the ceiling on my goal already, but we still need more, because we can do a lot more on this one. For Operation Landstuhl, $143,385. You, the members of The American Legion, to this moment have raised this year alone for all these needy projects, $1,580,757.91.

What a great ride to Reno with The American Legion Riders in all the work they are doing at the post, department and national levels. The Honor Guard at the Fallen Heroes Funeral, started by the Legion Riders of Kansas, is another great new service that has developed out of this great program. They have proven their abilities by raising money for the Legacy Scholarship Fund with these rides to convention. The Legion Riders have definitely strengthened this organization. Much appreciation is to the ad hoc committee for the future of the national conventions, which will include in the future The American Legion World Series, where feasible. This was not an easy task but they had a vision to bring these two great events together. I look forward to attending them in the future.

I believe The American Legion is Middle America. We need to stand up and be heard. If we don't, we have let America down. I challenge you that when you leave this convention, go back to your communities and do not sit silent. In any fashion, in any way, you need to stand up and be heard for what's right of Middle America. We need to mentor our future leaders so that they can continue to do the work of this great organization well into the future. It is up to each of us to mentor someone who will have the opportunity to stand on this stage as a National Commander some day.

Special thanks goes to Michael Peterson for the creation of The American Legion song, with part of the proceeds going to the Legacy Scholarship Fund. We made some progress, but we still must work on our Consolidated Post Report, so Congress and the American people will know all the good that The American Legion does on behalf of America. I always look to those standing with us, in service to our troops, such as we saw at our Washington conference this year, such as the *ABC* show *Extreme Makeover Home*

Edition actress Tanya McQueen or Hal Koster, the founder of the Friday night dinners in D.C. for our wounded troops and their families.

Once again, you have shown that The American Legion is not a dying organization. We are at a 100% plus with over 11,000 members above the close of books of 2006. We are a growing organization, here to stay, to serve the Americans veterans, more than ever. Membership will continue to grow by the great work that you are doing within these programs. But I ask you to ask friends and families to join our ranks. So let's get together with recruiting members for our organization. No one person can do it alone. Let's continue to grow and reach 3 million members once again.

During this journey as your National Commander, we have visited all 55 departments and some twice this year. We visited the troops overseas and in foreign countries. We walked the halls of Congress in support of our legislative agenda. We sat down and talked to ambassadors, generals, cabinet secretaries, as well as the President of the United States and the President of Taiwan. We visited our wounded warriors at Walter Reed, Bethesda and Landstuhl.

As I represented our great organization as your National Commander, I was humbled by the responsibility that you bestowed upon me at last year's convention in Salt Lake City. As I visited our departments and posts and saw firsthand the great people that make up The American Legion family, I couldn't help but feel a sense of pride and reassurance, knowing that both of my grandsons are blessed to be born in a country where they have an opportunity to become whatever they choose. I fully understand that the men and women who have worn this cap over the years have made that possible. I am proud to be a Legionnaire. As I stand before you today, I thank each of you for your support and reaffirm my commitment to this great organization and to our country. I will continue to serve as an advocate for American's veterans. God bless our great organization and God bless America.

With 'Service to America' as our theme, The American Legion, the United States Reserve initiated a partnership this past January that is bringing both our organizations even closer as we provide service to the nation, our veterans, their families and their communities.

Our next speaker deployed to Kuwait in October, 2002, as Commander at 143rd TRANSCOM Forward, in support of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom.' In October, 2003, he was assigned as Director of Movements, Distribution, and Transportation, Combined Forces, Land Component Command Kuwait. From January to August of 2004, he was responsible for port and ground transportation operations for the largest movement of the forces since World War II. Welcome the Chief of the United States Army Reserve, Lt. General Jack C. Stultz.

Address: Lt. General Jack C. Stultz
Chief of the United States Army Reserve

It's a great day to be a soldier and a great day to be an American. It's an honor to be here. Commander Morin, thanks for your leadership and for everything The American Legion is doing. As the Commander said, just last year, I stood here before you, having assumed the role of the Chief of the Army Reserve. Shortly thereafter, we signed a memorandum of understanding with The American Legion for mutual support of our soldiers. It has been great. And today, I'm coming here to thank you for what you are doing for our soldiers. But I wanted to read to you a couple of quotes first. This first one says, "The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they receive the veterans of

earlier war, being treated and appreciated by their country." That was George Washington, 1789. And another one said, "A man that is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards." That was Teddy Roosevelt, 1903.

That is what The American Legion stands for, taking care of our veterans, so that those who currently serve and those who will serve in the future, feel appreciated and feel like their service is warranted. What I can tell you today is that your Army Reserve is doing wonderful things. I have a passion in my heart for a bunch of great soldiers out there that we call 'warrior citizens.' They're warriors for our country, defending our liberty, defending our freedom, but they are citizens back in your community, and they are sacrificing, giving up their jobs, leaving their families, leaving their communities to serve their country when they are called upon.

I command a force of over 200,000 soldiers. Since 9/11, we have mobilized over 180,000 Army Reserve soldiers. That doesn't mean we only have 20,000 left because we are constantly replenishing our force. But the Army Reserve I joined years ago, which asked for one weekend a month, two weeks in the summer time, that force doesn't exist anymore. Your Army Reserve of today as an operational force is part of the Army. I tell my soldiers when I visit them that they might as well take the term 'reserve' out of their lexicon. They are part of the Army. They just happen to be on active status one time and, in another period, are in Reserve status, but are part of the Army. They are serving around the world.

Currently, I have 27,000 Army Reserve soldiers deployed in 18 different countries around the world, doing great things for this nation. What I have the honor and pleasure of doing is constantly traveling and seeing these soldiers. During the past six months, I've had the opportunity to go to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Djibouti, Africa; Kosovo; Germany. I just came back from Korea visiting soldiers serving our country. I was snowed-in in Afghanistan with our soldiers from the 158th Aviation Army Reserve Unit, Chanute Helicopter Unit. Their sister Company, Bravo 158th Aviation out of Olathe, Kansas, had just come home. That was the unit that was deploying to Afghanistan and got diverted to Pakistan for the earthquake relief and then left Pakistan and went to Afghanistan. Their sister company, Alpha Company, was over there in December. I was over there and they were delivering Christmas dinner to soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division. Now here is the unique thing, those soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division were on the mountainsides of Afghanistan. You can't get to them. But my Reserve helicopter pilots flew hot Christmas dinner and lowered them down on ropes to those soldiers so they could have a hot Christmas dinner. That's taking care of soldiers and they're doing great stuff.

I was in Kosovo in February. One of my young civil affairs NCOs by the name of Sgt. 1st Class Cramer from Wisconsin said, "Let me show what I'm doing." He takes me to this little village in Kosovo. I go into a building that is kind of run down, a stark looking building. But I sit down in a chair and in strolls four violinist, two cellists and a pianist. These were young children from Kosovo, probably age 10 to 14. They play *Ava Maria*, and it's beautiful. And then a young boy comes in with a guitar and plays a guitar solo. Then the headmaster comes in and says that this was the pride of his village. This was his music school and the kids lined up to get in there. His goal was to have a concert for the village, for the community. And then he said that my sergeant did it all. You see, he's a Reserve soldier and back home in Wisconsin, he had a little bar. He calls himself a musician and he likes to play music. So he contacted Gibson guitar and the University of Wisconsin. He got musical instruments donated, he got the music donated and he started this music school in Kosovo.

Another sergeant came in and said, "I want to show you what I'm doing." He takes me about 50 kilometers down the road to another village and on the side of the hill are two buildings. He said, "These are schools, kindergarten to fourth grade schools." And he said, "But sir, the problem for one school is for the Albania children and one school is for the Serbian children. They can't go to school together. They are segregated, but we're changing that. We're renovating the schools. We've built a playground and the kids come out and play together" Then he said, "Give me six months and I'll have them going in the same classroom together." Those are soldiers making a difference.

In April, I had the opportunity to go to Djibouti, Africa. They took me on a helicopter out to—I don't know where we landed and got out. Out of the wood line come all of the Djiboution people, with their goats and camels and everything. Suddenly, one of my vehicles pulls up and out hops one of my civil affairs team. They handed me this inoculation gun and said, "Come on, we're going to start vaccinating all these goats," Pretty soon, I'm bending over these goats, popping them in the side with some vaccine and marking them on the back with a red magic marker. But the local Djiboution veterinarian came up and said, "Your soldiers are saving peoples lives, because this is our food source, and they are helping us keep it healthy. They are drilling wells so that we have water for our people, and the people of Djibouti love America." That area of the country is critical, that area of the world, because that in the Horn of Africa is where some of the al-Qaida types are trying to set up camp, trying to get a foothold. We're turning the people against them.

Another individual said, "You should meet Captain Steve McKnight. He's one of your Medical Corps Service Officers. He's down in Kenya, by the way and the people down there couldn't tell you who's in charge of the country, but they can tell you who Capt. McKnight is." Steve McKnight went into Kenya and noticed that most of the girls stopped going to school when they reached puberty. They weren't allowed to go to school and he asked why that was. They said "Because once the girls reach puberty, they can't share a bathroom and there is only one bathroom for both male and female. So we don't let them go to school." Steve said, "Well, I can fix that." He got some engineer support. They went in and got girls' bathrooms in all the school. Now all the girls get to continue going to school and everybody in the country is excited about this, and happy about it. And Steve said, "You know, all it took was just somebody making a difference." By the way, Steve was supposed to come in June, to Florida, but he's still in Djibouti. He said, "I'm not finished yet, I'm staying another year, I'm not coming home."

Those are your great Americans, those warrior citizens, making a difference for this country, and then going back to your communities and making a difference there. We need your support because we've got to take care of their families. We've got to take care of them so they can focus on a mission. Lt. Col. Tom Weikert works for a health care company in Arizona. Tom's total company is only about 19 people. It is Creative Healthcare Solutions. Tom got mobilized last year to go over with the 108th Division to be part of the teams that's training the Iraqi Army. Tom said, "This is going to be hard on my company, because I count for about 10 % of the revenue." But his boss, Norm Stalsberg said, "That's okay, you go serve your country and oh, by the way, we're going to pay the difference in your salary, we're going to maintain your health care benefits, we're going to take care of your family." So Tom nominated them for the Department of Defense Freedom Award, recognizing employers who go above and beyond for our soldiers. Next month I'm going to have the honor in Washington, D.C. of attending the dinner when Creative Healthcare Solutions is one of the recipients of the Secretary of Defenses Freedom Award for employer support for Guard and Reserve.

As we were sitting on stage up here, we recognized a lot of great soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen. We recognized a Specialist Billiman who lost an arm in Iraq. What he didn't tell you is he was an Individual Ready Reserve. He was out of the service and just part of the IRR and got called back into service. He thought his time in the military was done, but he volunteered. "So, okay, I'll go if you need me." And he lost his arm. He said, "When that happened, I can not go back to my civilian job in Arizona." He told me as we were sitting there that his employer in Arizona has already told him that he had a job and that they will figure out what to do with him because he has paid his dues. That's part of that square deal that Teddy Roosevelt talked about. That's part of taking care of our veterans that George Washington talked about. A lot of that is happening because of efforts of The American Legion and others that are making this country stand up and recognize the great sacrifice that our soldiers are making, and the great sacrifice that our families are making. You are taking care of our soldiers and you are taking care of our families.

What's the evidence of that? Last year when I stood here, I told you that one of the biggest concerns I had is manning the force, it's finding soldiers, it's finding people who are willing to step up and join my ranks and knowing that they are going to have to put their life on hold. I said that I needed your help, because if you help me take care those soldiers and their families, they'll stay with me. Well, I can tell you right now, my force is about 6,000 stronger than it was this time last year, in terms of in strength, but more importantly, we are meeting our recruiting goals.

Secondly, when it comes to reenlistments, when it comes to retention, we use to make our retention goals on the backs of our career soldiers, those who were trying to get 20 years of service and were on multiple tours. The soldiers we struggled with where the first-timers, those who joined our force who were on their first enlistment and were making up their minds whether they were going to stay or not. Right now the Army Reserve is about 155 % of its goal on first term reenlistments. We have reenlisted almost three times more first-term soldiers than we have in years past. That tells you that those soldiers know what they got into. They didn't sign up for one weekend a month, two weeks in the summer time. They signed up to defend their nation and they're sticking with us and they're going to stay with us. More importantly, the quality of force has never been greater.

I was in Iraq last November and promoted two young E-4s to the rank of sergeant, brought them into the NCO corps. One was a young man from North Carolina who had his Masters in Public Administration. He's a city planner back in North Carolina. The other was a young lady who just finished her Bachelors in Molecular Biology and she's working on her Masters. I said to both of them, "What are you *doing* here?" They said, "Sir, we're serving our country."

When I was in Kuwait in April, I was talking to a little finance detachment. I asked if anybody had any questions. One young E-4 raised his hand and asked about the anthrax shot. He said, "Well, you know they are making it mandatory again." I said that I understood that, but what was his question. He said, "Well, sir, if you understand the drug application criteria for new drug applications with the FDA and you understand the criteria of what…I said, "Time out guy, I don't have a clue what you're talking about. What do you do for a living?" He said, "I'm a scientist with a drug company." I said again, "What are you doing here?" He said that he was serving his country. That's the quality of force we've got today in the Army Reserve. Those are great Americans in your community who have successful careers, who don't need this, but who want to serve their country. They want to step up and they say, "I'll put my life on hold to go serve my country." And some of them are making the ultimate sacrifice.

I lost a soldier today in Iraq. I just found out. It hurts, you know. We need to take care of their families. We have the Soldier's Creed, "I will always place the mission first, I will never accept defeat, I will never quit and I will never leave a fallen comrade." We'll also never leave a fallen comrades family, either; we owe it to them.

I stand before you here today for all of those soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and coastguardsmen serving our nation. They are our most precious commodity. They truly are our next greatest generation. They are doing what they do because they feel good about what they are doing. They appreciate what they have in this country—freedom and liberty—but they also know that people care because of organizations like The American Legion that stand behind their soldiers, that stand behind their veterans, and who say, "We're going to take care of them, we're going to make sure they get a square deal when they come back." I appreciate what you are doing, because you sure make my life easier in dealing with my soldiers. God bless this great United States of America.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LAHIERE: In our service to veterans, we must always remember that our highest priority is the return of any living Americans who remain Prisoners of War. We are fortunate to have with us today the Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, which is located at Hickman Army, Hickman Air Force Base, Hawaii. He has deployed to multi-military operations including, Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, Operation Desert Shield and Storm and Operations Restore and Uphold Democracy in Haiti. His most recent assignment has been as the Chief of Staff, NATO, Kasovo Force in Kristina, Kasovo. Welcome Brigadier General Michael C. Flowers, United States Army.

Address: Brigadier General Michael C. Flowers, United States Army
Commander Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command

I know there are some people here from Hawaii, so Aloha! *[Audience responds with "Aloha!"]* I'm from Florida though, so maybe I should just say, "How are ya'll doin' this afternoon."

It's great to be here in Reno, and an honor to speak to The American Legion. Thank you for the invitation to come on behalf of the soldiers, sailors, Marines and navy civilians who are part of the JPAC (Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command) to give an update on what we're doing. I'm going to warn you right now, there is a pop quiz at the end, and so for your army aviators, you'd better take your pencils out because you may not be able to remember it all. And wasn't it great to hear our Commander-in-Chief reaffirm the national commitment to our nations fallen and missing?

Now JPAC is at the forefront for returning our comrades from all wars. There is a growing interest from a lot of folks to include many family members from the Korean and from World War II.

But before I continue, I want to ask a couple of questions here. How many of you are married out there? Okay, there's a few. Okay, let's try an easier one then. How many of you can drive or how many of you have driven? Okay, there are a few more. Do we have any law enforcement officers out there? I know there was a bunch here earlier. I just want to tell you a quick story about an elderly couple who were driving along and then were pulled over. The gentleman who was driving rolled down the window. The officer said to him, "Do you know why I pulled you over, sir?" He said, "No, officer, I really don't know why." "Well, sir, you were speeding." He said, "Well, you know officer, I think the speedometer is broken on the car." Well, his wife was sitting next to him and she says to the officer, "Officer, I drove this car this morning and there is nothing wrong

with speedometer." So, he gives him a ticket and said, "Sir have a nice day." Now the gentleman was a little upset. He said a few things to his wife that were not very nice. He's a little angry. The officer said that he noticed that he didn't have his seatbelt on. The gentleman said, "Oh, I think when I went to get my wallet to show you my license, I unbuckled my seatbelt." His wife said, "No, officer, he never wears a seatbelt." Another ticket. Now the gentleman is very upset and really is not saying nice things to his wife sitting next to him. Finally, the police officer had enough and said, "Sir, just be quiet; just settle down." He looks at the gentleman's wife and said, "Madam, is he always like this?" and the wife, without batting an eye, said, "No, officer, only when he's been drinking." "Sir, can you step out of the car, please?" *[Laughter.]*

It is really great to be here with you after two years in command for myself. I'm surrounded by patriotic men and women. We also have civilians at JPAC who are dedicated to bringing home those who made the supreme sacrifice for freedom. This presentation is a tribute to their efforts. You can see as an overview some of the things I'm going to talk about. But this effort is not just about JPAC. This is a team effort. We have everybody involved and have a lot of support. It starts overseas with the American embassies, to the host nation workers in the field working along side our folks. We have the DPMO, we have the Defense POW/Missing Person Office, we have the LSEL in San Antonio, the Life Support Equipment Lab and the DNA laboratory. They are all part of this team that works hard to bring those who are missing from our nation's wars back to their comrades and to their families.

Even your Congressmen are involved and are paying attention. Trust me, I hear from them more often than you would imagine. JPAC is a very healthy organization, even during the time when the resources are stretched as we are fighting the war on terrorism.

I'll review our review our programs and what we've done in FY07. Of course, I can't emphasize the over-importance and reliance on you for our family reference sample programs, and I'll talk more about that later.

First, let me start with the statistics from our missions this year. 2007 has been a busy year for JPAC. We've completed eleven of eighteen scheduled recovery missions to date. Two currently going on in Europe, one in Germany and one in France. We also have an underwater recovery mission going on in France, as well. We have a mission currently going on in Cambodia and we have six more recovery missions that will be conducted in FY 07 or to the end of 30 September. So we've conducted a total of 47 recovery missions and 12 investigative missions of this year. We've deployed more than 700 personnel around the world and not one day has gone by this year that one of our own has not been out actively searching for the loved ones of someone back in the United States.

Now switch to World War II statistics. We've had ten recovery missions for World War II, three investigative missions and three research investigation missions. As far as the Korean War, I think you are all aware that we are currently not in North Korea. That's a policy decision. If the policy changes we are ready to go back into North Korea to continue our operations there, but we've conducted two recovery missions in South Korea this year, four investigation missions and one research and investigative mission.

As far as the Vietnam Conflict, we conducted 35 recovery missions, eight investigation missions and three research investigation missions. As far as next year, we're going to have more missions scheduled next year than any other time during JPAC existence, and that's almost four years ago. We plan to have 70 missions across the globe. That would be, 52 recovery missions and 18 investigation related missions. To break it down a little bit further, as far as World War II goes, we're looking at twelve recovery

missions, three investigation missions and two research and investigation missions. Korean War, two recovery and two investigation missions. Vietnam Conflict, plus three from this current year, up to 38 recover missions, six investigation missions and five research and investigation missions.

Identifications to date, we've had a total 53 identifications this fiscal year so far. That's 17 identifications from South East Asia, 13 from the Korean War and 18 from World War II. We also have five personnel who we had further identification on who were identified previously. So, as the future goes, I'm working hard to improve the working conditions for our members which we believe is an interim. Many of you may be familiar with the fact that there are plans on the books for a new JPAC Headquarters at Hickman which will allow us more lab space and bring the teams and all of our folks under one roof to work together. So right now that we've got more office space at Pear Harbor, which will let us get people out of the decrepit trailers that they are currently in, and that will give us over fifty new work space stations there. We've also got a plan that where we'll have a Butler Building go up that will double the lab space and the floor space. That's one of the constraints right now when it comes to identifications.

As far as the budget, I think that many of you are aware that we had some budget woes last year. Thanks to efforts of your organization and you, I can report back to you that that has changed. We've had a healthy budget this year. After taxes, it's around $46 million and we had an additional plus of $4 million as well.

Let me talk a little bit about host nations' support. We can't operate unless we have support from the host nations. The host nations' support is tremendous. I've just recently had technical talks with the Cambodians the Laotians and I will have talks with the Vietnamese here in September. They continue to cooperate and provide us with outstanding support. We are developing new relationships in Europe which is directly related to, of course, World War II, and we're sharing processes with a new command that the Koreans have stood up that merits our command. We think that's going to provide a lot of help for us in Korea, because they have stood up and they are moving out very quickly. When they find anything remotely related to U.S. remains, we're notified and we get a chance to go out and investigate or excavate their discovery.

Of course, we also have great support from our Headquarters, the Pacific Command. Commander Morin, many thanks to the Legion for the support for the JPAC program, not only at the national office, but also at the state offices. I want to recognize them at this time very briefly, who have established programs for us in terms of the family reference samples. That would be the state of Iowa, Idaho, Georgia, Ohio, South Dakota Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. We look forward to recognizing all the states in the future as the program continues to mature. For those who are here and don't know, we currently have about 1,000 sets of remains in our lab that need a family reference sample to identify them. If you know anyone who has a relative who has not returned, have them notify their Service Casualty Office or they can get in tough with us at JPAC. We will help expedite a DNA sample. Of course, nowadays, it's very simple, just a swab of the cheek, put it in the tube and away it goes. There is no need for needles or anything for those of you who may be squeamish in that area. We've compiled all of our information on the JPAC DVD which includes a JPAC video which was provided to all of the women's Auxiliary states. Those of you who would like to see that, I can assure you that the ladies have a copy and this information is also online for those who are interested. It's very convenient for those of you who may be challenged. It is a great project for you to share and work with your grandkids on.

It's an honor to stand up here before you today. Before I do sign off, I just want to recognize the National with a plaque of appreciation from us, for the Family Reference Sample Program. Commander Morin, thank you.

...National Commander resumes the chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: General, it's my pleasure.

GENERAL FLOWERS: We really do appreciate everything.

In closing, I thank you for your devotion to this great nation, for the devotion to those who serve and for your assistance that you provide to the joint POW/MIA County Command, until they are home.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you, General Flowers.

Now I call Ken Foster who servers as the Nevada Department Sergeant-at Arms and Adjutant of Post 8 in Las Vegas. He's also serving as the driver of our distinguished guests and he missed making a presentation for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. So Ken, come on up here.

DELEGATE ROBERTS, Nevada: On behalf of Las Vegas, Post 8 of Nevada, we have $3,000 for the Legacy Fund.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: It just keeps growing. It's wonderful! I now call on the National Adjutant, Robert Spanogle from the Department of Michigan, to issue the call for the Convention.

Call for Convention
Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan, National Adjutant

The Call for the 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Reno, Nevada, August 28-30, 2007.

The Convention business sessions will be held in Reno-Sparks Convention Center Hall 4, Concourse Level.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The Convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year amending the National Constitution and By-laws and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it. At 12:00 o'clock (noon) of the final session or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs on Thursday, August 30, 2007, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and the five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the National Convention shall be by Department and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution. (Section 3, Article V)

"…Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention July 30, 2007, and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and one alternate for each delegate." (Section 3, Article V)

In addition to the above, members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote which shall be exercised with the respected Departments except that the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention. Section 3, Article VIII)

"Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote." (Section 4, Article V)

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and the manner prescribed by Article V of the National Constitution. The rights of the Departments to make accredited substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant provided that said substitution shall be officially certified by the Department Commander and Department Adjutant at the time of the certification required by the National Constitution or any time prior to the adjournment of the first session of the National Convention.

Alternates

Alternates shall have the power to vote only in the absence of regular delegates. The selection of alternates to represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respected delegations. The vote of any registered delegate absent or not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his or her Department.

National Executive Committee

A meeting of the new National Executive Committee will be held at the call of the National Commander within 24 hours after the adjournment of the National Convention as provided by the National By-Laws.

Department Officials

Department officials, unless elected as delegates or alternates to the National Convention, have no privileges in the Convention except as the guests of their respective delegates.

Convention Committees

Each Department is entitled to one delegate for each of the following committees:

Americanism
Children & Youth
Constitutional Amendments and By-Laws
Credentials and Internal Affairs
    Credentials and other Internal Matters (Section I & II)
    Membership (Section III)
Economic
    Employments and Veterans Preference
    Other Economic Matters
Finance
Foreign Relations
Legislation & Rules
National Security Committee: Joint Meeting (Includes
Aerospace, Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, Law & Order,
Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs)
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
    Claims and Rating
    Hospital and Medical Services

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, that completes the Call to the National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I now declare the 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN; Medsphere is a leading commercial provider of open source technology for the health care industry. Medsphere product offerings leveraged the proven Vista Electronic Health Record Development by the VA which has been field tested for the last 20 years in more than 1,300 health care organizations. The President, Chairman and CEO of Medsphere Systems Corporation truly understands the concept of veterans helping veterans. For that reason, he is this year's recipient of The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal. A former U.S. Navy diver, Under-Secretary for Health in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs from 1994 to 1999, he was the chief architect and driving force behind the radical transformation of VA health care that occurred between 1995 and 1999. He is also a member of The American Legion, Post 38 in Rockland, California. The American Legion chose this great American to receive the Distinguished Service Medal for his vision of leadership in veterans' health care arena.

Welcome Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, President, CEO, and Chairman, Medsphere Systems Corporation. Dr. Kizer, please come forward.

Guardian of Freedom, The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal presented to Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, 2007. Doctor, the podium is yours.

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal
Dr. Kenneth W. Kizer, President, CEO and Chairman
Medsphere Systems Corporation

I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this award. It is a real privilege for me to be here with you today. If you would indulge me for a moment, I'd like to introduce three people who have accompanied me. They are much prettier than I am. I can't see where they are but first I introduce my sweetheart of 43 years, my wife. We met here in Reno at Central Junior High School in 1964. We remained sweethearts—there she is. She was the Junior Prom Queen, I was the captain of the football team, an all-American story. On Monday of this week we celebrated our 35th wedding anniversary.

The second person I'd like to introduce is my mother-in-law, Mrs. Bettie Stottard Muncie. For those of you from Nevada, you know Bettie from her T.V. show, *Be My Guest* which was on the air here for 30 years, or something like that. She is still a frequent visitor and speaker on television and well-known here in Reno. The third person I'd like to introduce that's here with me today is my daughter, Kim Lanford. Kim was born here in Reno 27 years ago, last month. She is currently on active duty with the Marine Corps, serving as a recruiter in the 12th Marine District in Huntington Beach, California. Her husband, Sgt. Kirk Lanford, is currently serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines.

In addition to thanking you for this award today, I also want to take this occasion to formally thank The American Legion for several other ways that it has touched my life and contributed to the success that I have experienced. My father was a World War II veteran and served in the 3rd Army. Somewhere along the way during his time, he traveled from Indiana, his home state, to Oregon and thought that was a nice place to raise a family. After he got out of the service and unsuccessful farming in Indiana, he moved his family to Oregon. Unfortunately, he died a very short time later in 1958. He

left his wife and five children alone. If it weren't for the benefits that we received from the VA, our life would have been a lot harder than it was. My mother died a few years later and we became wards of the court. It was as a result of those VA benefits that actually put clothes on our backs and food on our table often. And for that I thank the role that The American Legion has played in assuring those benefits were available.

In 1968, I participated in Nevada's Boys State, again thanks to The American Legion. Of note, I lost the election for governor. In 1978, while serving on active duty in Hawaii, my wife and I purchased our first house, using the GI Home Loan Program, again thanks to The American Legion for the role they have in that benefit. And in the early 1980s, while pursuing postgraduate medical training at the University of California, San Francisco, I was again assisted by VA benefits as a result of the GI Bill. Again, The American Legion has played a very important role in that, making that available to so many individuals. So, I trust that it will come to no surprise—and I'm sure you can understand—why I am very glad to have been able make the VA health care system function a bit better during my time, recognizing that it remains a work in progress and much more could be done to make it serve veterans better than it does today.

I consider whatever I have done to benefit veterans as partial payback for the many ways the VA has helped me over the years. If I ever have the opportunity to influence the VA in the future, it will certainly be my goal to further improve the services to veterans and to reopen VA health care to all veterans so that all veterans have access to VA health care. Commander, it is a real honor and I'm deeply humbled.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The American Legion is blessed to have partners around the world who share our dedication to veterans and their families. Years ago, the Republic of China established the Veterans Affairs Commission, with the aim of serving all of our fellow veterans. They assist them in seeking and successfully medical care, home care, employment, and educational assistance. They also design specific programs regarding the employment and educational assistance for newly retired veterans. We are most fortunate to have with us today a man who had dedicated his life to veterans and their families. Please welcome, Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs for the Commission of the Republic of China, Lin Wen-shan.

Greetings: Mr. Lin, Wen-shan, Deputy Minister
Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China

It is my great appreciation for the first time to attend your 2007 National Convention here in this city, Reno of Nevada. I considered it an honor to meet the leadership and to host The American Legion on May the 30th. I hope they enjoyed their stay in Taiwan. I know many of you have visited Taiwan, but I still want to extend it to you sincerely VAC friendship. Please call on us when you have a chance to travel to the Far East.

The American Legion in my organization VAC, have built an excellent relationship all over 40 years. We enjoy the close association and we appreciate such sincere friendship you have offered us in the past years, besides appreciation for your leadership from your nation every year. We also maintain close contacts with your department and Post 49 in Taiwan. We appreciate very much every year starting to arrange our host convention in Taiwan, including our own departments and up to the national.

You have in the name of freedom to support us patient provisions, in support of all of my country, the Republic of China in Taiwan.

I want to bring to your attention and ask for your continuous support this year. Fortunately, the Republic of China in Taiwan has been a democratic country from 1960.

So we are trying hard to maintain our name from the contagious diseases like SARS and bird flu, as any country has been doing. Today, we are still excluded from the international organizational, WHO, the World Health Organization and the UN, the United Nations. I want to present to you, our dear friends in The American Legion. We all believe that all human need no doubt include individuals are created equal and in the Preamble or the United Nation's Charters, it's to the reaffirm faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.

Today, I'm speaking on behalf of all veterans of my country. We also determine our equal rights to participate in World Health Organization, in respect to maintain international relations in the world are for those who have the vote to base the part that they abide to determine the peace of our fellow countrymen. My good friends, we continue to need your continued support to help us in this regard. We appreciate what you have done for us in the past, and we look forward to having your continued support.

We appreciate National Commander Morin for his support for our country. I will extend to him a memento on behalf the president of my country. I ask Mr. Han Son to read the citation.

INTERPRETER: Certificate accompanying the Award of Medal of Cloud and Banner: "Mr. Paul Morin, National Commander of The American Legion, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the Untied States of America and the Republic of China.

"In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander Morin is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with Cravat, No. 3642, by the government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Declaration Regulations. Signed by President, Chen Shui-bian, and Premier, Su Tseng-chang, and National Minister of Defense, Lee Chieh."

On behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs in the Republic of China, Deputy Minister, Lin, Wen-shan, would also present to National Commander Morin, a plaque of the tallest building in the world to National Commander Morin

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Korean Veterans Association is a patriotic honored association that strives for veterans' friendship, welfare, promotion and rights. Please welcome to our convention, the Vice Chairman of The Koreans Veterans Association, Admiral Kim, Hong-Yeol, retired

Greetings: Admiral Kim, Hong-Yeol (Ret.), Vice Chairman
The Korean Veterans Association

On the occasion of the National Convention of The American Legion, I would like to convey to all of you, the sincere congratulations of the 7.5 million members of The Korean Veterans Association. It is my great honor and privilege to meet and join with you today in this beautiful city of Reno. Korean people greatly appreciate U.S. soldiers in Korea for the dedicated service. Now the Republic of Korea as one of the peacekeepers of the United Nations is making every effort to promote freedom and democracy and to maintain peace around the world.

Since 1964, Korea had fought in Vietnam, Somalia, Darfar, Afghanistan and Iraq together with the United States as one of the closest allies. Last year North Korea launched missiles in July and also conducted a nuclear test in October, which threatened

war. Now North Korea has become a threat to peace and stability of the whole world with its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The six countries including the United States, Russia, China, Japan and South and North Korea, have continued to make tremendous effort to resolve the North Korea nuclear problem. Until recently the six party talks have been held to resolve this problem. American Legionnaires, please understand the securities situation in Korea. I would like to ask all of you to give your continued support to our for peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.

Once again, congratulations on your successful National Convention and I sincerely hope that our friendship between our two countries and to organizations will be everlasting.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: On behalf of myself and The American Legion, thank you for our mutual friendship and for our kind visit to Korea. I present this gift to you and to your wife in appreciation.

There are many veterans' organizations in Canada, but the largest by far is The Royal Canadian Legion with more than 4,000,000 members and affiliates. From the time of its formation, The Royal Canadian Legion has focused its efforts on securing adequate pensions and other well-earned benefits for veterans and their dependents. Acting as an advocacy agency on pensioners' behalf, The Royal Canadian Legion works hard to ensure ex-military personnel and their dependents are treated fairly. Welcome the Dominion Vice President of a Royal Canadian Legion, Mrs. Patricia Varga.

Greetings: Mrs. Patricia Varga, Dominion Vice President
The Royal Canadian Legion

I bring you greetings from your friends to the north, The Royal Canadian Legion. We wish you much success on your deliberations and your time in Reno. Some of you know that I'm from Saskatchewan. It is pretty flat in Saskatchewan. As a matter a fact, some say you can watch your dog run away for three days. Now those of you have been to Saskatchewan know that's not quite true. Mostly you see the deer and geese with the Americans chasing after them.

Our Legion branches across Canada represent the same ideals as your posts do in the United States. We face many of the same issues. We, too, are concerned with our veterans, both traditional and our new veterans. We, like you, want to ensure that those who don the uniform of our nation get the care they deserve from our government. They served and now they deserve to be looked after.

Our entry into Afghanistan has brought home to many Canadians the continuing need for The Royal Canadian Legion and its support operations. With the arrival home of every wounded and fallen soldier, it has become evident to all that we are at war, that our soldiers, our sailors and our air force personnel deserve the total committed support of our nation. One thing for sure, when our troops come home, they know The Royal Canadian Legion is there for them. They also know that many of the services and the privileges that they experience as veterans are available to them because the Legion and those of our fellow veteran organizations fought to make sure they were there.

That's what we've been doing since 1926. That's our job in Canada and we know that is what you have accomplished here in the States. Those who have fallen in pursuit of democracy and freedom also need to be remembered. In Canada, we do that on the 11 of November. We promote that as a remembrance period. We ask every Canadian to wear

a blood red poppy through that period in remembrance of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The funds that we raise through the distribution of our poppies go to our veterans and their families. I know you have an awful lot of business to get through. I also know the importance of your business. We who have served must ensure that those who follow us are treated with the respect and the honor that comes from their willingness to do what has to be done. I leave you with the best wishes of your friends and comrades to the north. From The Royal Canadian Legion to The American Legion you have our deepest respect for what you do. As Canadians and Americans, we share a continent, but most of all we share the same core of values and the same commitment to our country.

I'd like to thank each of you for your devotion and dedication to your organization. Our posts and our branches are made of wood and stone and steel. But you, the members, are the heart and the soul of The American Legion. I thank you all for your friendship and your comradeship and your hospitality and I wish you the very best at your 89th Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Our next international partner and veterans service is also headquartered overseas. Like The American Legion, the Administrative of Veterans Affairs of The Republic Poland aggressively provides service to veterans in their communities. Its officer and volunteers are dedicated to national defense care for veterans, perpetuating their legacy in maintaining the memory of their fallen heroes. Welcome the Minister of Veterans Affairs for The Republic of Poland, Janusz Krupski.

Greetings: Janusz Krupski
Minister of Veterans Affairs, The Republic of Poland, translated

...Speaking in native tongue with translation.

The Minister would first like to apologize for not speaking to you in your native language, but I hope I can compensate that.

It is a great honor to be a part of The National Convention of The American Legion. As a minister of war veterans and victims of oppressions of the Republic of Poland and at the same time a member of the democratic opposition against the communist regime in Poland, I would like to express my admiration and gratitude to you all. Without the endless fight of the American soldier there would have been no freedom in Europe.

The common value system that Polish and American soldiers have, allowed us to often fight hand-in-hand. The Polish citizens Kosciuszko and Pulaski fought for the freedom of your beautiful country. Americans helped Poland to regain freedom after World War I, after 123 years of Poland being divided between Russia, Germany and Austria.

The U.S. supported Poland during the economic depression after World War I. Herbert Hoover was the one who organized this help, a great friend of Poland and later President of the United States. In 1920, the Polish Army, together with volunteer American pilots, stopped the Bolshevik Army in the Great Battle of Warsaw. We also fought together in World War II. In 1939, the Polish soldier was the first one to fight the German and Slavic invasions, invasions that would have destroyed the European civilization. The Polish soldier fought bravely against the Germans during the entire war on all fronts. It was the Polish people who broke the ENIGMA code even before the war started. Polish Intelligence efforts were also substantial to winning the war over Hitler's Germany.

That wasn't, however, the total victory over totalitarianism. Poland had to face Soviet occupation, although the majority of the Polish population hated the communist

regime that was put to us against our will. If the U.S. wasn't the first one to understand the communist threat, it would be impossible to win the fight against communism.

It was you, the American soldiers who fought for the freedom of my continent. It was you who gave your blood in the name of the name of the higher values. It is you to whom we thank today for the patriotism, bravery and your service to your country. We thank you for the amazing fight against the evil empire of Korea, Vietnam and other places. Thank you for the hope you gave us during the Cold War, too. Thank you for the support, especially during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who was so loved here and who earned himself a special honor and respect in Poland. It was because of your fight and your support that we were able to survive and the Polish freedom movement was able to be born, the solidarity, which provided the last hit against communism in Europe. Without you, dear American friends, there would be no independent Poland.

Let the memory of the common struggle and the common ideas we had in the past be our leading star for the common activities within NATO and also for the American-Polish alliance for the freedom and democracy in the world. It is a difficult fight, but in that fight you can count on us. May God bless America and Poland.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: He came from Poland to visit the United States and address a veterans' organization since the end of communism. I had the honor to visit Poland. I am grateful to the ambassador who brought together our veterans organizations within Poland to his residence so we could form a bond between The American Legion, the minister and the veterans of Poland. I hope, Mr. Minister, this becomes a long tradition of our organizations.

Certificate of Appreciation
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

The man who served as our National Chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principles of God and country. Rev. Stan received his Bachelors of Arts and Masters of Divinity degrees from the University of Sioux Falls in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He also holds a Master of Science Degree from Jacksonville State University in Alabama. He is a member of the Kelly Porter Post 70 in Flandreau, South Dakota. During his 22 years in The American Legion, Rev. Stan has held several key positions including, post commander and department chaplain. He served as the department chaplain for 15 years. It is an honor for me to present a certificate of appreciation, marking his year of service as an outstanding national chaplain. I present this to the Rev. Stanley J. Gruneich.

I have had the opportunity to talk in many places, but it wasn't until I visited the reverend's home and had a homecoming for him. He says, "Commander, I would like you to come to my church and speak to my parishioners," I looked at him a little strangely, because I've never been asked to do that kind of a thing. I asked him if he was going to share the collection basket with me. He said, "No, but my trick, Commander, is that I continue to talk until there's enough in the collection basket."

It was truly an honor to go to his congregation and be able to speak to the members of his congregation. But surely during this journey as National Commander, no one could ask for a great spiritual advisor, a friend and someone who always knew when to call or send an e-mail, for I will always be grateful for his guidance to me as your National Commander.

This Certificate of Appreciation is presented to Rev. Stanley J. Gruneich, appointed and served as National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2006-2007. Given in reorganization of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GRUNEICH: Commander said that I could say a few words. He still trusts me. I gave him a certificate, also in January, because when I asked him to speak he said, "No one will ever believe it." So I gave him a certificate certifying he did speak in a church one time. I do appreciate that time. I do appreciate being a part of the national team, to serve this man, a very great commander, one who called upon us to walk beside him through all things. I'm deeply appreciative of this opportunity and thank you Commander Morin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now, I call upon Past National Commander Thomas L. Bock of Colorado to present the plaque of appreciation to Salt Lake City, Utah for hosting the 2006 National Convention.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER BOCK: Wow! Once in a lifetime does one have the opportunity to actually be a national commander at a National Convention. For the 88th National Convention, we started off with the Legacy Ride in Indianapolis and went all the way to Salt Lake City. We had a wonderful, enlightening and encouraging and just a little bit of fun in Salt Lake City. Everything from the Support Our Troops Activity right out front standing up to make sure that they knew The American Legion supported the American troops all over the world, and were proud to do that. But the work performed by the members of the Department of Utah to put that Convention together was outstanding. In appreciation for all of the hard work of Bill Christoffersen, President of the Convention Corporation and of gratitude for the entire Department of Utah for the wonderful Convention we had in Salt Lake City, we all owe a debt.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to Salt Lake City
for the 2006 National Convention
William Christoffersen, President
The American Legion Convention Corporation of Utah

It was a privilege and an honor for us of the Utah American Legion family and, especially for all of the volunteers that helped us from The American Legion family, to have a successful convention. On behalf of the Salt Lake County that oversees the convention facilities and the convention bureau, we want to thank everyone for being in Salt Lake. The doors are wide open and we say the same thing. We would like anytime for The American Legion family to come back to Salt Lake City for another convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: If you haven't yet dropped off your contribution to Operation Landstuhl, be sure to stop by the booth before you leave today. I set a goal of raising $50,000 for Operation Landstuhl and yes, you've already surpassed that. We can provide telephone cards, DVDs, civilian clothing and other miscellaneous items for our troops. I told you earlier about the donation we received from the widow from the state of Washington.

Now let me tell you about another donor, a 73-year old amputee from Oscola, Florida. He wrote that he planned to go on a once-in-a-lifetime hunting trip with his son who was suffering from kidney failure. After hearing about Operation Landstuhl, he and his son agreed to put these wounded worriers first. They cancelled their hunting trip and agreed to take the money saved and donate it to this worthy cause. A disabled veteran himself, the father used limited savings to make a $1,000 donation. The American Legion family is full of dedicated and compassionate members like the people I've told you about.

We, The American Legion family and friends of our family, continue to surpass in providing some of the badly needed assistance items for the wounded heroes recuperating at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany. By the way, tomorrow I will accept Landstuhl donations from departments on stage. This will happen after the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation report, approximately around 2:00 p.m. Thank you for all you are doing on behalf of those wounded warriors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials & Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section I of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

To the Eighty-Ninth Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 26, 2007, in Room A10, Concourse Level, in the Reno Sparks Convention Center.

Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Chairman, and George West of New Hampshire was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (July 30, 2007); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five (5) National Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention.

All living past National Commanders are members of the National Executive Committee without vote and life delegates to the National Convention with vote, which is exercised in their respective departments. (Voting strength figures attached.)

Motion was adopted by majority vote that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Permanent Committee Chairman and Permanent Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on July 30, 2007, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 2,984 allocated as follows:

Alabama	34	Montana	19
Alaska	14	Nebraska	54
Arizona	55	Nevada	16
Arkansas	27	New Hampshire	30

California	142	New Jersey	74
Colorado	33	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	34	New York	169
Delaware	18	North Carolina	56
District of Columbia	9	North Dakota	27
Florida	149	Ohio	144
France	10	Oklahoma	34
Georgia	59	Oregon	32
Hawaii	10	Pennsylvania	231
Idaho	19	Philippines	7
Illinois	132	Puerto Rico	14
Indiana	118	Rhode Island	14
Iowa	72	South Carolina	36
Kansas	51	South Dakota	31
Kentucky	38	Tennessee	42
Louisiana	40	Texas	99
Maine	35	Utah	17
Maryland	82	Vermont	23
Massachusetts	64	Virginia	66
Mexico	7	Washington	45
Michigan	97	West Virginia	33
Minnesota	114	Wisconsin	81
Mississippi	27	Wyoming	14
Missouri	66		

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I think I heard a faint second out there. Is that correct?

DELEGATE: Yes.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: On the question. Hearing none. All in favor, so indicate by saying 'Aye.'

…'Aye' from the floor. All opposed? The 'Ayes' have it. The report on Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Jimmy Foster of Anchorage, Alaska, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met at 10:00 AM on Sunday, August 26, 2007 in the Grand Sierra Casino and Resort in Reno, Nevada. Forty-one (41) delegates assigned to this Convention Committee were in attendance, plus twenty (20) guests.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Jimmie L. Foster, a delegate

from the Department of Alaska, was elected Permanent Chairman. Russell H. Hanseter, a delegate from the Department of Wisconsin, was elected Permanent Secretary.

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion.

A unanimously approved motion allowed the Permanent Chairman and Permanent Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate.

The final unanimously approved motion authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

The Legislation and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

The Committee heard remarks from Malcolm Shorter, Staff Director, House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Mr. Shorter discussed a number of legislative issues and held a question and answer session.

The Legislation and Rules Committee would like to offer the Convention Delegates a brief report on current congressional developments impacting issues of primary interest to The American Legion.

The Congress went into its August recess without completing work on funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The American Legion is extremely pleased with the actions taken to date and will continue efforts to secure an unprecedented VA appropriations bill.

The House has passed its version of the Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations for FY 2008, which met, and in some cases exceeded, The American Legion's funding recommendations. The Senate will resume work on its version upon return into session in September. The American Legion will continue to press for enactment prior to the start of the new fiscal year.

The new congressional leadership of the 110th Congress deserves praise for its timely actions in addressing the VA FY 2007 budget shortfall by adding $3.6 billion in February. Shortly afterwards, a budget resolution was also adopted that paved the way for increased funding for VA in almost every line item.

To date, The American Legion has successfully defeated congressional efforts to legislate the prosecution of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom and determine timelines for troop redeployments. Resolution 169, reaffirmed last year at the National Convention remains the official mandate of The American Legion with regard to the Global War on Terror.

The American Legion remains actively engaged in the on-going debate over immigration, with clear principled positions that promote legal immigration and opposes rewarding illegal immigration.

Among the first official actions of the new Congress was the announcement by Speaker Pelosi (CA) and Senator Reid (NV) that the newly-elected National Commander would resume the tradition of testifying before a Joint Session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees.

Mr. Chairman, on September 20, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly-elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. This hearing will be held on a Thursday; therefore, members of The American Legion family attending this event should have an opportunity for face-to-face meetings with their elected officials.

National Commander Morin, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Alaska, I move the adoption of this report and the adoption of the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motion has been made and seconded. On the question. Hearing none. All in favor.

…'Aye' from the floor. All opposed. The 'Ayes' have it. The report on Legislation and Rules is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Kenneth Danielson of Iowa, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman

43 members met at the Grand Sierra Resort, Carson 3, at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, 2007 in Reno, Nevada. Paul M. Allen (Minnesota), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and made general announcements concerning convention activities. He then informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the status of the U. S. economy. The Treasurer stated the American public remains concerned about the overall direction of the economy with good reason. The slump in housing and automotive manufacturing continues to hurt GDP but we have not seen a slow down in consumer spending. However, positive economic signals keep surfacing as the 2007 business year progresses. The latest news is in the job category. The gain of 132,000 jobs in June 2007 and May's total of 190,000 new jobs erase any lingering fear that the economy's first quarter sluggishness might show up again later in the fiscal year. Expect hiring to continue at a healthy pace in coming months.

The Treasurer said longer term; we remain optimistic that the larger U.S. companies will make a commitment to invest in growing their companies after cutting their inventories to a level requiring replacement to respond to customer orders for goods. Finally, interest rates should remain stable or flat with no immediate change expected by the Federal Reserve. Increasing rates would also be very detrimental, resulting in price strength for our clients who currently hold position in high quality government and government agency bonds. We believe that investors should maintain broad diversification in their stock and bond portfolios recognizing that the economic factors facing the market place may rotate to out of favor sectors that are currently under valued. The prospects for a soft landing in the economy for 2007 overall, seems to have improved, accepting the fact that we are experiencing slower growth than realized in the past three years. The outcome may not be a recession in 2007, but rather a drop in earnings and dynamic performance of the stock market overall. Fortunately, the U.S. economy remains strong and corporate profits remain stable.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that the national dues be set at $13.50. A motion from Roger Messier (VA) was made that the 2008 per capita dues remain at $13.50. Myron Kirby (IL) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Dennis Henkemeyer (MN), Chairman of The American Legion Magazine Commission and Daniel S. Wheeler (Virginia), the Executive Director. Mr. Wheeler reported that the advertising representatives, James G. Elliott Co., finished its first year at the same place as the previous reps the year before—a little more than $8 million in sales. At the end of the second year, 2006, sales ended at $9.55 million—a record year. In 2007, with three issues left to go, ad sales stand at $8.3 million, on pace to exceed $10 million in sales.

We were hit with a postal increase this year that added $50,000 a month to our postal costs, which now exceed $5 million per year. On the bright side, we are in the process of renegotiating a printing contract with R. R. Donnelley & Sons, our printer, which realize an annual savings of $200,000 per year over the next five years due to increased efficiency of presses and automation. The Magazine has an approved budget for 2007 that is based on achieving a $1,914,645 surplus. We are currently projecting that the surplus will exceed $2.4 million.

National Finance Director Paul M. Allen presented to each delegate and discussed a nine-page seven-year financial review and forecast. He informed the committee that we had a $650,297 deficit for the year 2006 and that from our first run reports, we are anticipating a 2007 deficit around $3,649,320. Mr. Allen then informed the committee our first run 2008-surplus budget is $4,150,535, which will be approved during the October Fall NEC meetings.

Chairman Danilson reported that the 2006 Crowe-Chizek certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate prior to the convention, and published in the convention program, shows our total assets were at $143,527,296. He also informed the committee that our 2006 year-end deficit was $650,297.

Denis McEneaney (NY) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Tony Riley (IN) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motion has been made and seconded. On the question. Hearing none all in favor.

…'Aye' from the floor. All opposed. The 'Ayes' have it. The motion carries the report on Finances is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I now call upon the National Adjutant for announcements.

Announcements
Robert W. Spanogle, National Adjutant

The Western Caucus will meet in the Convention Hall at the end of today's sessions.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Legionnaires, please rise and joint me in a salute to the Colors of our country by the numbers. One! Two!

The time is now 3:33 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

…At 3:33 p.m., The Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Wednesday, August 29, 2007 at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 29, 2007

…At 8:30 a.m., the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, our organist.

…At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 89th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

As we begin our program, join me in a round of applause for Maestro Peter Ole.

The convention will come to order. Sergeant at Arms; lead us in a salute to the Colors of our country.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Delegation, render a right had salute to the Flag of the United States. By the numbers. One. Two!

…At this time the Delegates saluted the flag and remained standing for the singing of the National Anthem.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: For Invocation, I call upon our National Chaplain, Stan Gruneich of Flandreau, South Dakota for the Invocation. Please uncover.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GRUNEICH: After the entertainment we had last night, I decided to go back in the file to a retro one. I ask that you do not get a hold of me. I wanted to tell you about the meanest man I ever met. He reminds me of Commander Morin. *[Laughter.]* Don't get ahead of me! Okay. I was working construction and took it over as a project manager in Sioux Falls. I walked in the house of Bill Schoenfelter, our Sioux Falls carpet layer. I opened the door. He cussed at me, swore at me. I said, "Do it again, I just got out of the Army and miss my drill sergeant."

He cussed and swore some more. He was so mean that one day the plumber pulled his truck up behind his truck while he was laying carpet. Nobody comes in the house when Bill Schoenfelter is laying carpet. He saw the truck. It was the plumber's downstairs, putting one fitting on. He went out and broke the headlights out of that truck. That's the way he was!

Four years later, when I left to take a church for ministry, Bill Schoenfelter came to me and said, "Stan, if I ever come to Sioux Falls, I'll come to your church." I said, "Bill, you haven't been to church for many years." I asked him why would he come to my church. He said, "Because you walked in the mud with me." Whenever it rained, he couldn't get the carpet in by himself. I'd help him unload one of the carpets so that it would not drag in the mud, and that's why he'd come to my church.

Now, the reason he reminds me of Commander Morin is that the Commander has asked us to walk side-by-side in the mud with the veterans. He has walked with us in the same way. He is leading by example. He calls us to go back and walk in the mud with our fellow veterans out there. Let us pray.

Invocation
Stan Gruneich, South Dakota, National Chaplain

You come to us in many ways, as creator, sustainer; provider. You come to us like a father and like a mother. You come to us in a storm and in the silence. Be present this day as our guide. You will rule over our deliberations. We ask to direct us by Your spirit and sanctify us by Your presence. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let's give a round of applause to a great National Chaplain, the Reverend Stan.

Please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the Untied States.

…At this time the Delegation recited the Pledge of Allegiance

Please cover and be seated. The convention is now in session.

Have you had a chance to make your donation to Operation Landstuhl? As I stated yesterday, I have challenged The American Legion family and friends of our family to donate money for the wounded heroes recuperating at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Landstuhl, Germany. I set a goal of raising $50,000.00 for Operation Landstuhl. Yes, you have already succeeded that, but they can sure additional funds so that we can provide additional telephone cards, DVDs, civilian clothing and other miscellaneous comfort items for the troops. If you haven't yet dropped off your contribution to Operation Landstuhl, be sure to stop by the booth in the lobby outside Hall 4 today. Also, today, immediately following the VA&R Report, around 2:00 p.m., I will accept contributions from the departments and the affiliate organizations on stage.

At the 87th American Legion National Convention in Honolulu, Hawaii, we vowed our unwavering support for our troops and the global war on terrorism. Through the implementation of Resolution 169, "Support for the War on Terrorism," the members of this organization have never missed an opportunity to stand by our Command-in-Chief and military leadership to educate America on the great accomplishments of our fighting men and women. In doing so, we tell America the truth about the war and we are winning. Today, we will hear from a very special guest, one who is very much aware of efforts to support the troops.

General David Petraeus met with then National Commander Tom Bock while the General was commanding the Command Army's School at Fort Leavenworth. When the Legion Riders came through as part of the American Legacy Run to Salt City, they honored the Legacy of the Buffalo Soldier on the post. When it rained, General Petraeus provided a room to hold the ceremony, as he addressed the group. He now commands the four-star post that oversees the Multi-National Force–Iraq. On January 24, he testified before the Senate on the ideas for Iraq, particularly the surge.

The strategy of increasing U.S. presence in Baghdad is also known as "The Petraeus Doctrine." He has taped a message to the members of The American Legion family. Listen to General David H. Petraeus, Commander, Multi-National Forces in Iraq.

Address: General David H. Petraeus
Commander, Multi-National Force in Iraq
—Via video

National Commander Morin, National Adjutant Spanogle, thanks for the opportunity to address The American Legion's 89th National Convention and thanks, in particular, for your superb leadership for this great organization, a true national asset and one that does so much to support our troopers, our veterans and their families. I'm sorry I couldn't join you in person today in Reno. As you might imagine, I really am sorry about that. But I am again grateful for the chance to share some thoughts with you, this morning.

This time last year, I was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and had the privilege of meeting The American Legion Riders. As you may know, they were riding their 'iron horses,' their motorcycles, to Salt Lake, Utah, raising money for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. They stopped off at the historic Fort Leavenworth, the 'one time gateway to the west' to pay homage to the Buffalo Soldiers Memorial. The Legion Riders were impressive. Even a rainy Kansas day could not dampen their high spirits and their clear sense of mission in camaraderie. Indeed, their commitment and dedication to our soldiers and their families were very obvious to all of us. They represented your organization exceedingly well and I hope this year's event was even more successful than last year's.

As all of you know, the great work done by The Legion Riders is just one example of the many ways the Legionnaires continue to serve our great country, even after hanging up their uniforms. I'd like to applaud in particular your programs that focus on our country's newest generation of veterans. From your 'Hometown to Heroes' program, to your transition offices at Walter Reed and the Severely Injured Center, to your family

support network, each of you, individually and The American Legion collectively, are making a difference in the lives of our soldier, sailors, airmen, Marines, coast guardsmen and their families. As you do every summer, you continue to inspire another generation to serve through your very effective Boys and Girls State programs.

On behalf of the more than 160,000 American men and women serving in Iraq, thank you very much. It is very comforting for those of us serving in harm's way to know that the membership of The American Legion is so committed to supporting us and our families.

The other day I was similarly privileged. I was able to address the VFW Annual Convention in this same mode, and this morning I'd like to do with you what I was able to do with them, to provide you an update on the operations we are carrying out in Iraq and also offer some insights on the troopers with whom I am honored to serve.

The operational environment in Iraq is the most complex and challenging I have ever seen. Insurgent and sectarian violence has torn the fabric of the Iraqi society resulting in the death of far too many innocent citizens and the displacement of millions more. Members of al-Qaida in Iraq and extremist militias seek to re-ignite ethno sectarian violence to intimidate the population and to destroy what the leaders of the new Iraq are trying to build. And Iraq's government, its fourth in about as many years, struggles to govern and increase its capacity in an environment that my diplomatic wingman, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, has absolutely described as an environmental of fear.

We are now over two months into the surge of offensive operations that is capitalizing on the surge of forces. In spite of the complex and challenging environment, our troopers and our Iraqi partners have seized the initiative in many areas. They have achieved tactical momentum in numerous locations across Iraq and they have made progress in approving security for the Iraqi people. Daily events certainly remind us of the considerable work that still must be done, but they have achieved undeniable progress.

In mid-June, our forces launched coordinated offensive operations throughout a number of areas, including some that have not seen the sustained coalition or Iraqi presence in many years. We are clearing neighborhoods and key rural areas of al-Qaida and other extremists. We are holding on to those neighborhoods and helping their residents rebuild them through a persistent presence of coalition and Iraqi forces. Our troopers are not commuting to the fight. Instead they are living in the neighborhoods they are securing, occupying joint security stations and combat outposts with Iraqi forces, to improve security in threatened areas.

As our forces clear, hold and retain areas across the country with our Iraqi counterparts, we are also furthering the development and professionalization of the Iraqi security forces. While some of these forces very much remain a work in progress, many of our Iraqi partners are demonstrating their ability to secure their fellow citizens. In early August, in fact, it was Iraqi security forces that successfully planned and executed the security for a major religious event, the anniversary of the death of the 7th Imam[1].

A commemoration takes place each year at a major shrine in Baghdad. In recent years, this even had been marked by horrific violence, innocent Iraqi pilgrims faced mortar and rocket fire as they marched the streets of Baghdad. In fact, two year ago nearly 1000 pilgrims were crushed to death as human stampedes were set off by rumors of an impending attack. This year, protected by Iraqi forces, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims marched in peace with no deaths due to terrorist activity.

With our Iraqi partners, we are also helping Iraqi officials improve the provision of basic services, fostering local economic revival and reestablishing the rule of law. These are not easy tasks, but we are making progress. Infrastructure and institutions are being rebuilt. This month, in fact, we saw the most electricity generated in anyone's memory, well over 1200 megawatts, more than pre-war levels. Banks and markets are also being reopened, additional employment opportunities are being developed, especially for military-aged males, and the administration of justice is moving forward. Legitimate trials are being held and Iraqi detainee operations are improving. But clearly more work needs to be done.

[1] Moussa (Moses) al Kadhim

Indeed, without question, much additional work must be done in each of the areas I just mentioned, but again there has been progress. Our efforts have been aided enormously by what may be the most notable development since I returned to Iraq in February, the increasing assistance of everyday Iraqis. Tired of the indiscriminate violence and turned off by the al-Qaida's Taliban-like ideology, many sheiks, tribes and local citizens are rejecting al-Qaida. They are helping secure their neighbors, volunteering to join local security forces, and providing us and our Iraqi partners with actionable intelligence. With this assistance, with our additional forces and with our greater freedom of movement, our elements have found over 1,300 more arms and ammunition caches than the first seven and one half months of this year, than we found all of last year.

The ground swell of opposition of al-Qaida is critical, as al-Qaida Iraq is the primary source of the sensational attacks that take place in Iraq. Thus many of our recent operations have been focused on them and on groups associated with them. We are slowly, but surely taking away al-Qaida's sanctuaries and capturing or killing their leaders and members. To spite our progress, however, al-Qaida Iraq remains a formidable foe and retains the ability to conduct horrific suicide car bombs and other attacks. Indeed, we believe they are seeking to conduct high profile attacks this month in advance of the assessment that Ambassador Crocker and I will provide to the Congress in September. Nonetheless, we have degraded al-Qaida Iraq capabilities, reduced their areas of influence and dealt significant blows to their networks. And we will continue to keep the pressure on them.

In the past few months we and the Iraqi leaders have come to appreciate more clearly than before, another threat that posed by Shia militia extremists, particularly by those trained, equipped, funded and even directed by Iran. Through the detention of a number of key leaders of militia extremists groups, we have gained valuable insights about the ties between the so-called special group extremists in Iraq, the Iranian Republican Guards, the Kurd force and Lebanese Hezbollah. In fact we captured in Iraq the Deputy Commander of Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, the organization established to help Iran train the Iraqi special groups.

During the same operation, we detained the Iraqi head of the Iranian supported special groups. These two individuals and a number of others in detention have explained in considerable detail the linkages between the militia extremist groups, the Kurds force and the Lebanese Hezbollah. In view of this and other actions by the militias, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has come out strongly and publicly against criminal militia elements, supporting efforts to bring them to justice and to stop the sectarian violence that they carry out. In our fight against al-Qaida Iraq, Iraqi security forces have been our partners. Indeed, they have been in the lead on many of these operations and have in some cases independently detained key special group leaders and operators. Again, in this area, too, we have made headway and will continue to keep the pressure on these extremists as well.

The developments I just described have not come without sacrifice. Tough fighting has resulted in the loss of some our country's finest young men and women, and our Iraqi partners have sacrificed heavily as well with losses generally three times ours. Our hard work and the tough fighting are not over either, as the situation in Iraq remains exceedingly complex and challenging. There is, in short, nothing easy about any aspect of our effort in Iraq. Still, together with our Iraqi partners, I believe we can make further progress in the months ahead. All are to make possible an opportunity for the important Iraqi political actions that are the key to long-term solutions, to Iraq's many problems. In the end, success will depend on those Iraqi actions as military alone, though absolutely necessary, will not be sufficient. We can provide the Iraqis the opportunity, but they must exploit it.

This month, senior Iraqi leaders have been working to produce a way ahead for the conduct of governance and will, we hope, be able to resolve some of the critical legislative initiatives that are central to the long-term achievement of true national reconciliation. As you would imagine, Ambassador Crocker will describe these efforts in our mid-September assessment. At that time, he will also provide his views and the prospects for political progress in the months ahead.

Having given you a sense of how I see things on the ground, I would now like to talk a bit about the troops with whom I'm privileged to serve here Iraq, troops you support so wonderfully from home. As you know, substantial elements of each of our military services are currently deployed in Iraq. After four years of sustain combat here, in fact, our troops are on their second or third tours and their experience is very evident. To put it quite simply, our leaders and troops get it. They demonstrate an impressive understanding of the environment, working across the full spectrum of operations and navigating with confidence between the enemy they seek to defeat and the civilian population we aim to help.

Indeed, our troops across the armed forces now possess skills and tools that were the near-exclusive preview of the special operations community just a few years ago, such as the ability to conduct counterinsurgency operations, the knowledge of cultural savvy necessary to train and work with local forces, a capability to gather, fuse and act on all forms of intelligence and the ability to help build local governments, reestablish basic services and revive local markets and commerce.

It is, in truth, a true privilege to soldier with our men and women here. I'd like to highlight two recent cases of heroism and sacrifice, two among many that made that point. As I stated, many Iraqi security force units are in the fight side-by-side with coalition forces. The story of U.S. Army Major Jim Gant and the Iraqi national police battalion that he advises illustrates this partnership. One forced by training together and then cemented by fighting together. On December 11, 2006, Major Gant lead a few U.S. Army soldiers alongside some 50 Iraqi national police and heroically fighting a sustained battle for over an hour through a complex enemy attack that included the coordination and deployment of small arms, RPGs and improvised explosive devices. In responding to the attack, Major Gant selflessly and repeatedly exposed himself to direct enemy fire to accomplish critical tasks. Among them, clearing a hot landing zone, so that a Mediavac chopper could pick up wounded Iraqi soldiers, saving an innocent Iraqi civilian, severely injured when an IED went off near her vehicle and positioning his Humvee to over watch and protect and shield his Iraqi counterparts, resulting in an IED detonating near his heavily armored vehicle, rather than near their light-skinned ones. Later, discussing the situation, Major Gant observed that on that day and at that time, there were no Americans, there were no Iraqis, no whites, no blacks, no Sunni, Shia, Christian or Kurds. Rather, it was a group of warriors fighting together, in a desperate battle. He said later, "I would gladly and without hesitation have laid down my life for all of them."

Nearly four months ago Major Gant was awarded the Silver Star Medal, our army's third highest award for valor for his actions on December 11th. He asked that the presentation be made in front of those he described during the ceremony as his best friends, his Iraqi brothers and ours. Many of you know the bonds he described. There is, in fact, no fraternity more special than the brotherhood in a close fight, and again I know that many members of that fraternity are in your audience today. The story of Major Gant and the Iraqi national police battalion is a small but important part of the overall story in Iraq, one played out on a daily basis as our soldiers work shoulder-to-shoulder with our Iraqi counterparts as we strive to improve the security situation for the Iraqi people.

Another story I'd like to relate, one you may have heard about on the news nearly two months ago, involved a group of helicopter pilots. Their actions on July 2 can best be described by the phrase Admiral Nimitz made famous years ago, describing a day when uncommon valor was a common virtue. On July 2, two Kiowa Scout Helicopters from the 3rd Infantry Division, were conducting a routine recognizance mission southeast of Baghdad in an area we had just begun clearing. Suddenly, one of the helicopters was hit by small arms fire and had to make a crash landing. Helicopter crews throughout the area heard the words on the radio, 'Fallen Angel,' the code words for a downed aircraft. Air and ground quick reactions forces launched to the location.

Meanwhile, at the crash site, the pilots of the downed helicopter climbed out of the wreckage and low-crawled to the relative safety of a nearby canal. The canal provided cover from the insurgents who were trying to find the pilots, but that concealment also prevented them from being located by their fellow soldiers. As time passed, the sound of the insurgents grew more distant, the two downed heard the distinctive sound, in fact, of Apache attack helicopters circling over head. They started trying to signal to them. Soon

the attack helicopters spotted the two men and one Apache landed to rescue them, while other helicopters provided security from the air. There was one problem, however. For as many as you know, an Apache helicopter only has room for two people in its cockpit. Undeterred, one of the Apache pilots gave up his seat to the most banged up of the Kiowa pilots. He and the other Kiowa pilot strapped themselves to the tops of the weapons pylons on either side of the aircraft, experiencing a truly incredible ride as they flew, exposed, at 130 miles per hour out of the hostile area to the safety of a near by base.

In later describing what happened, one of the Apache pilots, Chief WO Allan Davison modestly said of his actions, "Anybody else would have done the same. We just happened to be there." Incredibly, humble words from an American hero about a truly daring rescue that he and his co-pilot conducted.

A month ago, I had the honor of pinning Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals for Valor upon several of those involved in this episode. It was, as you would imagine, a very special, very emotional and very humbling moment. Again, I can't adequately describe how inspiring it is to serve with the great young men and women who wear our nation's flag on their right shoulder. I can say, however that it is events like those that make so many of us feel so privileged to serve again in Iraq with our men and women in uniform and with our Iraqi counterparts.

Yes, our troopers have not all been perfect, but for each who has failed to live up our country's exactions, there have been thousands of others who have selflessly gone about their mission, doing what they have been asked to do and during their separation from loved ones, soldiering in crushing heat and sand storms, battling a truly barbaric enemy, grappling with the complexities and frustrations of working in cultures that are very different from our own and in some cases, giving the last full measure of devotion in carrying out their assigned missions.

Repeatedly in Iraq, I have seen the concept behind our old 'Army of One' recruiting slogan played out, a concept that holds that each soldier has enormous self worth and can be the most important person in the life of another soldier at some critical point. In fact, I have often wondered, especially while observing soldiers rendering a final salute to a fallen comrade after a memorial ceremony, where our country finds such young men and women who serve so selflessly and in the face of enormous challenges repeatedly demonstrate impressive initiative, determination and innovativeness and courage. In truth, I know where we find them, in countless communities big and small across our great land.

On the 4th of July, I was privileged to administer the Oath of Enlistment to 588 of these wonderful young Americans in Baghdad. I wish all of you could have been present to see so many men and women in uniform reenlisting in combat for another term of service in our military, fully knowing the sacrifices their additional service might require. Following the reenlistment ceremony, 161 of our troopers raised their right hands and recited the Oath of Citizenship, hereby becoming citizens for the country for which they had already been fighting overseas. These were powerful moments and not ones I will soon forget.

By serving in Iraq, in fact, each of our troopers helps add new chapters to the history written of the service and sacrifice of earlier American generations. By their service, our present day troops join the long line of American veterans extending even further the line that many of you in the audience extended during your own time in uniform. Some of you in the audience may have arrived at an age at which one begins to wonder what he has accomplished in life and what footsteps he has left in the sands of time. Let me reassure you in that regard, for you have left huge footsteps in a clearly marked path of accomplishment, sacrifice and selfless service. Those of us in uniform today draw enormous inspiration from the examples you have set, and we are humbled to join the distinguished groups of American veterans that are represented by the Legion. In fact, if it can be said that those of us currently serving stand on the shoulders of those who served before us, then we stand very tall indeed.

So, this morning I want to close by saying thank you. Thank you for your service, thank you for your example and, most importantly, thank you for your tireless support of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coastguardsmen and their families. Your organization does a tremendous amount to sustain those serving our country in harm's

way and it has been an honor to describe some of their actions to you this morning. May God bless each of you and may God bless our forces serving around the world.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: You've heard General Petraeus tell us the truth of what is happening in the field. As I have said before, you are middle America. You must now stand up for our troops and speak out in what you have heard today in whatever fashion you may do in support of them.

I hope you have noticed this year that we have closed captioning for the first time. This idea came out of our American Legion National College, Class of 2006. Through their learning experience in writing a resolution and seeing it passed, we have them to thank for this new, great addition to our National Convention, and we thank them.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs, he is the principal advocate for veterans in the U.S. government ensuring they receive the care, support, recognition and dignity they deserve for their service to our country. He also directs the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits, programs and national cemeteries for American's veterans and their dependents.

Secretary Nicholson, in his term of office, has always had an open door to myself and our Executive Director of our Washington, D.C. office John Sommer. I say on behalf of John and myself, Mr. Secretary, we thank you for that open door policy. A lot of people have let me come through the door once, but they never let come back the second time. So, Mr. Secretary, thank you."

He just returned last week from visiting our troops in the field in Afghanistan and Iraq. On his way back, he stopped and visited those wounded warriors in Landstuhl, Germany. We thank him. It's not his first time. He's been there in the field many of times and has truly been there as an advocate for those GIs and future veterans. We thank him for that.

A 1961 graduate of West Point, he served on active duty as a Ranger qualified Army officer and as a paratrooper. He spent another 22 years in the Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of colonel. Welcome the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable James Nicholson.

Address: The Hon. R. James Nicholson
Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs

Thank you for the terrific job that you are doing and that you've done this past year leading this great organization. It has been a pleasure to work with you and the great staff of The American Legion. Thank you for inviting me to address your convention. I'm just delighted to be here this beautiful morning. I'd be truthful to tell you I'd be delighted almost anywhere but in Washington these days, but I'm going to be followed here by my Chairman in the House, Congressman Bob Filner, the Chairman of the House VA Committee with whom just this past week I traveled out to the Middle East.

I will be brief so you can hear from him. As the expression goes, I'm going to be brief, no matter how long it takes me. *[Laughter.]* I also want to thank you for the support that you have given the President; it means a great deal to him, believe me. I've had conversations with him on that.

This is a hard act to follow: President Bush and then General Petraeus. You'll recall, I'm sure, that the President said yesterday that the lesson that is there is that it is the heart's desire for liberty not to be denied. Once people even get a small taste of liberty, the President said, they're not going to rest until they are free. So, I think that we are extremely lucky in this country to have a President who has the courage, the principles and the resolve to stand up against our sworn enemies and to stand up firmly against intense criticism for doing that here at home.

Now I know that sometimes The American Legion and we at the VA have our differences. That's to be expected. But when it comes to caring for veterans and our young servicemen and women, we're opening the gates of that freedom that the President spoke about. Today in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have no differences. We are one voice, we, The American Legion, the President of the United States and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I want to thank you also for your support for our troops. As Commander Morin mentioned, I did just come out of Afghanistan, Iraq; actually we were in Pakistan as well, which is a key country out there in the logistical support of our effort. We stopped at Landstuhl and visited many of the recent wounded soldiers who had just come out of the combat zone. It was interesting. I wish each one of you could have been there with us and with the staff, the leadership of that hospital when they took us to what they called the Chaplain's Closet which is their store and which is the product of your Operation Landstuhl. You go in and there are shelves lined with ordinary things, or they seem ordinary to us. But they are not ordinary to some servicemember who has just been wounded and taken out of the battlefield and into that hospital with nothing but his hope to survive and the skills of the people who are administrating to them. They can go to this store and get telephone cards, common supplies, and clothing. It means a great deal to them. I want to thank you on behalf of all of those people, the patients and the staff.

I want to thank here before all of you, Bob Spanogle and John Sommer. They have been rocks for me and us at the VA to work with. As I said, we don't always agree but we meet regularly and work together. We have a lot more in common than that about which we differ. I want to thank them and you and the resolve you've had this past year to visit our vet centers and our poly-trauma centers. It is very useful for us and I welcome it, as the Secretary, for you to go out there and make an independent, critical appraisal of how we're doing there and in administering to these great young people.

I come from a little town in Iowa. Anybody here from Iowa? *[Cheering.]* Good! There wasn't a Legion post in my town. There were only 99 people and 9 of the 99 were my family. But it was incorporated. In fact, my classmates at West Point, some of which vowed to come and visit if we graduated, and they did, left still not convinced that it was called Struble. They thought it was called 'Resume Speed' because those were the only two signs that were there on either side of the railroad track. But there is a great tradition for service there, even in my family. My father was a veteran, I'm a veteran, my son is a veteran, I have a brother who is a veteran and I have four nephews who are colonels in the Army. In fact, one just left Afghanistan after commanding a brigade there for 16 months. So, this is in our blood.

I am a member of The American Legion Post 241 in Le Mars, Iowa which is the closest thing to a town that we were from our little town Struble. There I played Junior Legion Baseball. Members of my family participated in Boys State. The Legion has always been a part of our life, really, since just about I can remember, from Junior High School on. I also remember the first time ever really getting out of that area. My father took me to Sioux City to see a rodeo. I was struck by the intensity of the bucking Braham bulls. I think about that a lot now as I work in Washington, and I also think about what other things bulls do regularly, too, some days in Washington.

My dad was a farmer. He went broke farming, actually, so we moved into that little town. We worked for farmers. One of the things we did was milk cows. We sat on that three-legged milking stool and dove our head in the flank of the cow and got attached. There was nothing that could shake us from our mission of milking that cow. I use that metaphor of my youth to describe the VA today.

Your VA and I want to give you a brief report using that analogy. It's a three-pronged organization: a medical leg, the benefit leg and the memorial leg. The medical leg is the one that has the highest silhouette. It probably gets the most attention; it has real scale. We now see over a million veteran patients a week. We have a 153 major medical centers through the country and now over 880 clinics. We have over 200 vet centers and I've directed that we add 30 more. In our facilities, we take care of all the needs of our veterans. But we are at war and in all previous wars of our country the ratio of fatalities to injuries has been one out of four. Today, in the global war on terror, that ratio is one our of 17. Now that presents unique challenges to us at the VA. But I like to say that it presents us with unique opportunities because a lot more of our people are coming home alive than would have in all previous conflicts. That's due to the heroic battlefield medicine being administered to them that we witnessed firsthand last week. It is attributable to the competency and the dedication of the people through that entire line of care.

When they come to us, they're coming with two signature injuries out of this war: one is trauma brain injury and the other is post traumatic stress disorder. The brain damages are coming obviously from those blasts and from that environment they are fighting in over there. The post traumatic stress disorder in previous wars was called battle fatigue or shellshock. But it is a condition of our young people having a very uncommon experience, coming from a civilized society and going through what they do over there, some of which General Petraeus just so eloquently portrayed to you.

But I bring this up and want to dwell on it a minute because we could use your help in the area of post traumatic stress disorder. It is important that these young heroes who are feeling these symptoms know that they are not losing their minds, that there's not something permanently rearranged about their wiring. They are having a common reaction to that very uncommon experience and we, none of us, spouse, an employer, a commander should have any stigma to that. They should be encouraged to come into the VA for help because we can help them, we can cure them of this, if we can start early enough. So I ask you to be sensitive of that. If you have people in your family or in your community experiencing that, encourage them to come and see us. We now, when we have a returnee from the global war on terror come to us for any reason, to a sore arm or anything, we screen them for any showing of post traumatic stress disorder or brain damage. If we detect any, we are, indeed, submitting them to a very fine treatment regime that we have developed.

I could go on about the health leg of this great organization, but I'll just end on that by saying it is indeed the biggest integrated health system in the United States and inarguably and arguably it is the best. Now that's a proud statement of a proud Secretary. Back there in Struble, we used to say, it ain't braggin if it's true. Others are saying it's true. There's a new book that has just been written called *Best Care Anywhere,* written by a person named Philip Longman, whom I've never met. But he substantiates that hypothesis in this book. So, we have a great deal to be proud of in the medical care we're providing to our veterans and it's exactly what they deserve.

The second leg, the benefits leg, there, too, is very big. Last year we had a near record number of people apply to us for claims. We spent $2.7 billion in educational benefits supporting over half a million veterans. We run the sixth largest life insurance company in the United States and we run a compensation and benefits program that is well known to most of you. There we have a challenge, because it is currently taking us 177 days on the average to adjudicate a claim. That, in my opinion, is still too long. It has come down from just a few years ago when it was 220 days. Next year it will be down again because Congress has been very supportive of us and the President in getting more people to try to expedite these claims. A couple of things I do want to mention there. We move the returnees from the war to the top of the queue and we're treating with those in about 100 days. Veterans over 70 years old are also a priority in our claims system. It is getting better. It needs to. It's coming down.

Third leg is memorials. There have been 48 million of our countrymen serve us in uniform in the history of our country. Over half of them are still alive. We have about 25 million veterans. But everyday now about 1,900 of our fellow veterans pass away, mostly veterans of the greatest generation. I say that, and then add that today we have the latest, greatest generation serving us. But about 1,900 a day, so we're expanding at the biggest rate in our cemeteries since the Civil War. It's appropriate that we have for the final repose of those who have served us, kept us free, a beautiful shrine-like dignified place to rest forever and for the rest of us to pay our respects.

I want to add just briefly, some of the initiatives that we have underway. Time precludes going into great detail of this, but it's not surprising to you that there is a shortage of nurses in the United States. We suffer that at the VA. We have about 60,000 nurses. To help us see that there is the assured supply of nurses, we have instituted a nursing academy. You'll hear more about this, but this is going a long way in helping us assure ourselves of the supply of nurses that we need to take care of our veterans.

Diabetes is at an epidemic proportion among veterans. We have an initiative to thwart that because it leads to so many other terrible diseases: hypertension, heart disease, amputations, hardening of the arteries, blindness. Staff infections, many people don't know that today in America more people are dying in hospitals from staph

infections than are dying on our highways. At the VA, we have an initiative going. It's called MRSA. It's a long technical word—mephacillin resistant staph aureus. But we're going to cut out staph infections at VA hospitals, and we can do that. We have a major transformation in the department going: information technology, acquisitions and research.

In closing my report to you of the status of your VA, there is a great deal for you to be proud of, as I am. And the people that make it that are the people who work there, the 244,000. I want to illustrate the kind of people who work there by telling you the story of the VA in Katrina. It's a story not well known, but you'll remember when Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, it took out our Gulfport Hospital. It just leveled it. In our New Orleans hospital, we had to make a decision about whether or not to evacuate and we decided not to. That was a correct decision.

Katrina moved and missed us, but the levies were breached and we were flooded out. So we had, for 5 days in that hospital, a hospital full of patients and staff, no electricity, no air conditioning, no services. Then we commandeered some duce-and-a-half ton trucks and some C-130 sorties, because we had to get those people out of that hospital. Through the ingenuity and courage and the devotion of people throughout the chain of command at the VA, we were able to do that. We evacuated every one of those patients, some of them weighing over 300 pounds, many on respirators, down those dark steps, into those trucks, out to the planes. That's a great story.

But think of the staff, the caregivers. Some of them could look out the window from the upper stories of the hospital and see their own houses; that is, see the roofs and the chimneys because they were flooded out. They did not know the disposition of their families, their children or their pets, but we asked them to go with their patients, and they did. They got on airplanes and flew off. W triaged them in the air. They didn't even know where they were going to end up, but they stayed with their patients. That's the kind of people that work at the VA.

The kind of people we serve was driven home to me again last week. There was a young captain in Bagram, Afghanistan, a big smile on the face of this captain having a visit. The captain said that she just finished the Harvard Business School and was given a big job by the Boston Consulting Group, but was called to active duty. There with a huge smile on her face she told me of how satisfying and meaningful it was for her to be there doing what she's doing with our troops in Afghanistan.

We are a blessed people in this country, blessed by the kind of fellow citizens that we have. The country is blessed because of the people like you and the service that you have given and the commitment that you still have for the future of this country. It has been my privilege to serve President Bush and the veterans of this country for the past two and a half years. I thank you for what you're doing, what you have done and what you will do for the procurement, the preservation, the freedom of our country and for those people, those soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen, coastguardsmen who are out there on the front line, doing this everyday in the most unbelievable conditions. Your support, your involvement, your engagement is critically important to this country. Thank you for it. God bless you and God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Mr. Secretary, let me in appreciation of your dedication to the veterans of America, present you the Commander's stein and wish you well in your next endeavors. Thank you for being here today with us.

SECRETARY NICHOLSON: Thank you, I'll have a cold one in this.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Mr. Secretary, let me assure you, on behalf of the men and women of The American Legion, we commend the men and women, the doctors, the nurses and the medical staff because we truly believe that we have the best that America has to offer, serving in those fields for our veterans.

One of his early appointments upon arriving in Washington, D.C. was a seat on the House of Representatives Committee on Veterans Affairs. In that role, he has been a tireless fighter for veterans, winning the praise of thousands of individual veterans and high accolades from the national veterans' organizations. Early in the 110th Congress, his colleagues elected him chairman of this committee. He is fighting to call attention to health problems affecting the soldiers who have served in Vietnam and the Gulf War. He

is working for more mental health care for veterans and for a GI Bill Educational benefits that will pay for a veteran's education at a four-year public college or university.

Please welcome the Honorable Bob Filner of the 51st District of California, the Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Address: The Hon. Bob Filner
Chairman, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Thank you for inviting me here. California, you're way back too far, you need to be up front. *[Cheering.]* We're going to help you get up front next time. Thank you again for inviting me here with all of your heroes of America. You inspire us all, not only for your service in the past, but your willingness to reach out and help veterans now and in the future. We're looking forward to your testimony at the joint hearings in September. You may remember that you weren't allowed to do that for the last couple of years, but we say welcome back, American Legion. Welcome back to make sure that we know where you stand. You have a voice in what we do in this Congress. So, we're looking forward to that on September 20th.

The Secretary mentioned that we had been in Iraq together and Afghanistan last week. We decided that we needed to go together, the Secretary and the Executive Branch of one party, myself as Chairman of the House Committee from another party. We came together and went there together to say we don't care what political party we're in, we don't care what differences we might have on political issues, we are going to be united in this country and this Congress and this government to make sure that every young man and woman who comes back from Iraq gets all the care, the love, the attention, the honor, the dignity that a nation can bestow. We went there saying that.

It was an inspiring trip. The young men and women that we met there are so expert, so self-assured, and so professional. They work together as a team. Just look at these young people, 22 and 23-year olds, flying the planes and helicopters, doing the medical evacuations. What an incredible group of people we have there. It was again inspiring to see them.

The Secretary and I really went to follow the path of the wounded warrior, from when, unfortunately, there was an injury, to their medical evacuation, to their movement to a forward surgical unit, to their transfer to a regional hospital, in either Iraq or Afghanistan and then taken to Landstuhl. We followed that trail to see all the people who do such an incredible job in making sure that those warriors come home alive. We were inspired by them.

I was able to spend the week with the Secretary. I came back from that week even more sorry that he is leaving on October 1st. Secretary Nicholson—I think he has left the room. I just want to thank him for everything that he has done for this nation, for our country's veterans, for his leadership and his character. His integrity, I think, spread through the VA. We thank you so much for the service that you have given to this country. Thank you, James Nicholson.

I came to the Chairman of our Committee just at the time when that Walter Reed scandal broke. People throughout America saw that, although we want to support our troops, support our troops, support our troops, a lot of them, when they came home, we were not supporting in the way they deserved. That Walter Reed story which was supplemented by stories of other defense and VA installations around the country, said to America: We have to do better. We have to do better for these young heroes.

The silver lining that was in the cloud that Walter Reed represented was that we argued for far more money than we were going to get out of the original budget submissions. In the three budget bills that went by the House in the first three or four months, we were able to add to the veterans' budget, this year over last year, over $13 billion dollars. That represents a 30 percent increase in the healthcare for our veterans. It's unprecedented and we were able to do that because of the Legion, because of other VSOs and because America understood that we had to do a better job. We had to do a better job because we knew if we didn't do the job for these Iraqi veterans, we're going to make the same mistake as we did in the past. We've made some critical errors.

How many of you are Vietnam vets? Let's applaud all of them, please. I can't see how many, but I'm told a great percentage. I have to say to all of you, on behalf of this country, I guess we let you down. We didn't give you the honor and the respect and the care, by and large, that you deserved and earned. Many people in this country, I don't excuse myself from that, confused the war and the warrior. If we didn't like the war, we said to hell with the warrior. That was a tragic mistake. We owe you an apology. We owe you a request for forgiveness, I guess. We made you the canaries in the mine. We made you people who we saw what would happen if we didn't do this job right.

You know the statistics, half of the homeless tonight across America, over 200,000, are Vietnam veterans. That's a terrible blot on the record of America. You know that there has now been as many Vietnam vets who have died by suicide since the war than died in the original war, over 58,000. That's a terrible, terrible statistic. That says we did something wrong as a nation. We didn't do the care that was needed, we didn't welcome all the vets back into society. I say that we have to say more than we're sorry. We should do a better job.

We have to serve our Iraqi and Afghan veterans, but we also have to serve our World War II, our Vietnam vets, our Korean vets, our Persian Gulf War vets also. We're going to do them both. Here is what I suggest to say. We're sorry to the Vietnam vets. You know about Stand Downs for homeless vets. I went to the first one in San Diego, California, of where actually I represent. Secretary Nicholson came to San Diego for the 20th Anniversary of our first Stand Down. You know what happens there, for three days we take these homeless veterans and give them some security, some food, some camaraderie, some comfort that they lack on the street. They get clothing, they get medical attention, they get dental care, they get legal advice, they get haircuts. We bring all the resources that they need together. Volunteers from all over the community and the VA come together and from the veterans' groups and say, "You know, we care about you," for three days.

At the last five speeches I've given at the Stand Downs, I said I'm tired of giving speeches at Stand Downs. We know what can we do for veterans. We do it for three days every year, but Stand Downs ought to be 365 days a year. That's what the VA is for. So we are going to say we're sorry and thank you by putting in the money necessary for the care and treatment of homeless veterans around the nation. We have to do this as a nation. We cannot let that service to our country die in an alley with alcohol or drugs all around. We can do a better job and we're going to do that.

You all know it took awhile for Agent Orange to be accepted as a reason for some of the disability or problems that you all suffered later on. Many of you still have to fight the VA to get that connection made from Agent Orange to cancer or Parkinson's or Lou Gehrig's disease. I say that if you served in Vietnam, you deserve treatment at the VA without going through all of that stuff that we are forced to make you go through. *[Applause.]* Fighting the bureaucracy ends up to be more harmful than the original wounds that you ever had. For too many across the country, VA means veterans' advisories instead of veterans' advocates. We have got to make the VA the advocate and not the advisory. All I want for your treatment is your DD-214. I don't want you to have to go through all these, you know, connection kinds of arguments and testimony and scientific evidence. You served us; we serve you.

I just saw a list of almost 500 Vietnam vets who in their early 50s got Parkinson's disease. That's a young age for Parkinson's. There has to be a connection between whatever happened in Vietnam and Parkinson's. Yet the law says there is no connection between Agent Orange and Parkinson's." Hello!? I got what I need, I see what the evidence I need. You shouldn't have to make any further argument. We're going to make Parkinson's and Lou Gehrig's disease presumptive, but I want to get rid of all of the kinds of fights you have to do and, really, give you the care that you have earned. *[Applause.]*

Another thank you to the Vietnam vets and all veterans is mandatory funding for the healthcare of all the veterans in this nation. We have got to do that! We can't go through these political battles every year. We argue 1 billion, 3 billion, 6 billion, independent budget, President's request, Congressional thing. Let's make it mandatory and stop the political games. We can do that and we're going to do that. *[Applause.]* The Secretary

mentioned the disability claims are over 600 thousand backlogged. That's disgraceful for a nation of our technological abilities and it creates an enormous, enormous pain and frustration for our veterans. Yes, we put money in the budget to hire a 1,000 or 1,200 new employees, but that will take years to bring it down. We need to cut through that whole bureaucracy, cut the red tape, give the veterans what they have earned and do it fast.

I hate to use the IRS as an example, but many of you remember when the IRS was one of the most dysfunctional agencies in America. You never got your refund, you didn't know what was going on. But changes were made a decade or a decade and a half ago and if you filed your tax return and got a refund, you will get the check back in three or four weeks. Right? Well, why can't we do that at the VA? Submit your claim, submit all the doctors' things, we accept the claim subject to audit, just like the IRS. Why do we have to put you through years, in many cases, of not being able to get what you have earned? People have died, people have lost their homes. Or we can send a minimal amount of 30% and then check it out, but I want that claim backlog to go to zero. I don't want to bring it down slowly and slowly over five to 10 years. Let's cut through the red tape, get the disability checks in the mail and make sure veterans have the assistance that they need. That's how we can say thank you to the Vietnam vets in this country.

Let me just comment briefly. The Secretary noted that the brain injuries and the PTSD were the signature injuries of this war, and how we are keeping these young men and women alive, when in past wars they would not have survived. But we have to be honest. We have tens of thousands of young men and women coming back with PTSD and brain injury and we don't have the resources to handle them right now. That's why we put the 13 billion dollars in. But we have not solved this problem and we need communities to help us. We should be reaching out. We're going to put money in the budget, not just for VA help but for grants to community-based healthcare to help the VA and the Department of Defense handle these issues. We simply cannot do it alone right now.

We hear horror stories. They're not typical, but they are enough to say we are not doing the job. If a young man in Minnesota or Florida or California can go to the VA near them, say they think they have PTSD and they are thinking about suicide, and they are sent home because they have to wait three or four weeks. They commit suicide. That's a crime that we should not allow to happen. The Army has just released its statistics that said we have the highest Army suicide rate since Vietnam. We cannot allow that to continue. We have to do a better job and we're going to put the money in. But we're going to ask the community for help. We're going to try some new things.

I just want to mention a pilot program that, I think, we'll try to get this year. We know that too many people are leaving the combat area, whether they are in the Reserves, the Guard or active duty, without being adequately diagnosed. They want to get home. Everybody wants to get home. They don't want to check anything that will keep them longer. Their commanders may not want them to check anything because it somehow embarrasses the unit. There're afraid they won't get a job in law enforcement if they check that they have nightmares. But if we allow them to go without adequate diagnosis and treatment, we're releasing a time bomb in the community. You know all about it, whether it's domestic violence or alcohol and drug abuse, it's homelessness, it's suicide.

You all went to boot camp to learn about war and unit cohesion and the mentality that you need. But when you leave the combat zone, you can be in Baghdad yesterday and tomorrow you'll be taking your kids to a soccer game. There's no time for decompression there. There's no time for figuring out what's going on. We need a de-boot camp while on active duty I'm calling it. I'm stealing the Legion program, we're calling it the 'Heroes Homecoming Camp' where every young man and woman, part of their active duty, whether it's 8, 10, 12 weeks, will have a mandatory evaluation for brain injury and PTSD. It all has to be done. No stigma. Then we will seal the records so it doesn't hurt future job prospects. We can start early treatment, right away, because that's key.

The family ought to be involved in this. It's the family where you get the adequate diagnosis and the rehabilitation. Equally important, they should do it with, say, their company unit. It's that camaraderie of the combat that keeps people sane. But when they're discharged or when they leave combat they loose that group solidarity in that way

to keep together. What if we kept 180 to 200 Marines and soldiers together, with their families, whether it's at a military camp or maybe a college campus? You get the diagnosis, your family is there, you could talk to your buddies, you get that support and we can start the job kind of counseling that people need. We could start the kind of transition to educational benefits. All the community can focus on helping those people, but we're giving them time to not to have to return to that, the normal existence that is so hard to do after combat and leads to so many problems.

So, I hope you'll help me and I hope you'll support this Heroes Homecoming Camp. We're going to try and get a pilot project in the budget, because that transition from combat to civilian life has not been managed properly. We have too many time bombs ticking in our society. Ladies and gentlemen, you have been at the forefront for dealing with all of these issues. Most of the ideas I have, I've stole from the Legion. Your annual testimony, the people I meet around the country in my own community, of course, your outreach to the veterans, no matter where they come from is vital. You know what we owe these young people and these older people. You know as a nation we can do this. We have the resources to do it. If we're spending a billion dollars every two and a half days in Iraq, we can spend a few billion on those coming back. We have to do that. With your support, we are going to do that. You are vital to that political process. Unfortunately, not everybody understands it. Your Congress people, your Senator need your education, your lobbying. You've got to be in their face and when you do that, we will get this job done. We owe it to these veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. We owe it to the veterans of Vietnam. We owe it to the veterans of World War II, Korea and Persian Gulf I. As a nation, we can do this. With your support, we will do it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Mr. Chairman, let me present to you a stein also in appreciation of what you're doing for the veterans of America. On behalf of the 2.7 million members of The American Legion, thank you for returning the joint hearings. That was so very much important to us.

If you haven't had a chance to stop by The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund booth to purchase a Michael Peterson, *It's Who We Are* video and DVD, remember that 50 percent of the profits from the sales of the DVD go to fund The American Legacy Scholarship Fund. They're on sale for $10.00. Please visit The Legacy Scholarship Fund booth located in the lobby outside Hall 4 and pick one up. You're making a worthwhile investment for our fallen heroes.

Also this morning we received another check from American Legion Post 490 of Houston, Texas for $1,000.00.

Joining us is a man who has dedicated his life to serving veterans and their families. He graduated from the United States Military Academy, West Point, where he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army. He served as an Administrator of the U.S. Veterans Administration from 1982 to 1986 where he introduced management initiatives that brought a significant increase in the efficiencies within the organization, and were noted outside of the VA. Prior to that, he served as the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. From 2001 to 2003, he participated as Commissioner and Co-Chairman in the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans. He now heads the newly established Veterans Coalition, an initiative of The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the AMVETS. Welcome the Honorable Harry Walters.

Address: The Hon. Harry Walters
President Veterans Coalition, Inc.

I'm an old Army fullback. I blocked for the Heisman Trophy winner. His name was Pete Dawkins. I've been known as kind of a straight shooter during my life. I learned I had to be a straight-shooter. If I missed the block my Heisman Trophy winner got hurt. So I always shoot straight and try not to mince words where I don't have to. Kind of a reputation I have with my family and my friends and it's me.

It is a treat to be here. Twenty-two years ago is the last time I addressed this convention. I've missed not being here, but now that I am here, I'd like to thank Commander Morin for his very strong year of leadership in The American Legion. I've watched with great interest his verve, his support, his advocacy and his brilliance. I want to commend you for electing him and commend him for an excellent year.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson is no stranger to me. Two years behind me at West Point is better than a few years ahead of me. So I have split the family, if you will. The Secretary has been very supportive of our efforts with the Vet Commission on the future for Americas' veterans. I am grateful to him for his support. You see, I know why he supports it, because he doesn't have the time to think into the future. The time bombs are around him daily, as you all well know. I thank Jim from the bottom of my heart for his support of our efforts to dare to look into the future.

We have also briefed Chairman Filner, who has also been quite helpful. We briefed him on our activities and he then included the commission in a roundtable meeting in a hearing on veterans' issues. His support, along with ranking minority member, had been helpful to our deliberations on the commission. It is important to recognize and understand that the problems and opportunities of the past, as well as the present, it's important to understand them in order to build a new plan for the future. As a reminder, the Veterans Coalition was formed in June 2006. It was formed by the leading veterans service organizations who were looking for a new mechanism to inject new positive ideas into the policy arena of the veteran community.

The founders of the organizations were The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and AMVETS and me who formed the corporation and comprised the Board of Directors. The goal of the coalition is principally to fund and support the activities of our commission on the future for America's veterans. We are a 501(c)3 charitable corporation that raises money from foundations and the private sector to fund the research and the analysis necessary to bring together the transforming ideas for the commission.

Associate members of the coalition include the Vietnam Veterans of America; the Jewish War Veterans; The Military Order of the Purple Heart; the Blinded American Veterans Foundation and the Armed Forces Services Corporation. Our commission has 11 very dedicated, distinguished and well-informed commissioners. Their duty is to develop a 20-year strategic plan for the Department of Veterans Affairs to the year 2027. We, unfortunately, just lost one of our commissioners, Bryan Sharratt, a fine man, an expert on our Guard and Reserve matters. We lost him to cancer last week, so there is a cost to our service as well.

We are fully independent and, therefore, able to operate without the preconceived agendas that are so prevalent in government control commissions. Our commissioners are experienced in all these matters and are well-known by and well-schooled about the veteran community. I served as the President of the Veterans Coalition, and the Managing Commissioner of the Commissioned on the Future for Veterans, and I do not have a vote. We expect to deliver our recommendations to the American public and all of you in May by 2008.

Notably, one of our Commissioners is Dr. Ken Kizer, a brilliant man who was Undersecretary of Health for the DVA from 1993 to 1999. Dr. Kizer deserves due credit for reforming the DVA hospital system to its present standard, the lowest cost for patient and the highest quality care health provider in America. Interestingly, Dr. Kizer's transformational ideas were not well received in the veteran community. He was castigated for daring to think and daring to reform, but his critics were wrong, dead wrong. We now see that he was right to manage assets, to implement change and to lead in a way that provided concrete results for the word that has been in my vocabulary for the last year for every sentence, for the *future*.

Appropriately, Commander Morin awarded Dr. Kizer The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal yesterday. He was awarded for his forward thinking and creative work while leading the Veterans Health Administration. I can think of no one more deserving of this award than Dr. Ken Kizer. I would suggest to you, however, that his award should not only recognize what he has done in the past, but point to what he

will do as a distinguished commissioner looking over the horizon once again. He dared to create change in the 90s and now a commission on which he serves will dare to recommend greater transformation in 2008.

Change in large organizations is not always easy. But for sure, business as usual will fail us at the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The old slogan that the only one sure thing for the future is change, sounds good, but the fear of change prevents change. We on the commission will dare to recommend transformation. Ron Conley, your Past National Commander, served with us as well as a commissioner with great energy and purpose. His presence and insight helps us immensely as we navigate our path to our recommendations. Thanks, Ron.

The spirit of our commission is in a slogan. I like slogans. It has three parts. First: we're going to honor all of our veterans of our past wars. It's our duty. We need to salute veterans from today's war on terror in Iraq. It's our duty. But our most important duty is to inspire a future for all veterans and their families, and that is our mission. We are not in this as critics. When something is broken, we will say so, but only for the opportunity to insure that it is remedied by our plan for the future. Ladies and gentlemen, the future is upon us, hopefully, a future with blessings and hope and security, a future with well-thought through strategy to insure that our veterans in 2027 will have a full benefit of a healthy and robust Department of the Veterans' Affairs. This is our duty.

I addressed The American Legion at your Mid-Winter Conference last March. At that point, our commissioners had only met three times. We were getting focused on the strategy, a department that would serve in some capacity all veterans and their family members. The notion of addressing all veterans was advanced by our commissioners at our very first meeting, all veterans. Interestingly The American Legion has been a forefront of thinking about all veterans for at least 15 years. The American Legion's GI Bill of Health, of which I was involved, was created to open up the DVA medical system to veterans who had been locked out of care at DVA hospitals and clinics. Although that goal was temporarily achieved, it was abandoned quickly for lack of funds in 2003. We need to have an entity to replace the DVA, an entity to replace the DVA that will return to the commitment of serving all veterans.

The commissioners that came with us were asked two questions about a managing commissioner. One is, if you believe in writing a big check, and a bigger check, and a bigger check, is the answer, don't come on the commission. If you believe restricting care at VA hospitals and reducing the budget accordingly, that's arithmetic. I can do arithmetic, don't come on. We're thinking creatively between those two goalposts and that's where our recommendation will fall.

The Commission On a Future For Americas' Veterans is the *only* commission, task force or panel that has dared to really plan for the future. Some may soon say, and some of you may say that the future cannot be predicted. And some of you may say it is pie in the sky to be future-minded. I say, however, that virtually all government managers today deal only with the present and so they're constantly negotiating the difference between last year's budget and next year's budget. I estimate that 50% of my time at the Department of Veterans Affairs, then called the Veterans Administration, tells you a little about how old I am. I estimate 50% of my time was dedicated to budget issues and my deputy, the Honorable Everett Alvarez, spent at least 75% of his time on budget issues.

Budgets are not plans. Budgets do not look into the future. Secretary Jim Nicholson has appropriately called the VA budget process, Byzantine. I agree. Beyond that, management by budget cannot provide good planning and certainly won't result in good administration to the nation's resource for the veterans. We say that good management requires a strategy. Our commission is going to create one.

Now because we are an independent, nonpartisan and self-funded commission, we have won the confidence and interests on all sides of the veteran community. Everyone is discovering we are developing a practical strategic plan that will give confidence and vision to leaders who presently do not have the tools or the time required to do what has to be done at the DVA, if the DVA is to survive. Yes, it will come to a question of survival unless we transform.

The Comptroller General of the Untied States, David Walker, is speaking around the country about a looming fiscal train wreck. We are intent on the commission to prevent

veterans' cares and service from being destroyed, by such a financial crisis. I'll have more on that in a minute.

Our commission is also analyzing benefits and services to ensure that relevant in the 21st century. Chairman Filner just related to that situation. This is important because much of the laws governing the benefits area were created after World War I and, in many ways, cannot meet the needs of today's veterans. They are woefully out of date, not to mention, as Chairman Filner appropriately pointed out, adversarial in nature.

We are now in the process of reviewing and studying two concepts that have merit and have been advanced by our commissioners. One of the concepts involves the Veterans Health Administration and the other concentrates on the Veterans Benefit Administration. A third concept is envisioned, but is envisioned as a notion worth investigating further.

Let me begin by reviewing some thoughts about veteran's health care. First and foremost, we must recognize that physical asset management from the Department of Veterans medical care system is archaic and ineffective. The average age of a medical facility is now over 55 years. Do you know that it has been 16 years since a new VA hospital was built? This is in comparison to the average age of a facility in the private sector medical systems of 10 years: fifty-five versus ten. The real cost of managing this aging infrastructure is being borne by the federal government. But the veterans who must use them are the ultimate losers in this game. Imagine owing a house that is 55 years old and then imagine the cost of repairing and maintaining that house 20 years into the future and you will soon decide you should buy a new house.

The DVA CARES Commission of 2004, again chaired by Everett Alvarez, attempted to address these asset issues, but the CARES Report for all intents was dead on arrival. The Congress continues to fund these monumental maintenance costs without a meaningful strategic plan for the future of the assets. The American Legion, on the other hand, has been in the forefront of pushing for this strategic planning for the management of these assets. But, unfortunately, the political process has not lent itself to a viable plan. Our commission is studying ways and methods to manage these assets in the best interest of America's veterans.

Not too long ago, the commission visited the Department of Veterans Affairs Poly-Trauma Center in Tampa, Florida. DVA folks told us that the highest priority for a new hospital in the whole entire VA system was in Orlando, Florida where, of course, many veterans have migrated. Interestingly, while I was Administrator of Veterans Affairs in 1983, a first priority for a new hospital in the Department of Veterans Affairs was in Orlando, Florida. Twenty-four years later, it's still not built. This is not acceptable and it's the veterans who must wait in long lines and use outdated facilities that are suffering. Business as usual is not acceptable.

Not long after our commission began, Dr. Ken Kizer provided all commissioners a list of 26 essential management and clinical principles to manage the new Veterans Health Administration, in order to effectively provide for all veterans and their families. Unfortunately, the DVA does not have those management tools available to them now and business as usual is their only strategy. I want to repeat that we are not critics here, but there must be a new order of business if the VA is to succeed in what should surely be a challenging future.

Another commissioner, Bill Diefenderfer, ironically a former Deputy Director of the OMB—I never thought we had a friend at OMB—Bill was a friend. Vietnam veteran under President George Herbert Walker Bush. He advanced a concept to our commission of a new entity to manage the physical assets of the Department of Veterans Affairs. We think this is critical if we are to have a viable system in the years to come. We are looking at governance and asset management problems that could destroy the VHA as we know it today. But there are other threats as well, real threats.

The VHA as we know it today could easily be donated to the public health system. This threat to the DVA manifested at least once already in 1992 when 10 hospitals were offered by the Veterans Health Administration to Health and Human Services to care for the poor, immigrants and disabled. At that point, veterans in those hospitals would have vouchered out to the private sector. This proposal, rightly so, caused a maelstrom in the veteran community, culminating in an angry political issue at The American Legion

Convention in 1992 and ultimately the Secretary of the Veterans Affairs. Some of you may remember that incident. I do, because I was there.

So, don't we presently have a high quality, low cost or patient information technology driven system? Sure we do. Well then why are commissioners so concerned, why am I so concerned? The answer chiefly lies in the very bleak financial forecasts for federally-funded agencies for the next eight to 10 years. Not just General Accounting Office, but Congressional Budget Office has also issued dire warning signals to all who will listen about this economic Tsunami. These are real threats and real concerns.

David Walker goes so far as to liken our situation to that of Rome at the beginning of its downturn and suggested that we can change the picture of the future only if we act responsibly. Our commissioners are studying and testing a concept that would address this government and asset management issue. It should be noted that a full plan has not yet been developed, but in our research we are testing different management structures and plans to create the best means to manage the assets and govern the organization. In these deliberations we envision a model in which is the Department of Veterans Affairs' assets would essentially be donated to our nation's veterans so that the properties could be protected from financial encroachment or trade to other agencies for political purposes.

We are envisioning a veterans' trust, if you will, that will be governed by and for veterans. There is much more work to be done on the approach, but we have formed working groups that include people from each of the veterans' service organizations, Department of Veterans Affairs, congressional staff and private sectored firms with vested interests in the future of the Department of Veterans Affairs. These working groups are conducting research and examining ideas for the future for the veteran community.

We may not be able to resolve all potential difficulties but we are working to have an open interactive process that encourages input from all interested parties and we will be seamless. We are targeting this November for a straw man report that will give a sense of what our recommendations may include. The issues on the table are exciting and if structured properly and enacted, would provide solutions to improve the way business is conducted and protect veterans' programs from a looming budget crisis. We also need to provide incentives for the system to grow and to serve potentially all veterans and their families. This offers an opportunity to do what The American Legion has always espoused: create a better veterans' health care system that could serve all veterans and their families. We do recognize that those who are able should bring their insurance with them or purchase a low cost DVA policy for their care. There is a policy today for Category 7 and 8 veterans who are denied access, by the way.

The American Legion has pointed a way for this possibility in the past with the GI Bill of Health and it is still a good model. We're also studying a philosophical change to the Veterans Benefit Administration. Chairman Filner touched on this subject. The 1917 law and a patchwork that followed it still govern the benefit structure of the DVA. That law needs to be revisited. The present system is an adversarial system, not an advocacy system, so our commissioners are working on the view that the intake philosophy for veterans' benefits needs to be turned on its head. We have to have and we have to enable people to receive what is needed to become fully functional citizens. Additionally, the system doesn't employ modern day information technology. Incredibly in today's world, it is still a paper driven system.

This inefficiency of a disability benefits program has created 700,000 claims in the backlog and it gives the department a black eye every day. Again, this is not meant as criticism. The employees at the DVA work hard to manage these issues, but until we change the philosophy of the system, change the intake approach of the benefit process and allow for modern technology to help us, the system will continue to be broken. One of our commissioners, the Honorable Ray Boland, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs in Wisconsin and President of the Association of the State Directors of America, chairs our working group on this very important project. A brilliant man. The commission's working groups are presently studying these areas with the excellent assistance of organizations, like Booze, Allan, Hamilton; Mitre Corporation; and the Altarum Institute which are serving as think tanks for us in providing us excellent research capabilities.

We also have a third rail that has come under discussion. The consolidation of the Department Veterans Affairs Hospital System with the Department of Defense Hospital System. The present crisis, managing the not so seamless transition from DoD status to veteran status is very familiar to me and to your National Adjutant, Bob Spanogle. We both served on a Presidential Task Force to Improve Health Care for America's Veterans from 2001 to 2003. The task force studied this issue and made solid recommendations to solve the problem. However, all of our recommendations were shelved despite the fact that we had a good blueprint at hand. The lesson taught us that we must have an independent commission this time around if we avoid the outcome of past efforts of different commissions that have been so easily ignored. There is one issue here, however, that dwarfs all other issues.

The Department of Defense mission is different than the Department of Veterans Affairs. These different missions drive ownership of people and, therefore, the inability to transfer people properly from one to the other. Noting that this is a huge overriding issue, some of our commissioners proposed that we take on this challenge with an eye toward essentially bringing together the two systems under one ownership. Although this concept has merit, our commissioners decided that this was more than we could take on at the moment. We should consider making a broad and bold statement that this issue be seriously examined by Congress and other leaders in DoD and DVA. The reasoning was that we did not have the time or the resources to tackle this important issue in depth. I personally believe consolidation has great merit.

In closing, I'd like to thank The American Legion for its foresight in helping to form a commission on a future for America's veterans. It is the first time, the only time, that the veterans' services organizations have formally joined in a support effort to enact major change in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Although VSOs are the founders of this corporation, it's important to know, however, they all do not have to approve or accept our effort. As I had previously noted, the Legion has historically been in the lead of creative thinking for the department and I expect it will continue to do so. While we were pleased, indeed, the DVA budget for next year has dramatically increased, we should not be caught napping. Budget cycles will tighten and our national treasure, the Department of Veterans Affairs, will see some very difficult times in the years to come. A viable strategic plan is critical to ensuring a successful future for our veterans from the conflicts of yesterday, today and tomorrow. I lastly want to thank the Legion and the Legionnaires who have contributed to our entity. We still need your support.

Robert Browning wrote a verse that has always been one of my favorites. I leave it here with you today. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp; or what's a Heaven for." There is one other thing I want to leave you here today and I never leave any veterans without it. It's a slogan we created at the Department of Veterans Affairs when it was known as the VA, Veterans Administration. The slogan that we created was dissed by the *Washington Post* as trite and notably not so true. Since that editorial, of course, we've printed 100 million of that slogan, been on cars, all across America, as the highest selling slogan of anything the VA Canteen has ever had, by ten fold. It's a simple statement. It's a statement that rings true today and will ultimately, hopefully with God's blessing, be with us forever. It's slogan that says, "America is number 1 thanks to our veterans." *[Applause.]* God bless you and God bless this country."

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you for sharing as the chairman of the commission. Thank you for your 25 years of membership in The American Legion and Post 888 of Ohio. Harry, on behalf of myself and The American Legion, we appreciate all you are doing.

Our next guest represents an organization that shares our dedication to maintain and strengthen America's core of values. The Sons of The American Revolution is a historical, educational and patriotic non-profit corporation. It seeks to maintain and extend the institutions of America's freedom and enhance the appreciation of true patriotism and respect for our nation's symbols and preserve the value of American citizenship. We have with us today a man who has dedicated his life to perpetuating the stories of patriotism, courage, sacrifice, tragedy and triumph of the men who achieved an

independence of the American people. Welcome the President General of The National Society of the Sons of The American Revolution, Mr. Bruce A. Wilcox.

Address: Bruce A. Wilcox
President General of The National Society of The Sons of The American Revolution

It is a distinct honor for me to address you this morning. As a retired naval officer, naval aviator, with 20 years operational military experience in the Cold War period, I'm proud to be a member of The American Legion, Post 1775 in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. But I stand before you today as President General of The National Society of the Sons of The American Revolution, representing 27,000 members of our society, who are proud of the fact that we are direct descendents of the heroes of the American Revolution. Our ancestors were the first war veterans and we have been celebrating their accomplishments since 1889 when our Society was organized. I'm sure that if they were here today, they would probably be wearing The American Legion covers as we are.

Let me tell you a little bit about our organization. We have many patriotic programs that celebrate the American Revolution and the founding of our nation, including national historic essay and oration contests for our youth, Outstanding Eagle Scout, JROTC and ROTC recognition and a national poster contest for grade school children. Our color guard in colonial uniform participates in historical commemorations and celebrations in communities around the nation. You may have also seen them in patriotic parades and sporting events across this country. In recent years, we have joined The American Legion in partnership for common goals, such as promoting the Flag Amendment. Actually, one of our first actions of our Society in 1890 was to promote national observance of Flag Day. Since the early years Sons of the American Revolution has promoted the daily display of the Stars and Stripes on all public buildings, in courtrooms and in every post office in the country.

The SAR has been a force in securing the enactment of laws prohibiting the desegregation of the American Flag in most states. We have a program to recognize citizens and businesses that properly display the flag. We have recently started offering instructing in proper retirement of worn flags. We also have programs to publicly recognize outstanding teachers, firemen and law enforcement workers. We have joined The American Legion in the Blue Star Salute and we support veterans' homes through visitation. We participate in veteran grave decoration programs and we seek out the gravesites of Revolutionary War veterans so that they are never forgotten.

The story of The American Revolution is one of vision, heroism, sacrifice, persistence and some blind luck. People like John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Benjamin Franklin provided the vision. Military heroes included George Washington, Nathaniel Green, Henry Knox and John Paul Jones and thousands of members of the Continental Army and the various state militias. Other heroes included the many prominent leaders of the original states who risked everything and often lost it all. The supporters of the American Revolution value freedom above all and when the war was over they had won their freedom and formed a government that has persisted for over 225 years and is a success story for the world to emulate.

We believe this grand and glorious story of the American Revolution should be brought to life for our children, recent immigrants and others who have missed it in school. Therefore, we have taken on a mission to help our teachers throughout the nation to present this story. We have established a facility called The Center for Advancing American Heritage at which we are developing teaching and programming materials that have worked for us. We distribute them, free of charge, throughout the nation.

Our operation is small at this time but is growing in raising money to build an expanded facility and hope for further growth in years to come. We welcome any support you may wish to give this worthy venture. The National Society Sons of The American Revolution looks forward to continued partnership with The American Legion to protect freedom that was earned by our forefathers and to hand it to our children and their children. We know that The American Legion stands with us in our quest for patriotic education throughout this nation, and now it is my pleasure to make a presentation to the National Commander.

Commander Morin, in recognition of an accomplishment as a patriotic leader of this nation, it is an honor and a pleasure to present to you on behalf of the National Society Sons of The American Revolution the Distinguished Patriot Award.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Bruce, thank you for your membership and for being here. I'm very humbled in accepting this. Thanks, buddy!

…The Convention delegates viewed videos.

Special Presentation: The Prestigious Patriot Award
Kaziah Hancock and Michael Reagan

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack against America, many patriots took it upon themselves to do something to help the families of our fallen warriors. Their talents and commitment to serve their fellow citizens have contributed so much to diminishing the pain and elevating the pride of those left behind. Today, The American Legion will honor two such individuals, our most deserving, of The Prestigious Patriot Award. Welcome Kaziah Hancock and Michael Reagan to this stage.

Michael has some pictures of his paintings here or sketches. Kaziah's paintings are on display by the registration area and I encourage you to visit them. We will now have the reading.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: For your unswerving devotion to America and her fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives for their country in the Global War on Terrorism. By using your artistic talent to create portraits of these heroes for their families, you have helped to provide closure to hundreds of loved ones while preserving the legacy of these great young warriors with a permanent and touching tribute. On behalf of the 2.7 million wartime veterans of The American Legion, thank you for putting your wonderful talents to use in such a noble cause. Presented this 29th Day of August, 2007 at the 89th National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: At this time we will hear from Kaziah.

KAZIAH HANCOCK: You know what I love about people that are like this organization? I consider this group as a large body of friends, because what means something to me is being of service. You know it's right in your code when people go to take the roles for the nation and for the military to serve. I just love that. Four and a half years ago I first started this. I take the war personally. I'm not accountable for other people's actions, whether they're grateful or if they're not or whether they take things for granted. But I'll tell you what, my friends, this little sister doesn't take anything for granted. All the sacrifice that you men and women have made, all the sacrifices that are now being made, I salute you, because, by God, all that I have, I would not have if wasn't for people with guts to serve our great nation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now we will hear from Michael.

MICHAEL REAGAN: "This will be a little bit inconvenient for a second, but I need the audience to do something. If you are a Vietnam veteran, please stand up. *[Applause.]* They deserve that. You folks are my family. I love you all and welcome home.

I gave a speech in the state of Washington a few weeks ago. The National Commander was there. When I walked off the stage after I was able to get by the Vietnam veterans that I had newly met that day, he took my hand and put his coin in it. He said, "Welcome home!" Vietnam veterans like to say this, "Pretend we don't have this little chip on our shoulder." But you know we do, because none of us have heard that very much. I've had the President of the United States say, "Welcome home," and I've had Paul to say, "Welcome home." So what I did is a little gift for Paul.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you, Michael, it's a truly awesome.

MICHAEL REAGAN: Those two words mean a lot to Vietnam veterans. We hear a lot about the things that are going to be done for us. We've been listening to that for

about 40 years. But you can say welcome home to a Vietnam veteran; put your arms around him and say, "Thank you" any time and it's done right now.

I want to talk a little bit about this project. This is the most important thing I've ever done in my life. When I came home from Vietnam, I didn't have any scars, although I had been at the DMZ in '67 and '68. I don't know why I didn't. I kept asking myself why I came home. I found out 3 ½ years ago why when I began this project. I had a young woman call me. Her name was Cherice Johnson. She had seen some television piece about my portraits. I've been doing celebrity portraits for 35 years. She said, "How much would you charge me to draw my husband?" I was pretty excited. I thought the TV piece was probably bringing me some work. And then on the second paragraph it said, "He died last year in the war." I told her I couldn't charge her. I said, "I'm a combat guy, your husband is my brother, you're my family. Just send me the picture."

So I did Michael Johnson's portrait. Two days after she had received her picture, she had called me. I'd like to say that I was in the car with my wife going to get a haircut. *[Laughter.]* I wonder if I can blame that [lack of hair on head] on Agent Orange. I don't know yet.

But [Cherice Johnson] told me that for the last year all of her friends and the people that loved her have been trying to help her heal, to get over that initial hump, so she could start living her life again, so she could start sleeping. She said that when she received my package and opened up the envelope and pulled her husband out and looked into his eyes, she was able to reconnect and all of the things that she needed to say, she was able to say. She said that nothing had meant as much as this. I turned to my wife in the car. I listened for 20 minutes and if you knew me very well, you know I'm not a listener, I'm a talker. But after about 20 minutes, I turned to my wife and said, "We need to do them all." She said, "How are we going to do that." I said, "I have no idea." She said to me, "How are we going to pay for this?" I said, "I don't care, we're going to turn it over to God as I was not charging anybody. This was all free. These people have given up enough."

I want to thank my wife for supporting that decision because it necessitated me retiring from my job as the artist of the UW and closing down an art studio, I had spent 40 years to open, to have the time to do this project. But again, like I said it's the most important thing I've ever done in my life. These posters you see on the right represent two-thirds of those portraits.

I want to tell you a couple of simple stories just so you really feel the impact of what we're doing. Now, the people from the state of Washington have already heard this. They already brought their Kleenex, so I apologize if anybody needs any, but you can contact them. I had a mother call me from Virginia. She said, "Can you draw my son. He just died in the war in Iraq." I said, "Of course, I could." She said, "Could you draw him holding his 13 week old daughter?" I said, "Of course."

So, she sent me a picture. She sent me lots of pictures, but there were no pictures of the daughter and son together. So, I called her and said, "There is no photograph here of them together." She said, "They never saw each other. I need you to draw that one, so as my granddaughter gets older, she has something that she can say is of her and her father." I did that picture; it's on the top of number 1 poster. When the mother received that picture, she called me back and said, "Way after you are gone, my daughter will be pointing at that picture saying, "That's the one of her father and her."

I received a phone call one day from a young woman in Kansas. We've both received lots of these kinds of phone calls. She said, "Can you bring my brother home from the war?" She didn't even introduce herself. I had no idea who I was talking to. So after I got into the conversation a little bit, it turned out that her brother had promised to be at her wedding. He kept getting extended, they kept postponing the wedding. He had been killed a few days earlier. They had the wedding scheduled for two weeks later. She said, "I need my brother home for my wedding." I said, "Get me the photographs, I'll do my best."

I got the photographs, did the portrait, framed it, got it to a friend of mine who lives in Iowa. She actually drove it to this person's wedding. She showed up that day at the wedding. The mother, the daughter—the sister, of course, who was getting married knew about this. Nobody else knew about it. My friends walked in with the portrait. The mother and father looked at these people saying, "Well, we don't know you. Who are

you?" The sister said, "Well, mom and dad, I have a surprise for you." She said that her mom said to her, "You are not suppose to give us gifts. It's your wedding." She said, "We better go in the other room." So, my friends, with the portrait, the daughter and the parents of the bride went into the other room. She handed them the picture and they unwrapped it. There was their son. Her mother said, "Perfect." In all the wedding pictures, the son is in all the wedding pictures. So, I had the family call me and thank me for bringing their son home.

We're just artists so I can't totally explain to you how I was able to bring her son home. I want to read this one letter. It is short. "Michael, it has been some time since receiving the sketch you masterfully drew of my son, Isaiah Hunt. I have wondered at various times, like when the sun seems to hit it just making it appear as if it is energized with a halo of sorts, and again as Isaiah's eyes follow me around the room. But to date, the most important impact that portrait has is the attention it gets from my grandson, Brandon Isaiah. He was born just one year ago after we lost his uncle to this earth, but since birth, he has smiled and stared at that portrait as if he can see more than a drawing. We like to think he met him in heaven just before he came to be with us. It allows us to talk about his special uncle, who would love him very much. Brandon has also had a very unfriendly introduction to his life thus far, and we truly believe Isaiah has been there for Brandon during some of the worst, making himself known to him somehow. I just wanted to share this with you, because it says the first impression of your work isn't the whole story. It accomplishes what I believe you intended."

This is what I intended, bringing these soldiers home to their family to share in the future as well as the past.

"Thank you again for capturing something even photographs weren't able to do of my son."

I'm doing two portraits a day. The day before we drove down here, I finished the 802nd portrait. I have 100 sitting there waiting for me after I'm done speaking here today. We're driving back to Seattle. Again, this is the most important thing I've ever done in my life. But I have one other message. We are The American Legion. I followed a speaker in California a couple of weeks ago who asked the crowd to please be there for the soldiers when they get home. I have a little different way I want to say that. I'm not going to ask you to do anything. I'm going to tell you that you have a duty to be there. We've been there. Some of us weren't cared for very well when we came home, but there's a whole bunch of people coming home that can be cared for and it's our responsibility. *[Applause.]*

When you see a soldier or if you ever hear of anybody talking badly to a soldier, you have to step in. There are things happening in this country that we want to pretend that aren't happening, but they are. I spoke to the Marines at Fort Lewis just a couple of months ago and when I was done speaking, I had a Marine corporal who had just gotten back from Iraq asked me to talk to him. This angers me. I went over to him and he said, "I feel like crying after talking to you." I said, "You know, I cry every day. Crying is okay." He started crying and I put my arms around him and held him, a young Marine corporal who had just fought in the war.

We pulled ourselves away from the rest of the room so he wouldn't be embarrassed and I said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" I meant that. He said, "Answer a question for me." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Why does my town hate me?" I won't tell you the words I used because the Marines use some different words when we talk to each other but needless to say, I had something spontaneous to say. Then I told him, "You've changed. You scare people because you've decided to do something not a lot of them will do, not a lot of them are brave enough to do and you survived it. So you've changed. I don't believe people hate you, but they are afraid of you and what you need to do is reevaluate the people that you're going to call your friends as all Vietnam veterans have done, and start living your life." Then I gave him my phone number and told him, "If you ever need to talk to somebody, call me."

There's about 5,000 people in this room. If every one of you made it just a duty of your own to reach out to 10 different soldiers when you saw them in your lifetime, that's 50,000 soldiers you can touch. Believe me, and I know this, all those Vietnam guys who stood up, all those men and women, know this. They need to be touched, because we

needed to be touched. As said earlier, when we weren't touched, it cost us over 58,000 suicides. Don't let that happen again. These people are us, you guys. The men and women in this room, these people coming home are us. You don't have to agree with anything. My project is not political. It's not red or blue, left or right, pro or con. It's about love and respect. And what I expect this room to do, and that's why I'm now a member of The American Legion, is I expect all of you to love and respect these soldiers when they come home. It doesn't matter what you think about the war. *[Applause.]*

As I said earlier, these posters represent two-thirds of the portraits I've done. We're currently working on the third poster. We're going to do these posters as long as the pictures are being done that I'm doing. If you want to get these, you can download them free at the: *www.FallenHeroProject.org* site. They're on the home page, you just have to download them. They are all free. The reason they exist is not to remind the country of the loss, but it's so my promise to these families is kept. I don't ever want you to forget these people, and then to the families who I've sent each one of them. They're in these pictures, these posters, it's so they know their lost ones are not alone.

I'd like to introduce Don Mills from Seattle, Washington, Post No. 1. He's my Washington guy and has been a big supporter of mine. I have brought two sets of these posters, one for the National Commander and one for the national office. I'd like to give those to them now. But again, the idea of these posters is to post them. A lot of the posts in Washington state have taken these and put them up on their walls, so that when we come into the room, we have eye contact with them. Anybody in this room who wants a set of these, all you have to do is go out and get them.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you. Let's give these most magnificent artists a true welcome and honor they deserve on behalf of The American Legion. To both of you, thank you so much for what you are doing on behalf of our fallen heroes. In appreciation by The American Legion and the American people, the members of our great organization in any way that you may help these two artists do their great work, please step forward. Thank you and God bless both of you.

KAZIAH HANCOCK: The web site to see the volume of paintings that myself and four other artists have accomplished in the last four and a half years, is: at *www.heropaintings.com*. There is over 700 images the five of us have completed collectively. As far as my political opinion, let me tell you what, I'm for keeping America on the map.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: If you haven't yet dropped off your contribution for Operation Landstuhl, be sure to stop by the booth located in the lobby outside Hall 4 before leaving today. I set a goal of raising $50,000 for Operation Landstuhl so that we can provide the telephone cards, the DVDs, civilian clothing and other miscellaneous comfort items for our troops. The American Legion family and the friends of our family have surpassed that goal of $50,000. But we need more to provide some of those badly needed necessities for the wounded warriors recuperating in Landstuhl, Germany. I'll also be accepting contributions from departments and affiliated organizations today, immediately following the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Report at 2:00 p.m. on stage.

The Chair recognizes Linda M. Perham of Vermont, Chairman of the National Convention on Credentials & Internal Affairs & Membership, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Linda Perham, Vermont, Chairman

Forty-seven members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), considered seven resolutions, all of which originated with departments of The American Legion. Three were rejected and four were referred to the standing committee.

Kenneth Mueller (TX) nominated Linda Perham (VT), seconded by Tim Grabin (CO) as Chairman. Motion carried. Jimmy Maness (AL) nominated Gerald Goetzinger (SD) as Secretary. This was seconded by Lee Engelbrecht (UT). Motion carried.

Harvey Daggett (CT) made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the report of the Committee and that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the report resulting out of the Committee to insure proper wording and form without changing the substance of meaning. The motion was seconded by Norma Walter (SC). Motion carried.

Rejected

Resolution No. 13 (MI): DMS Initial Membership Fee to be Raised from $20 to $35
Resolution No. 8 (CO): Collection of E-Mail Addresses of American Legion Members
Resolution No. 79 (MT): DMS Program of The American Legion—Target Amounts

Referred to the Standing Committee on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 6 (CO): Seek a Study to Evaluate the Cost and Benefits of the Current DMS Program
Resolution No. 82 (VA): Membership Chairman Awards
Resolution No. 78 (MT): DMS Program of The American Legion Dues
Resolution No. 74 (MT): Female Apparel as Gold Brigade Awards for Female Legionnaires

Commander Morin, as a registered delegate of this convention, I move for the acceptance of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motion has been made and seconded to accept the report. On the question? All in favor, signify by saying, 'Aye.' All those opposed, by 'Nay.' The 'Ayes' have it. The report on Credentials & Internal Affairs—Membership is adopted.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander
Lloyd H. Woods, Maine, National Vice Commander

It is now time for the membership awards. The department and individuals who will be joining me on the stage took membership to another level in 2007. They have shown that during the year that "Back to the Basics" and "Together We Will Win" approach to membership does work. Membership is one of the keys of our strength and the strength has been made even stronger by their efforts. Partnerships with the United States Recruiting Command, *Military.com*, The American Legion Riders, Team Johnson Racing, "Heroes to Hometowns," Walter Reed Medical Center, Active Reserve Military Components and many others have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to reach out to younger veterans and their families. Couple that with our continued commitment to service to veterans, their families and our communities and we will clearly see why The American Legion's growth potential is unlimited. It is an exciting time.

Our DMS Plus Program is a tremendous success with over 192,000 new members this year. DMS Plus has been a wonderful tool for over the past two years and has assisted six departments in attaining their highest membership total in their entire history. However, DMS is a tool, but just a tool. The 10,000 member-plus increase we are experiencing this year comes as a result of your working our excellent programs and attending to the basics of the Four Pillars of our great organization. It is now, my pleasure to present a number of membership awards, and ask National Vice Commander Lloyd Woods to assume the duties of the podium.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODS: During the past year, six departments took their membership efforts to an all time high. For each of those commanders, membership chairmen and their adjutants, we have a ring or a gift to recognize their accomplishments. In addition, a plaque is presented to the department commander for the department efforts.

The first department is the Department of Nevada. This is their 8th consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to Commander Tony Vaughn, Membership Chairman Daniel Waters, and Department Adjutant Lionel Motta.

Next is the Department of Delaware. This is their 8th consecutive all-time high. Maintaining their traditional membership was a key element in the department reaching this goal. The presentation is to Commander Donald White and Membership Chairman Lyman Brenner.

Next is the Department of Virginia. This is their 2nd consecutive all-time high, maintaining their traditional membership was a key element in the department reaching their goal. The presentation is to Commander Jerry Howard, Membership Chairman Ronald Miluszewski, and Department Adjutant Dale Chapman.

Next is the Department of Arizona. This is their 2nd consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to Commander Thomas Cosgrove, Membership Chairman Douglas Gorniak, and Department Adjutant John Aldecoa.

Following Arizona is the Department of Florida. This is their 2nd consecutive all-time high. The presentation is to Commander George Wehrli, Membership Chairman J. Faye Skaggs, and Department Adjutant Michael McDaniel.

The Department of South Carolina is next. The presentation is to Commander John Dellinger, Membership Chairman Michael Strauss, and Department Adjutant Jimmy Hawk.

DELEGATE DELLINGER: Last year at the National Convention, Commander Morin, we had a membership goal to meet. Commander Morin made a comment that he hoped South Carolina did not make their goal, because of my bet with him. If I lost, then he got 5 gallons of sea-crab soup. If you don't know what sea-crab soup is, it's only available in Macon, South Carolina. But anyway, we done him one better. We made the 100%; we made an all-time high. So at this time, I have a special presentation for Commander Morin. I have an apron that has a recipe for sea-crab soup. Now the 5-gallon of soup we're going to get, but I couldn't find a bucket. So this is a painter's bucket that was converted to a minnow bucket and now it's converted to a sea-crab soup bucket, and the bucket has the makings for sea-crab soup. Commander Morin gets to make his own sea-crab soup.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODS: Please accept these awards as a token of our personal appreciation for your department's membership efforts.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Consolidated Post Report is a summary of what The American Legion posts have accomplished in their communities. It is an opportunity to tell the story of your post on an easy to fill out form. For the past 15 years, the average response rate has been about 50 percent. Last year, when I went in front of Congress in September representing our organization, I only had the numbers from 6,680 posts from out of 14,500 American Legion posts, only 47 percent in all. In order to increase that response rate at the start of my year, I issued a challenge to all departments to improve the response rate from their posts. With that challenge being given, our overall response rate improved from 47 percent to 56 percent, an increase of just over 1,500 posts reporting.

Those department commanders that met my challenge of 75 percent response rate were: Alaska, California, Florida, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Mexico. I think they all deserve a round of applause.

Now those departments that exceeded my challenge and had a response rate of 95 percent or higher, I have asked to join me on the stage today for special recognition. At this time, we will present their plaques. We call upon National Vice Commander Elgin Wahlborg to assume of duties at the podium for the reading of the winners.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WAHLBORG: The winners in this category: Mervin G. Gunderson, Commander; Department of Montana, Jerry Landkamer, Commander; Department of Nebraska; Earlon L. Beale, Commander, Department of New Hampshire; Ronald P. LeVasseur, Commander, Department of Rhode Island; Jerry W. Howard, Commander, Department of Virginia; Harold E. Plants, Commander, Department of West Virginia; and Louis A. Regalado, Commander, Department of Mexico.

Once again, congratulations to those seven departments who went above and beyond the call of duty. Please don't stop this hard work. We have a long way to go before we get our reporting numbers up. With your help, we can do it.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander
Allan C. Setterberg, Utah, National Vice Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The National Emergency Fund is perhaps one of the most visible ways we can demonstrate our commitment to veterans serving veterans. At the start of my year as your Commander, I issued a challenge. I asked every department commander to raise funds based on their year-end membership totals. I did not ask for a baseline amount to be given. I just asked that we give. During the challenge year, The American Legion gave out just over $75,000 in grant money to Legion family members for the disasters we experienced in 2006 to 2007. We raised over $290,000. It is great to know that when a Legion member needs help, the Legion family will step up and give without reservations. It is because of your continued giving that we are able to sustain this fund. I think we deserve a round of applause at this time for all of you for what you have done.

Those department commanders who were top fundraisers in their respective categories determined by membership size are receiving a Revere Bowl. We have six department commanders being recognized today. At this time, we will present the Revere Bowl. Will National Vice Commander Allan Setterberg assume the duties of the podium for reading of the names.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER SETTERGERG: Those department commanders who have been recognized as the top fundraisers for National Emergency Fund based on size are: James W. Casey, New York; David A. Schaaf, Maryland; Charles E. French, Georgia; Harold E. Plant, West Virginia; Henry L. Trest, Mississippi; Marvin R. Siegfried, Hawaii.

Congratulations. Thank you for your success. Please do not stop the fundraising efforts. We never know where disaster will strike again. Remember, each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund will stay in the National Emergency Fund. At this time, I would like to ask those departments who have checks for the National Emergency Fund come forward and make your presentation now.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MILLER, Pennsylvania: The great Department of Pennsylvania has a check for $8,451.09 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE RICE, Idaho: Cleve Rice, NEC, from Idaho. This year we held the 20th year of the Tri-State Golf Tournament. It happened to be in my hometown. Nevada, Montana and Idaho were involved. This year we have a check for $1,245.00 for the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOWARD, Virginia: Past Commander Jerry Howard from the Department of Virginia. I have two checks. The first one is from American Legion Post 180, Vienna, Virginia for $1,000 and the second one from the Department of Virginia for $2,000.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEIFNER, Iowa: Milt Heifner, Delegation Chairman from the great Department of Iowa, is proud to present a check in the amount of $1,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

DELEGATE DELLINGER, South Carolina: I have check for $5,283.

MR. SMART, Arizona: From Grand Canyon Post 42, Department of Arizona, $1,000.

MR. HEDRICK, Southern Caucus: As Chairman of the Southern Caucus, I'd like to say that this morning we had our breakfast. We done a lot of heavy fining to our members and they were gracious in what they done. We've turned the money already into the front office. We want to give $4,142.50 to the National Emergency Fund, $4,142.50 for the Legacy Fund, and $2,287.00 for the racecar team for a total of $10,570. I challenge the other caucus to do the same.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: That's because I ate grits at the Southern Bloc today.

DELEGATE MORMAN, Ohio: Mike Morman, Commander of the Department of Ohio. We are honored to present this check. We have with us our Delegation Chairman, Ed Anderson; our NEC Carl Swisher; Alternate, NEC Richard Zulch. Our department officers are Bob Kimball and Lou Dimmerman and the ones responsible for this are Directors of Charities, Inc. It gives me great pride to present to the National Emergency Fund a check in the amount of $60,000 to help.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Once again, there is a spirit of giving that you do so well and so often. Today, we raised $84,121.59. Thank you.

The next award is to a man who set the standard for recruiting during this membership year. The National Recruiter of the Year gathered 470 new members to The American Legion fold. Welcome a dedicated Legionnaire, Mr. Frank H. Carr, from Post 32, Halifax, Virginia. I call upon National Vice Commander Byron White to come to the lectern.

Presentation: National Recruiter of the Year
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WHITE: Frank Carr is certainly a Legionnaire true to his word. Last year when he accepted the Legionnaire of the Year Award at Salt Lake City, he said, "I'll see you next year." By gosh, here he is. His 2-year total is 958 new members for The American Legion. In reorganization for his efforts, Commander Morin will present a number of items to him, to include a Revere Bowl, a Legion Cap, a shadowbox plaque, a National Top Recruiter ring, and a polo shirt. These signifying the significance of what he's done. The Department of Virginia is required to provide a wheelbarrow to take it away. Congratulations, Frank and I hope we see you again next year for its repeat.

MR. CARR, Virginia: First, give an honor to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to Commander Morin, who it's truly been a pleasure working with this year. To Adjutant Spanogle and his staff for assisting and providing me with all the materials I needed to do what I needed to do; without them I couldn't have done it. To my State Adjutant Dale Chapman and to all the members of the state who helped me, along with Linda, who is the Membership Secretary who put up with me all year, to my lovely wife, my lover, my best friend, for giving me the time to do what I needed to do in order to recruit these people. I truly thank you and I love for that and to each one of you my fellow Legionnaires, it has truly been a pleasure working this year to bring in people into The American Legion. It's because I love the Legion, its ideas. I love working for the Legion because if I didn't believe in The American Legion, I wouldn't be doing what I would be doing today.

Some of my friends often tell me it's only because I am a minister that I am able to do some of the things I do. But thank God for His favor in allowing me when I talk to people, He puts in front me the people who want to join the Legion. But along with God's favor, I must tell you it takes planning and focus on what you are trying to do. A good knowledge of your post, your state and your national programs and activities and what the Legionnaire you're trying to sign up can do to fit into those programs and ideas.

There's no real secret, as I say again, to recruiting, just ask everyone who might be eligible to join the Legion, if they would join. I sometimes have to ask ten or more veterans in order to get one to say that he will join. But in asking those ten who say no, I just do like the Bible says, I just shake the dust off my feet. I don't get upset, I just go and ask somebody else.

In order to do this, the main thing I tell people, is that I went to a Legion conference in our state of Virginia one year and saw a young man get the top recruiter for the state. That was my dream, just to win the state. But along with a dream, it takes a vision of how you are going to do it. So I just want to tell everyone it takes a dream along with a vision, because you've got to have both in order to do what you are going to do in anything in life. A vision without a dream is a disaster and a dream without a vision is just a nightmare. So when you're trying to do something with a focus and a purpose, you can make it happen. Just get out there and ask everybody you see to join the Legion, this great organization. You shouldn't feel ashamed to ask anyone to join. Thank you and I truly appreciate for all the gifts and the words I received today.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Jamie Koutz of Indiana, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economics, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters
James E. Koutz, Indiana, Chairman

Eighty One (81) members of your Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters met at 8:30 a.m. on August 26, 2007, in Convention Room A7, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committees were called to order by Joseph Sharpe Jr. (DC), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Ron Chamrin (DC), Assistant Director for Economic Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. James E. Koutz (IN), Chairman of the Standing National Economic Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committees.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Richard Zulch, as Committee Secretary; Albert M. Robotti (NJ), Chairman of the Employment and Veterans Preference Committee and Richard T. Lee Jr. (CA), Secretary; William Christopherson (UT), Chairman of the Other Economic Matters Committee and James Fratolillo (MA), Secretary.

A Screening Committee on Economic Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committees for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committees substantially. It was chaired by James E. Koutz, Chairman of the Economic Commission and was composed of the following persons: Richard T. Lee, Jr. (CA); James Fratolillo (MA); Albert M. Robotti (NJ); and David G. Desmond (NC).

The 24 Economic resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committees:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	9
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	2
Referred to the Standing Commission	5
Received and Recorded	8
Rejected	0

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committees' behalf.

A report of action taken on the 5 resolutions referred to the Standing Economic Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the department concerned.

Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 51: Full Funding and Staffing for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) and Its Programs
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 92 (MA) and Resolution No. 151 (MN))

WHEREAS, Within the Department of Labor (DOL) annual discretionary appropriations, the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) receives funding for the administration of various employment programs; and

WHEREAS, VETS provides such programs as the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, and the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI); and

WHEREAS, VETS programs provide quality employment services to enrolled veterans and potential employers; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), provides a federally mandated staffing formula for both DVOPs and LVERs; and

WHEREAS, Historically, Congress has failed to fully staff all DVOP and LVER positions in each state; and

WHEREAS, Meaningful employment is a proven effective approach to homelessness among many homeless veterans; and

WHEREAS, The goal of VETS is assisting all eligible veterans in obtaining meaningful employment through proactive assistance and aggressive training; and

WHEREAS, NVTI provides VETS with standardized training for veterans' employment professionals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion continue to advocate full funding and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs.

Resolution No. 52: Restore Language to Title 38, Chapter 41, Regarding DVOPs and LVERs
Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Throughout the nearly two hundred and twenty-year history of the United States, the men and women of this nation have served in the Armed Forces in the interest of the collective body of states, united under a central Federal government, "to provide for the common defense"; and

WHEREAS, These men and women served the United States under the constitutional authority vested in, and by direction of the President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, In Section 4301, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of disabled veterans of the Armed Forces are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, Congress,

to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Public Law (PL) 107.288 has eliminated the requirement that DOL/VETS review all workforce centers annually and this has minimized Federal oversight of the programs since the ASVET has drastically cut funds allocated for this activity and established a policy that only 10 percent of the centers operated under Title 38 will be reviewed; and

WHEREAS, PL 107.288 has removed the job descriptions of the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) from Title 38, USC, and given the states the ability to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus weakening the VETS programs across the country by eliminating the language that required these staff positions provide services only to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The passage of PL 107.288 also removed the federally mandated manning formulas for assigning DVOPs and LVERs and this has allowed each state to determine the number of veterans' employment personnel in each state, and the assignment of more than one half time DVOP and/or LVER to one office, while eliminating positions in offices that need veterans' staff by virtue of veteran intake; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support legislation that will restore language to Chapter 41, Title 38 that requires 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also support 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.

Resolution No. 130: Oppose Efforts to Change the Residency Requirements for State Directors of the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The United States Government has recognized that the employment of veterans is a national priority and responsibility; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Labor, Veterans Employment & Training Service has done an outstanding job of promoting the employment of veterans and protecting the rights of veterans to employment across the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Veterans Employment and Training Service does its jobs in every state by employing State Directors that work with the states, local veterans service organizations, community based organizations, local governmental entities and local employer; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that each State Director have a comprehensive knowledge of the state economy, veterans service organizations, including the American Legion, local service providers, and each states workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Each State Director must have a strong cohesive relationship with state Workforce agencies, therefore, in most cases the State Directors are hired from the state Workforce agency; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, U.S Code 4103 (s)(2) requires each Director for Veterans Employment and Training for a State shall, at the time of appointment, have been a bona fide resident of the State for at least two years; and

WHEREAS, The residency requirement as stated in Title 38 USC has served this nation well and has enhanced the success of all programs administered by the Veterans Employment and Training Services; and

WHEREAS, For many years the American Legion has been a strong supporter of keeping the residency requirement part of federal law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any effort to change the current law that requires the residency requirement for the State Directors, United States Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service.

Resolution No. 133: Transfer Of Montgomery GI Bill Education Benefits To Immediate Family Members
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economics (Employment and Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) provides educational assistance for service members and veterans; and

WHEREAS, MGIB benefits are earned benefits exclusively for those individuals that have chosen to serve as members of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Service members and veterans encounter life events, such as multiple deployments, that may not be permissible to participate in continuing education; and

WHEREAS, Disabled veterans have the ability to use the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and may choose not to use earned MGIB benefits; and

WHEREAS, Dependents of veterans can benefit from the transfer of MGIB benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support the transfer of Montgomery GI Bill benefits from a veteran to their immediate family members if the veteran elects to do so.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 110 (NY): Oppose Efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to Create a National Call Center for VA Education Benefits
Resolution No. 159 (DE): Exemption of Deduction from Unemployment Insurance Benefits
Resolution No. 168 (SD): Minimum of One Full-Time LVER and One Full-Time DVOP Positions Per Local Employment Office

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 50 (TX): Support Improvements in the Reporting Programs of the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Resolution No. 53 (TX): Support Legislation to Require Regional Administrators, State Directors, Assistant State Directors and Other Professional Staff of VETS to be Veterans
Resolution No. 54 (TX): Department of Labor Data System Regarding Veterans in its Programs
Resolution No. 96 (MA): Seek Continuation of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) Program
Resolution No. 97 (MA): Support Veterans Preference in Public Employment

Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
William Christopherson, Utah, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 22: Allow All Spouses of Deceased Veterans to Gain Eligibility For the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The current eligibility for a home loan from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Home Loan Program for spouses are: an unremarried spouse of a

veteran who died while in service or from a service-connected disability, or are a spouse of a serviceperson missing in action or a prisoner of war; and

WHEREAS, It is unfair for a veteran's spouse only to become eligible for the Department of Veterans Affairs home loan if the veteran dies of a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are more likely than not the primary income provider for the household and contribute the majority of payments to mortgages for the family; and

WHEREAS, Upon death of a veteran, the mortgage payments must continue to be paid and the burden falls on the widow/widower. Many times the spouse elects to relocate to a smaller, more economical establishment, that is within their means; now, therefore, by it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support that all spouses of deceased veterans gain eligibility for the VA Home Loan program.

Resolution No. 91: Federal Procurements and Contracts for Veteran-Owned Businesses
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Small business assistance to all veterans who have honorably served our country is a veteran's benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion seeks and supports legislation to require a 5 percent goal, with set-aside and sole source authority, for Federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by veterans, including those small businesses owned by reserve component members who have been or may be called to active duty, or may be affected by base closing and reduction in our military forces; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to all veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Due to a small number of service-disabled and veteran-owned businesses that are representative in the Federal procurement small business area; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That any veteran business development assistance should include funding to assist Federal agencies in reaching their 5% veteran procurement goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek to develop a user-friendly veteran procurement database for use by all Federal government agencies; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That 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.

Resolution No. 100: Transitional Housing Allotments for Returning Combat Veterans
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Unlike the active duty component that are stationed stateside in the final months of their service, Guardsmen and Reservists are fully employed in a combat zone up until the final day that they redeploy back to the Continental United States; and

WHEREAS, At the demobilization site, returning veterans undergo approximately 3 weeks of physicals, transition programs, reunion with family members and inventory accountability. There is little time for these service members to start the process of finding a home, apartment, room or other dwelling; and

WHEREAS, Families are sometimes unaccommodating to returning veterans and cannot or refuse to house them. Young veterans are living with their families, friends, in hotels, in cars, and are homeless; and

WHEREAS, Many single soldiers stay at hotels and are burning up their savings earned over the prior year. Veterans are having to enter unfair leases/agreements just to find a place to stay because they are in dire need; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are ineligible to live on campus housing due to the likelihood of returning in the middle of a semester and are unable to start college for 4 more months. For 9 months out of the year, universities are in their lengthy fall and spring semester terms and these young men and women can't restart their academic careers until the next term starts; therefore, they are not eligible to live on campus; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 90,000 Guard and Reserve have been re-entering the private sector each year since 2001; and

WHEREAS, A 180-day 'buffer' period will allow veterans to transition back in to the civilian sector with much greater ease and will prevent homelessness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support 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.

Resolution No. 180: Veterans Entrepreneur Training Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, In 1989 The American Legion Department of Utah received a grant for $91,447.00 from the U.S. Small Business Administration to be used to fund entrepreneurial training for veterans desiring to implement and own a small business venture; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion program was designed to encourage and motivate veterans to explore their management and organizing abilities required in formulating sound business plans and help in obtaining needed financing for successful implementation of a business; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation with The American Legion and the U.S. Small Business Administration with local entities that entail schools with Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce, business owners, State Industrial Development Departments, private consulting support systems, lending institutions, and instruction and information from existing and retired business owners can contribute to The American Legion programs following three-fold objectives:

1. To reach out to as many veterans as possible to explore their business interests;
2. To select a reasonable number of veterans to participate based on entrepreneurial potential and application of business successful criteria;
3. To provide selected veterans with education programs, support workshops and counseling to assist in forming sound business plans; and

WHEREAS, Classes should be held at educational establishments during evening or weekend hours and should include the veteran entrepreneur's spouse or partner whenever possible having proved to be an unequivocal asset to the veteran's success; and

WHEREAS, Due to older age individuals separating from active military, plus activation of Guard and Reserve units who have immediate family obligations that interrupt a service person's business or employment while deployed can completely change their future professions when returning could necessitate a training program to fit their changed needs; and

WHEREAS, A veteran entrepreneur training program be re-instated that creates capacity and capability within the veteran community; and

WHEREAS, A veteran entrepreneur training program would be designed as a holistic approach to assist veterans and their spouses at every level of transition to the next level while ultimately creating viable sustainable and competitive business; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion request 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 in return to productive civilian professions.

Resolution No. 181: Veterans Small Business Opportunities
Origin: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, Small business ownership and entrepreneurship are the backbone of the American economy and foundation for democracy; and

WHEREAS, Veterans, through their service, have cultivated experiences, skills, and self-discipline that make them well suited for self-employment; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-50) to assist veteran and service-disabled veteran owned businesses by creating the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, a.k.a. The Veterans Corporation (TVC); and

WHEREAS, The National Veterans Business Development Corporation is unable to comply with certain mandates set forward in P.L. 106-50, which directs that they engage in providing entrepreneurial education, services and advocacy to promote and foster successful veteran entrepreneurship within the veteran business community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support restructuring of the National Veterans Business Development Corporation, which replaces the Chief Executive Officer with a congressionally appointed Director from the Senior Executive Service, and restricting the role of the Board of Directors to fundraising, marketing and branding which will serve to increase small business opportunities to veterans.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics

Resolution No. 19 (MD): Elimination of the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Funding Fee
Resolution No. 20 (MD): Eliminate the Department of Veterans Affairs Multifamily Transitional Housing Loan Program and Reallocate the Funding Solely for Supportive Services Grants for Homeless Veterans
Resolution No. 21 (MD): Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Status

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 89 (MA): Support Efforts of the Small Business Administration (SBA) Office of Veterans Affairs
Resolution No. 95 (MA): Support a Department of Veterans Affairs Small Business Loan Program

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN KOUTZ: Mr. Commander, I, James E. Koutz of Indiana, a duly elected and registered delegate to this convention, move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Do I hear a second? Seconded by many. On the question. Hearing none. All in favor signify by saying aye. All opposed? The ayes have it. The Economic Convention Committee report is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now it is time to extend special recognition to three employers for their outstanding record of making jobs available to veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We recognized three such organizations as a 2006 Employer of the Year. One award is for the companies employing 50 or less people; another for companies employing from 51 to 200 people; and a third for companies with more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a post and advances through the department and national competition levels. The award in the 50 employees or less category goes to Nielsen Ford/Mercury of Bloomer, Wisconsin. Accepting the award for John Nielsen, owner, is David Kurtz.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2006. Presented to Nielsen Ford/Mercury for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention, Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

DAVID KURTZ: I'm here on behalf of John Nielsen of Nielsen Ford/Mercury in Bloomer, Wisconsin. John couldn't be with us. He had to leave for other business just shortly. But before he left, he did ask me to convey a couple of things to the convention. He did say to me before he left a few minutes ago that this was certainly one of his high points of his life to spend the last few days with us.

Nielsen Ford/Mercury employees 19 people and of that, 17 are veterans. John says that Nielsen Ford/Mercury has enjoyed success as a result of great employees. We hire on the basis of an applicants attitude, aptitude and desire to learn. Servicemen and women show respect, are reliable, resourceful and responsible. I credit these noble attributes to the sacrifices, training and experience provided through service to the country. Thank you for the honor to be in your presence.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to Alutiiq and Wackenhut Security Services of Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. Accepting the award is Darrell Pickle, Project Manager.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2006. Presented to Alutiiq and Wackenhut Security Services for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention, Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

DARRELL PICKLE: On behalf of Alutiiq and Wackenhut, I would like to thank you all. Most of our success as an employer and contractor has come from our veterans. Out of the approximately 100 employees that we do have, approximately 87 are veterans. We employ veterans. I have several from the Korean War, five or six who are Vietnam veterans. I currently gave five employees who are deployed at this time, serving. I'd just like to thank you all for the opportunity.

The one thing I'd like to leave you with that really sums it up and that I will never forget. It was a phrase I saw some years ago. Some people don't really agree with it, but it said, "If you can read this, thank a teacher," and then there was a little pause and right below it said, "If you're reading it in English, thank a veteran." *[Applause.]* And that to me is very true.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: In the large employer category of 200 plus employees, the award goes to the Employment Source Projects with Industry, PWI of Fayetteville, North Carolina. A company representative is unable to be here today. Accepting on behalf of the company is Jeff Joyner, the outgoing commander and Richard Neville the incoming commander from the Department of North Carolina.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads. The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans for 2006. Presented to Employment Source Projects with Industry PWI for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention, Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

JEFF JOYNER and RICHARD NEVILLE: On behalf of the Employment Source Projects with Industry of Fayetteville, North Carolina, it is with great pride that I accept this award for the outstanding job that they have done throughout the time, not only this year, but in the past years of employing our veterans. What an outstanding job and we are very proud in the 'Tar Heel State' to accept this award for them.

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employee Representative of the Year Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Another employment award that I am honored to present goes to the top Local Veterans Employment Representative, LVERs, in the nation. The award honors individuals who have done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice. The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2006 goes to Walter A. Pollock, Jr. of One-Stop Career Center, Columbus, Georgia.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans and Employment Representatives of the year 2006. Presented to Walter Pollock, Jr. for your outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Georgia.

WALTER A. POLLOCK, JR.: This is my second time to be up here. I was in Utah and was amazed and in awe that I received the award from The American Legion. I'm even more amazed and more awed that your organization has chosen me for the second time in a row. I will let you know of some of the things that we do in Columbus, Georgia, which is at the home of Fort Benning, Georgia.

We see 60 veterans a day in our Career Center. Of those 60 veterans a day, that averages out to be a lot of people. Our hiring rate is at 82%. We do six job fairs a year, one just for disabled and another one just for the homeless. We don't wait for the veterans to come in to us; we go to them. We go to the soup kitchens, we go to the shelters, and we go to The Salvation Army, because these are veterans with barriers, and that is what we are in business for, to help veterans find jobs.

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year, I'm happy to present to Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, the DVOP of the Year Award, to James E. Warren of Tyler, Texas.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding DVOP of the Year, 2006. Presented to James E. Warren, for you outstanding service to the veterans of the state of Texas.

JAMES E.WARREN: I bring you greeting from Tyler, Texas and the state of Texas. First of all, I'd like to thank God for everything He has done in my life and for allowing me to be here today to receive this award. I'd also like to thank Commander Morin and The American Legion for this award. It's appreciated and will be cherished. They say behind every good man, there is a good woman. I say behind every DVOP there is a whole bunch of people.

I'd like to thank first of all my wife who is my support. I would like to thank my LVER Joseph Hamrick, Jr. for his leadership and his training. I'd like to thank all the great staff and co-workers at the East Texas Workforce Center in Tyler and the Texas Veterans Commission and The American Legion Department of Texas. In the last five years that I've been at DVOP, I've had opportunity to meet many DVOPs from all over. I never found a DVOP that was not committed to helping vets. So, today I would like to accept this award, not only for me, but for all the hardworking committed DVOPs.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: When the Employer Awards Program was established in 1947, its purpose was to recognize employers across the country who had

established outstanding records in the employment and retention of the disabled. In doing so, we are able to educate employers and the general public about the many positive aspects of hiring disabled persons and thereby increasing their employment opportunities.

Here to accept the award is Trudy Adams, Director of Association for Retarded/Disabled Persons; Deland, Florida.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Disabled Veterans 2006. Presented to Association for Retarded/Disabled persons for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention; Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

TRUDY ADAMS: Thank you. I'm truly honored to be here today with a very elite group of individuals. Being from a non-profit organization, we get overlooked quite often. So it's truly an honor to be recognized by The American Legion. Our mission is to serve and advocate for persons with disabilities. Everyday we strive for that. I'd also like to thank the men and women and their families of all the armed forces for their sacrifices over the years, and to my fiancé, Kevin, for all his support.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations. I say those words all workers love to hear, "Thank you for a job well done." We are certain you will keep hiring veterans. Please tell other businesses about the reliability and work ethic of veterans. Congratulations.

Presentation: Employment Service Office of the Year
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Continuing with our recognition of those who assist our fellow veterans in finding meaningful work, it is time to honor the top Employment Service Office of the Year. The award goes to the Coeur d'Alene local office of Idaho, Commerce and Labor. Accepting the award is Joann Edmiston, Office Manager.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Office of the Year, 2006, is presented to Idaho Commerce and Labor for outstanding service to the veterans to the state of Idaho.

JOANN EDMISTON: It is my privilege and honor to accept this award on behalf of the Department of Labor in the Coeur d'Alene office. The staff is not only dedicated and committed to serving veterans, they have a passion for serving veterans. Thank you.

Presentation: Homeless Veterans Outreach Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The charge of The American Legion is to provide service to veterans and their families. That service includes helping our homeless veterans as they try to reenter society as productive self-supporting citizens. I thank God that we have agencies across America that initiate programs to assist our homeless veterans. I'm honored to present the Homeless Veterans Outreach Award to one department of The American Legion that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help our homeless veterans. Accepting the award is John Dunlap, Chairman of Homeless Veterans Outreach Program of The American Legion of Idaho.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National 2006 Homeless Veterans Outreach Award is presented to The American Legion family Department of Idaho, for the year 2006, for its exceptional efforts toward the elimination of homelessness among veterans in the state of Idaho. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention, Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Department Adjutant Rick Helskey will speak on behalf.

RICHARD L. HELSKEY: John had to get back to Post Falls as he had a flight scheduled early this afternoon. But he'd like to thank everybody for the award and the Department of Idaho, on behalf of the Department of Idaho, just keep going out there and working for these homeless veterans. We'll eventually get them off the street.

Presentation: The Older Workers Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The American Legion strongly believes that older workers are a valuable economic resource of proven skills, stability, and experience. We also encourage employers to hire and retain older workers in the work force. The purpose of the Older Workers Award is to recognize all employers for their outstanding record of hiring and retaining older workers. Accepting the award is June Saint, Manager of Patient Admissions, Columbus Hospice, Columbus, Georgia.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Older Workers 2006 is presented to Columbus Hospice of Columbus, Georgia for an exceptional record in the employment of disabled persons. Presented at the 89th Annual National Convention, Reno, Nevada, August 29, 2007.

JUNE SAINT: It is with the greatest joy and the deepest humility that I accept this award on behalf of Columbus Hospice. Our goal is to care for people with life-threatening illness. We have been able to achieve that aim by hiring and retaining people greater than 50 years old. Our work force includes a number of 34 percent or greater of people who were hired after they were 50 years old. During the past 10 years, six of the Employee of the Year Awards were presented to people older than 50 years old, with the oldest being in the 70s.

I would like to add a personal note. My husband and I have been treated like VIPs, and we certainly appreciate that. I am convinced that when I leave here today, that because we serve a living God, and there are organizations like The American Legion, brave men and women who serve this country and young people in the next generation, will have that spirit that we long for. Thank you. God bless you and God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you all again for your dedication for employing our veterans. The chair recognizes Joseph Caouette of New Hampshire, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Forty-seven members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 am on Sunday, August 26, 2007, in Room A11, Reno-Sparks Convention Center to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph E. Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; Jim Gates (CO), Vice Chairman; and Fang Wong (NY), as the Secretary.

The committee discussed eleven resolutions that were assigned to the group. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by the departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that compliment the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made by Fang Wong (NY) and seconded by Jim Heath (TX) that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the committee, to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

Eleven resolutions were considered with one being approved as amended, five referred to the standing Americanism Commission, four received and recorded, and one rejected.

Approved

Resolution No. 132: Oppose Amnesty For Illegal Aliens And Their Employers
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(As amended)

WHEREAS, An investigation by state and federal authorities in Utah "uncovered an alarming new crime spree involving illegal aliens and identities stolen from victims under the age of 12;" and, thousands of companies were found to be paying salaries to the social security numbers of Utah children on public assistance under the age of 12; and

WHEREAS, Fraudulently obtained social security numbers frequently belong to American citizens and legal residents including children; and

WHEREAS, An illegal alien arrested at the Swift meat packing plant in Utah justified identity theft by stating it was the only way she could "legally" work in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Identity theft and document fraud are felonies; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could grant amnesty to illegal aliens who are committing felonies by using our children's and fellow children's social security numbers and identities; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could grant amnesty to businesses who have failed to pay taxes on salaries paid to illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans would make it a crime for federal employees who are processing an illegal alien's paperwork to report the use of fraudulent documents, identity theft or tax evasion to law enforcement authorities; and

WHEREAS, Comprehensive immigration reform plans could leave the victims of identity theft to recover their identities at the cost of hundreds of hours of work and thousands of dollars while criminal illegal aliens could be granted amnesty, given a new social security number and eventually rewarded with American citizenship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion reiterates its opposition to any and all forms of amnesty for individuals in this country illegally; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the federal government to hold accountable those employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens, especially those aliens showing suspected fraudulent documents, thus suggesting the possibility that identify theft may have occurred; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That illegal aliens convicted of felonies relating to the use of fraudulent identity documents, especially those of children, in order to obtain employment in the United States be promptly deported to their country of origin; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States assist victims of identity theft perpetrated by illegal aliens by providing the victims with assistance in reclaiming their identity while erasing derogatory information, such as criminal convictions resulting from the misuse of the victim's identity records; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion adamantly opposes provisions of any comprehensive immigration reform legislation that grants amnesty or forgiveness to the employers of illegal aliens.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 76 (MT): Automatic Birthright to Children Born of Illegal Immigrants

Resolution No. 113 (PA): POW/MIA Flag Display Added to Flag Code

Resolution No. 118 (CA): Reverse Automatic Birthright to Children Born of Illegal Immigrants

Resolution No. 121 (CA): Rights of Citizenships be Granted Only to Children With Type 1 or Type 2 Birth Certificates

Resolution No. 165 (TN): Exempt the United States Flag from Local Regulations Concerning the Display of Advertising and/or Decorative Flags

Received And Recorded

Resolution No. 59 (OH): Fences and Barricades Along America's Borders
Resolution No. 83 (VA): Cease Importation of American Flags for Presentation to Deceased American Veterans
Resolution No. 90 (MA): American Manufactured American Flags
Resolution No. 122 (CA): Strengthening of the United States Border Patrol in Order to More Adequately Secure the United States Borders

Rejected

Resolution No. 174 (MX): Teaching of Geography to America's School Children

Mr. Commander, yours truly, Joe Caouette, a duly elected delegate to this convention, from the Department of New Hampshire, moves the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Report has been moved and seconded by many. On the question. Hearing none. All in favor 'aye.' All opposed? The 'ayes' have it. The report on Americanism is adopted.

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Having completed the adoption of the Americanism report, it is appropriate to announce the winner of two Americanism Awards. The Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy is given annually to the department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12 months prior, beginning August 1, to the Boy Scouts of America program. This year's winner is the Department of Maryland.

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the department within the United States, documenting the greatest activity and using The American Legion School Medal Program. This winning department shows what can be accomplish by an active and involved organization. The winner is the Department of Maryland.

Joining me on stage to present the next award is Phil Bronstein, Editor and Executive Vice President of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Phil is a great American journalist. As a reporter, he was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for his work in the Philippines. He covered conflicts in Southeast Asia, El Salvador, Peru and the Middle East. He is also a former Chairman of American Society of Newspaper Editors. The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy, which Phil is about to present, is one of the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents during each national convention. It is named in honor of one of American journalism's most prominent and influential figures and given to the department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. The winning department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of a total resource, manpower as well as financial, which was devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion year.

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
Philip Bronstein, Editor-in-Chief
San Francisco Chronicle

I'm extremely honored to be in your company today and to be representing the Hearst Corporation. I'm all the more honored and delighted to be presenting the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy. I think this is the 68th year that we have been able to present this award, so Hearst and The American Legion have a fine tradition that goes back, I think to 1939, if my math is correct.

In the intervening years, Hearst and Hearst Company has grown even beyond the dreams of our very inventive founder, William Randolph Hearst in the magazines, TV, newspapers, technology all over the world. But through all that, we are able to do our business, to practice our craft of journalism precisely because of the sacrifices and

courage you all have provided to keep the freedom of the press alive among the many other freedoms we enjoy in this country. Please allow me to thank you all for that.

I know the press can be irritating. It is irritating to me sometimes and it's my business. But Thomas Jefferson who first disliked the press because of its coverage of his presidency, said a free press was an essential element of security for people in this country. So veterans who have done so much to safeguard our security during the history of this country and the press have some things in common.

I'm not just a member of the press. I'm also a resident of San Francisco. It's probably fair to say that a reasonable number of people only want to go to Reno. That's the closest as they want to get to San Francisco. After all, San Francisco is a city where it's hard to clean up the streets. But the City Council has a foreign policy about every 5 minutes. None of the foreign policies I'd feel comfortable repeating here. But in case you harbor some concerns about the unusual politics of San Francisco, let me reassure you, it's the largest daily newspaper in the Bay Area. We have reflected over and over, the blood, the sweat, the tears and the triumphs of the brave men and women who served and are serving our country.

These are the same men and women you represent and support so spectacularly. We followed different units into battle and have covered them at home, both before and after their deployment. One of our reporters, John Coopman, himself a Marine, was embedded with the unit during the Iraq War and he captured the reality and the humanity of that unit. It was the 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines and the camaraderie and the challenges of battle. John wrote a book about his experiences called, *McCoy's Marines*, named for the CO of that outfit, and it was an honorable portrait, full of integrity of the men and women he covered during several trips to the Mid-East.

We try every day to do right by those serving under the most difficult circumstances. The Preamble to The American Legion Constitution says that your members preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars. We help you to do that through telling the stories of those wars, past and present, with accuracy and always with the context that war involves the valor and actual lives of our friends, our sons and daughters, husbands, wives, fathers and mothers. Part of our responsibility for the right of a free press is to make sure these people appear to the public as real people, that the public feels what they feel and feels what their families feel.

I was a war correspondent for nine years. When you're covering a war, that means you get to be shot at, but you don't get to shoot back. It can be a very unpleasant experience itself. A number of journalists have been killed and seriously wounded in this war. But as reporters, we often get to leave those postings, we get to go back to nice hotels and recuperate; we get to go home. So, we don't want to diminish the bravery of my colleagues who risk their own lives to tell the truth of those they cover, but I have to tell you, of all people, you understand that journalist and soldiers operating in times and places of war, it's the acts of bravery, large and small, that determine the character of a person and of a nation. We in the press develop a really unqualified appreciation for those who do put their lives on the line for long stretches of time. As The American Legion noted in the resolution last year in Salt Lake City, warriors above all other people pray for peace, for they suffer and bare the deepest wounds and scars of war.

Since 1919, you and the Legion have provided unqualified support for the men and women who served. You've done it in so many ways. I hope you can view the press as helping the public to understand the humanity of those men and women. Today, the technological revolution makes your jobs and our jobs a lot easier. Those who serve can communicate with their families and loved ones, so much more easily and directly. They can tell their stories, they can tell their experiences through blogs, through podcasts, video casts, texting, e-mail. This phenomenal support you've always provided might be made a little easier through the tools, particularly those tools, that connect the serving men and women with their homes.

In journalism we like to say we got into this profession because we wanted to change the world. Sometimes we do, but you all have changed the world in so many, many ways, throughout the life of this organization and through the sacrifices and the courage of your members. It was safety and security and service that inspired William Randolph Hearst and it's in that spirit that this award was created. So, once again, I'm

particularly honored to be presenting this year's Americanism Trophy to a department of The American Legion that has exemplified the ideals that we all wish for, for our lives and for our country. That winning department is the Department of Alaska.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER PISA, Alaska: I'd like to thank all the great Alaska Legion family members for doing all they do to make this possible. I also challenge all Legion family members to continue to strive to do what we do best and that is serve the community, state and nation.

Presentation: 2007 National Law Enforcement Of The Year
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

As an organization, anchored in the belief that we must maintain law and order, The American Legion annually selects an individual as its Police Officer Of The Year. The next order of business is to honor a member of law enforcement for setting an example in community service. Our 2006 Law Enforcement Officer Of The Year is a 24-year veteran of the Willmar Police Department in Willmar, Minnesota. She has a long track record of producing high work ethics and standings. She is a total team player, with an attitude and desire to perform exceptional off-duty community service. She is the first female officer selected to receive this high award in the 89-year history of The American Legion. Please give a warm round of applause to Sergeant Julie Ann Asmus.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: America's finest. The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year, presented to Julie Ann Asmus for distinguished service above and beyond your assigned duties. Rendered through selfless dedication to community service and professional achievement. By your demonstrated performance you have personified the versatile police officer that represents America's finest. The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in your career. Awarded August 29, 2007, at the 89th Annual National Convention in Reno, Nevada.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I thought I was just booked for something with all those flashes going off over there. *[Laughter.]* Let's give a true American Legion round of applause to our Police Officer Of The Year.

JULIE A. ASMUS: Thank you so much for this incredible honor. I need to thank the Willmar Post No.167 for nominating me for the state of Minnesota award and all of you for honoring me here today.

It's ironic that I'm receiving this award from The American Legion because life has come full circle. It is because of The American Legion that I am standing here today. I became a member of the American Legion Auxiliary the day I was born, eligible through my father, Leo VonderHarr, a veteran of the Korean War. I remember as a young member of making tray favors for veterans' homes for every holiday. My mother, Ivy VonderHarr, was the Unit Leader for many years and it was instilled in us, it was ingrained in us, to remember the veterans and to do things for our community. So when I was selected as a Girls Stater in Madison, Minnesota in 1977 and when I became a police officer in Willmar, Minnesota 26 years ago, and when I became a Legion member through my service in the National Guard, I didn't know any different than to be active and involved in my community.

About a year ago, I heard a saying, "Don't do your job to just make a living, do your job to make a difference." Fortunately, I'm in a position where I really can make a difference in people's lives. Sometimes we don't realize how our words or actions affect people until months or years later. Again, I would like to thank the Willmar Post 167 for nominating me, and my family for supporting me. Today, I have my husband Brian Asmus, my daughter Stephanie, my mother Ivy VonderHarr, my sister Becky Scalrude and my brother, Dale VonderHarr and his wife, Cheryl, here to support me. Again, as a past Girls Stater, as a member of The American Legion and as a long time member of the American Legion Auxiliary, I'd like to thank the Department of Minnesota and The American Legion for instilling in me the qualities that made this award possible.

Auction: Legion Rider Vest
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

As I said yesterday, there would come a time today when we'd have a little auction. We had hired a professional Reno, Nevada model, but she hasn't showed up yet. So the next best thing we could find is a model from Massachusetts. He came from Palmer Post No.130, so I'll ask the model to come forth. The first thing we'd like to do is auction off the beautiful vest she, he, is wearing now. *[Laughter.]* Maybe I can hear a bid of $50.00 to get it going. I have $100. *[Various bids are taken.]* Sold for $450 to Carl Swisher from Ohio.

Now you have this beautiful helmet that was only worn by your National Commander, prior to this modeling. It's a good size because it fits my head, it fits his head, it'll fit anyone's head. It has all the emblems of the organization on it, autographed. Show them the beautiful autograph by the National Commander. That's worth it alone. All right, we're looking for $250 to start it off. *[Various bids are taken.]* Sold to the Department of New York for $2,200.

When you come forth with your cash or checks, we'll be happy to present you the merchandise. In God we trust, all others pay cash or checks.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Dennis R. Boland of Florida, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children & Youth for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Dennis R. Boland, Florida, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 26, 2007, in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room A16, Concourse Level in Reno, Nevada. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Dennis R. Boland of Florida as Chairman and delegate Herbert J. Petit, Jr. of Louisiana as Secretary. There were 49 members of the committee present.

There were no resolutions to be considered by the Convention Committee on Children and Youth, but discussion was heard on the important work of the National Commission on Children & Youth.

AREAS OF CONCERN: Our Areas of Concern for the 2007-2008 year deal with quality of life issues affecting America's children. They are: Child Health, Military Family Support and Child Safety. These are timely topics that impact the lives of all young people.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS: July 20, 1968, marked the beginning of a movement that has changed millions of lives. As a global year-round sports program of training and competition for persons with intellectual disabilities, Special Olympics has served as the catalyst for change: change in perceptions, change in attitudes, and change in laws regarding inclusion.

Special Olympics is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals with intellectual disabilities to become physically fit, productive and respected members of society through sports training and competition. Currently serving more than 2.25 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities around the world, Special Olympics offers year-round training and competition in 30 Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Through sports, these special athletes develop improved physical fitness and motor skills, greater self-confidence and a more positive self-image. They grow mentally, socially and spiritually and, through their activities, exhibit boundless courage and enthusiasm.

The American Legion family has helped support the mission of Special Olympics for over 35 years. Through our volunteer involvement and financial contributions, the Legion family has helped enable Special Olympics to offer sports training and competition that provides the athletes with the opportunity to showcase their skills. The American Legion family, at all levels, continues to pursue ways to assist Special Olympics in this very worthwhile endeavor.

CHILDREN'S MIRACLE NETWORK: Every child needs a place where they can receive specialized care, and The American Legion Family helps make such places

possible at Children's Miracle Network hospitals. Each dollar raised by our members helps repair hearts, provide treatment, and most importantly give hope to 17 million kids. Each day at a children's hospital:

- 200 children will visit the Emergency Department
- 32 children will receive cancer treatments
- 28 children will be treated for heart problems
- 4 children will be admitted after a serious injury or illness

The funds contributed by The American Legion Family ensure that the best care is available whenever children need it. Since 1998, The American Legion Family has contributed more than $24.4 million for Children's Miracle Network, nearly $4.68 million last year alone. These funds are used by each participating children's hospital to best meet the needs of children in the community they serve.

The real work to save and improve the lives of children across North America and throughout the world gets done at Children's Miracle Network hospitals. In one year, these CMN hospitals benefit more children than any other children's cause or organization. The American Legion continues to play a vital role as a corporate sponsor in helping these hospitals treat children.

CHILDREN & YOUTH CONFERENCE: On September 21-23, 2007, the inaugural Children & Youth Conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Indianapolis. This annual conference will educate department representatives on current children's issues and the programs of the National Commission on Children & Youth and is designed to accomplish three objectives:

- To instruct Department Children & Youth Chairmen on the programs and activities of the National Commission on Children & Youth, to include contemporary issues impacting the child welfare field, recent legislation as it relates to the Legion's children & youth agenda, and program mechanics;
- To provide Department Children & Youth Chairmen with the tools needed to design, implement and conduct a Department Children & Youth Conference to train Post and District Chairmen; and
- To encourage Department Children & Youth Chairmen, through round table discussions and/or small groups, to participate in an exchange of ideas that focus on the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs of children.

To successfully implement Children & Youth programs of The American Legion at the state and community levels demands adequate training of our volunteers. This annual conference will provide Children & Youth Chairmen with not only instruction on the Legion's children & youth programs, but outline the tools they need to conduct a similar conference within their home departments.

OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS: When National Guard and Reserve parents are mobilized, their children suddenly have unique needs. While these kids still "look the same," their lives have been turned upside down. These "new" military kids need to connect with other youth in similar situations. They seek friends and adults who can empathize and can help them cope with their new world.

Operation: Military Kids creates community support networks for military youth when soldier parents are deployed. It delivers recreational, social and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities. It educates the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole, and it becomes a part of the ongoing deployment support services for military children and youth.

The American Legion is proud to be associated with this project and encourages our departments and posts to work with and support this effort to contribute to the well being of Military Kids.

TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: Our Temporary Financial Assistance Program continues its eighty-two year tradition of service to veterans and their families. Last year the TFA program awarded over $472,714 in non-repayable grants to veterans' families.

With the help of The American Legion, 1,108 children of eligible veterans and currently activated parents were able to keep a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs and clothes on their backs. I urge each of you to make use of this landmark program to assist needy veteran's children within your communities.

FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK: Our greatest strength, as Legion family members, has always been demonstrated most effectively by our volunteer involvement at the post level. A prime example of this is our Family Support Network.

Last year, through our National Headquarters alone, The American Legion Family Support Network fielded 1,571 requests for assistance and information from our comrades currently serving on active duty and their families. So far this year, the Legion has received over 1,000 calls for assistance, or approximately 37 requests per week.

Once a request is received, the basic information is transmitted to the respective department. Departments contact the closest post and the onus is on the post to contact the family. Within days, often within hours, members of The American Legion family are on hand to assess the situation and assist the family in finding resources both locally and nationally.

Thousands of posts have responded to the call for action, providing assistance to families ranging from simple home repairs to emergency financial aid. Local posts are a vital link in connecting families to already existing resources. Our members know their communities and they know how to get things done. The American Legion Family Support Network is a key component in our mission to care for our service personnel and their families. I ask for your help in spreading the word.

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

DELEGATE BOLAND: As a duly elected delegate to this Convention, from the Department of Florida, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I've heard many seconded. All in favor. 'Aye.' All opposed. The 'ayes' have it. The Report on Children & Youth is adopted.

Immediately following the next two presentations, we will accept donations for The Child Welfare Foundation on stage. Anyone having them, please come forth.

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

I now have the pleasure of presenting The Garland Murphy Award to the department that raised the most money for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. It is a pleasure for me to present this award to the Department of Ohio.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award, presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the program year of 2006-2007. In recognition of their designation as the number one department in total contributions received from their volunteers, in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants. Dennis R. Boland, President of The Child Welfare Foundation and William Pease, The Foundations Executive Secretary have signed it.

Special Presentation: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

It is now time for me to present the U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award. This award recognizes the collective efforts of an American Legion family in a department. It goes to the department that collectively raises the most money for The Child Welfare Foundation, during the past program year. The winner of this prestigious award is the Department of Ohio.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The U.S. 'Udie' Grant Legacy Award, presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Ohio for the

program year of 2006-2007 in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. We thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: If anyone has donations to The Child Welfare Foundation, I will now accept those donations on stage.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOWARD, Virginia: From the Department of Virginia, another $1,087.

...National Commander Morin recognizes and thanks each donor in turn.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEIFNER, Iowa: Melt Heifner, Delegation Chairman, Department of Iowa, and Department of Iowa Commander Bob Mahon present a $1,000 donation to The Child Welfare Foundation.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LaCOURSIERE, Connecticut: On behalf of The American Legion family, Department of Connecticut, $1,500.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ANDERSON, Ohio: On behalf of the Department of Ohio, it has been our honor to win several things. But through the goodness of everyone there in the great 'Buckeye' state, we're proud to present another check. This one is in total of $65,000 for Child Welfare.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: We've collected for The Child Welfare Foundation, $68,587.00. Thank you.

Immediately following this next report is when we will collect donations for The Landstuhl Medical Center. We ask anyone with donations to come backstage following or while this next report is given.

The Chairman recognizes K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation for a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation
K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut, Chairman

89 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 26, 2007, in Room A-1, Concourse Level, Upper Level, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Peter Gaytan (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Jacob Gadd (DC), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Chris Harding (OK), as Committee Secretary; R. Michael Suter (NY), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; Terry Schow (UT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and David Sanborn (MI), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Steve Smithson (MI), Deputy Director, to Claims and Rating and Shannon Middleton (MD), Deputy Director for Healthcare, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 63 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by K. Robert Lewis, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1—Walter Pytka (RI)

REGION 2—Randall Fisher (KY)

REGION 3—Philip Youngblood (GA)

REGION 4—Donald Lanthorn (OH)

REGION 5—Milton Smith (ID)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-Ninth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 55 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	3
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	0
Referred to the Standing Commission	9
Received and Recorded	27
Rejected	16

A motion was made and seconded to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Convention Committee's behalf.

A report of action taken on the 9 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the department concerned.

Approved

Resolution No. 10: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims Directly on Behalf of The Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, There are over 25,000,000 honorably discharged veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are approximately 638,000 veterans who have some type of action pending on their claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 181,000 of those claims are over six months old; and

WHEREAS, In addition, there is a growing backlog of pending appeals, which is now over 159,000 cases, as well as approximately 16,000 remanded cases at the Appeals Management Center; and

WHEREAS, Appeals are, by definition, among the oldest claims in the system and reflect the claimant's belief that they have not received a fair or proper decision; and

WHEREAS, The nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,300 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Under currently proposed legislation, a pilot program, establishing an official federally funded arrangement between County Veteran Service Officers and VA in five states (California, Florida, Ohio, South Carolina, and Texas), with the potential of expanding to other states upon the request of a County Veterans Service Officer in such a state, would be created in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veterans benefits; and

WHEREAS, Many County Veterans Service Officers are, in fact, accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation would allow the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a County Veterans Service Office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any federal, state, or county veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, under this program, would refer claims to the County Veterans Service Officer for specific development as specified by the Secretary; and

WHEREAS, Claims submitted to the County Veterans Service Officer under this program would be treated, for receipt of claim purposes, as if submitted to VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a County Service Officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and VA adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, This dual role would essentially make the County Service Officer a quasi VA employee, creating an inherent conflict of interest between the County Service Officer's role as a veterans advocate and his/her function as a quasi employee of VA; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran-service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and Power of Attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an accredited representative of The American Legion to develop claims on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under a contractual arrangement between VA and County or State government or under any other arrangement where the representative would be acting in an official capacity directly on behalf of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 111: Oppose Processing of Original Pension Claims by Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Maintenance Centers
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, This country has always provided for the needs of veterans, their dependents and survivors at local Regional Offices; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has traditionally processed all original claims at the local Regional Office (Agency of Original Jurisdiction); and

WHEREAS, The local agency of original jurisdiction processes many original pension claims through Pension Express which expedites the processing of these claims, usually within a two week period; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposes to have all pension claims, including original pension claims, processed by the appropriate Pension Maintenance Center; and

WHEREAS, The Pension Maintenance Centers would drastically increase the processing time for these claims; and

WHEREAS, consolidating the processing of original pension claims at one of VA's three Pension Maintenance Centers would hinder proper representation by a claimant's duly appointed accredited representative; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes this action will cause extreme undue hardship on disabled and senior, low income veterans, their dependents, and survivors who seek VA Pension Benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That it oppose any effort by the Department of Veterans Affairs to have original pension claims processed by the Pension Maintenance Centers.

Resolution No. 140: Extend VA Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to Service-Connected Veterans Who Are Permanently and Totally Disabled
Origin: Minnesota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs Mortgage Protection Life Insurance is presently available to veterans entitled to the special adapted housing award under Section 2102 (a) of Title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected veterans rated as permanently and totally disabled cannot obtain Mortgage Protection Life Insurance through commercial insurance companies; and

WHEREAS, Their widows and dependents must bear an undue hardship upon the death of such veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the members of The American Legion seek the enactment of legislation, which would extend the Veterans Administration Mortgage Protection Life Insurance to service-connected veterans who are rated as permanently and totally disabled.

Resolution No. 179: Increase Beneficiary Travel Pay for Eligible Veterans
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Public Law 100-322 (1988) severely restricted veterans' eligibility to receive beneficiary travel payments; and

WHEREAS, Service-connected and other veterans authorized beneficiary travel only receive $0.11 per mile, and are subject to a $6 per trip deductible, not to exceed $18 per month; and

WHEREAS, Eligible veterans are not reimbursed at a reasonable level for costs incurred to visit a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility for service-connected or other authorized care and treatment; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiary travel pay was never intended to pay actual transportation costs, such as authorized by the government for Federal employees, but instead, provided to help defray costs; and

WHEREAS, There are no provisions in law that VA must increase the per mile travel authorization on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary travel program is discretionary and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is required to review the program annually to determine the VA's ability to maintain the program and its ability to increase the reimbursement rate for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has determined that it is necessary to maintain the current reimbursement rate in order to allow the VA health care system to accommodate the increasing patient workload; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding for VA health care would allow the Secretary to increase the rate without negative consequences to funding for direct care; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiary travel pay has not been increased from its current rate since 1978; and

WHEREAS, The price of gasoline has steadily increased since the $0.11 rate was established, creating a financial hardship for veterans who have to travel long distances for care, or for those who have limited financial resources; and

WHEREAS, The lack of a consistent and reliable mechanism to periodically adjust the per mile authorization for beneficiary travel creates an injustice and an unfair economic burden to many veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to seek adequate funding to accommodate the needs of the increasing demand for care, to include the need for an increase in the beneficiary travel rate; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to immediately increase the per mile beneficiary travel pay for eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to periodically adjust the rate to assure that the per mile reimbursement rate is increased at a reasonable and acceptable level.

Received And Recorded

Resolution No. 9 (MI): Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research

Resolution No. 11 (MI): Oppose Any Reduction of Eligibility Criteria for Department of Veterans Affairs Per Diem Payments To State Veterans Homes

Resolution No. 12 (MI): The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program

Resolution No. 23 (MD): Provide Full Funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program

Resolution No. 24 (MD): Support Medicare Reimbursement for the Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution No. 25 (MD): Recognize Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989-1990) as Periods of War for Department of Veterans Affairs Pension Purposes

Resolution No. 26 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment

Resolution No. 27 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Radiation

Resolution No. 28 (MD): Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption

Resolution No. 57 (OH): Support Increased Per Diem Payments to the State Veterans Home Program

Resolution No. 62 (NJ): Support the Automatic Waiver of Veterans Benefits Administration Debts of $250 or Less

Resolution No. 65 (ID): Funding for Mental Health Care in the Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution No. 66 (ID): Assured Funding For Department Of Veterans Affairs Medical Care Be Made A National Priority

Resolution No. 81 (DC): The American Legion Policy on Department of Veterans Affairs Information Technology Management

Resolution No. 93 (MA): Department of Veterans Affairs Burial and Plot Allowance

Resolution No. 94 (MA): Presumptive Medical Treatment for Persian Gulf War Veterans

Resolution No. 98 (MA): Funding for Department of Veterans Affairs Construction Program

Resolution No. 99 (MA): Support 33 1/3 Percent Per Diem Payment to State Veterans Homes

Resolution No. 138 (MN): Protect Disability Rating After Ten Years

Resolution No. 141 (MN): Increase The Burial Allowance For Service-Connected Veterans and Those Who Die In A Department of Veterans Affairs Facility and Provide for Annual Adjustments

Resolution No. 143 (MN): Support Protection of Veterans Benefits in the Case of Taxation, Cutbacks, and Elimination

Resolution No. 144 (MN): Oppose Lump-Sum Payments of Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation

Resolution No. 145 (MN): Oppose Offset of Social Security Benefits or Any Other Federal Benefit by Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation Payments

Resolution No. 146 (MN): Support Legislation to Authorize the Veterans Health Administration to Collect Monies from Medicare

Resolution No. 147 (MN): Oppose Means Testing of Disability and Death Compensation

Resolution No. 148 (MN): Mandatory Funding for the Veterans Health Administration

Resolution No. 153 (MN): Support Legislation to Provide Presumptive Service Connection to Atomic Veterans for All Recognized Radiogenic Diseases
Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Resolution No. 3 (AK): Department of Veterans Affairs Study for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Southeast Alaska
Resolution No. 87 (SC): Construction of a New Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Upstate South Carolina
Resolution No. 112 (NY): Oppose Efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs to Create a Virtual Information Center
Resolution No. 139 (MN): American Legion Oppose Any Recommendation to Alter Current Law Regarding Service Connection
Resolution No. 142 (MN): Rounding Up Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits for 50 Cents or Higher
Resolution No. 150 (MN): Increase the Department of Veterans Affairs Fee-Based Limitation for Medical Care
Resolution No. 152 (MN): Support a Change in the Federal Regulations to Provide for a Temporary Total Rating
Resolution No. 162 (WI): Construction of a Fisher House on the Grounds of Milwaukee VA Medical Center
Resolution No. 164 (WI): Congress Authorize and Fund the Construction of Columbaria

Rejected

Resolution No. 5 (CO): Financial Performance Bonuses to Department of Veterans Affairs Employees
Resolution No. 15 (MI): Department of Veterans Affairs Allowance for Purchase of Cremation Urns
Resolution No. 61 (NJ): Restrict Monetary Bonuses to Department of Veterans Affairs Management
Resolution No. 67 (ID): Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation for 100% Disability
Resolution No. 68 (ID): Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at Forty Cents Per Mile
Resolution No. 69 (ID): Veterans Receive Medications with No Co-Pay
Resolution No. 70 (ID): Future Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs be Qualified and Honorably Discharged Veterans
Resolution No. 106 (NY): Department of Veterans Affairs Beneficiary Travel Reimbursement at 48.5 Cents Per Mile
Resolution No. 107 (NY): Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices be Authorized to Hire Employees
Resolution No. 109 (NY): Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Include All Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
Resolution No. 125 (IL): Sensitizing Department of Veterans Affairs Records to Prevent Identity Theft
Resolution No. 126 (IL): Require the Department of Veterans Affairs to Employ Full-Time Veteran Benefits
Resolution No. 127 (IL): Access to Department of Veterans Affairs Electronic Files for Which The American Legion Holds Power of Attorney
Resolution No. 128 (IL): Equal Disability Compensation Ratings for All Veterans and Their Families
Resolution No. 135 (MN): Burial Flags for Members of the National Guard and the Reserves
Resolution No. 158 (AL): Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs Accept Amputees' and Serious Head Injury Claims Automatically

DELEGATE LEWIS: As a duly elected delegate to this Convention, from the Department of Connecticut, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The motion has been so made and seconded by many. On the question? Hearing none. All in favor, signifying by 'aye.' All opposed? The report on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Report, it is appropriate to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2006-2007 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Minnesota.

At this time, I will accept donations for Operation Landstuhl from departments and other organizations. As of this moment, we have collected, $151,065.08. Thank you one and all. That amount of money has been collected using The American Legion on-line articles in the *Dispatch* and *The American Legion Magazine* and joining with *Military.com*. When that article was placed on *Military.com*, that one day alone, we had 600 new members join The American Legion. So, when you do the work and you let the people know what's happening, membership will happen. Now we're going to accept the checks.

JOHN COX Minnesota: Commander, on behalf of posts in the great state of Minnesota, I present a check for $1,000 for Landstuhl.

…National Commander Morin recognizes and thanks each donor in turn.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: John here served as my department commander this year. When I traveled through Minnesota, we had a lot of fun. But I also told him when I arrived that for every degree that it was below 32, they would have to get at least one additional member. So they owed me an additional 2,765 members. The coldest morning was 14 degrees below. So, I kept that paper and had it right here all this year since I left Minnesota. Commander John Cox has asked many times to get this paper back. I said at some appropriate time at the convention I would present it to him. Now is that time, Commander.

JOHN COX Minnesota: Thank you, sir.

MS. PERHAM, Vermont: On behalf of a little post in Bellows Falls, Vermont, Pierce Lawton Post 37, you inspired us with your leadership. I present you with a check for $2,000.

DELEGATE MITCHELL, Idaho: From my one day fundraiser in Boise, Idaho, we raised $3,650 and $500 of those dollars came from the Veterans Home Post 151. That's really veterans helping veterans.

DELEGATE COONEY, Wisconsin: When we received your request for funds to help Operation Landstuhl, we sent out a letter to all of our Legionnaires, and they came through. The home of the Brett Favre and Green Bay Packers, we want to present to you a check of $25,000.

DELEGATE HOWARD, Virginia: The Department of Virginia, when we heard your request for funds for Landstuhl, these gentlemen behind me were leading candidates for our department offices along with one who couldn't make it, decided to forego their hospitality room at the department convention and donate those funds, along with our department funds. We have a check for $3,000 for the project.

DELEGATE FRENCH, Georgia: On behalf of the Department of Georgia, I'd like to present to you for your special project a check for $3,121. I'd like especially to recognize one lady who had a daughter who went through this situation, Mary Lepley from Post 145, who personally led a fundraiser for $2,000.

DELEGATE PLANTS, West Virginia: On behalf of the Department of West Virginia, I'm presenting a check for the Operation Landstuhl, for $1,000.

MR. BUSH, Kentucky: With the hope that every little bit helps, from Madisonville, Kentucky, Post No. 6, $250.

DELEGATE KOUTZ, Indiana: Commander, you remember when you were at Boonville Post No. 200 during last October when we had a rib cook? Well, you ate some

of the ribs. We tried this two weeks ago and had a benefit for this Landstuhl Operation. We have a check from the Legion family for $900.

DELEGATE SPARKS, Texas: On behalf of the state of Texas, I have two checks for the amount of $7,755.00. However, there is one thing I must say. When you were there at the Department Convention at the end of June, there is a small post in Texas, Onion Creek in Austin. They have about 200 members. They went back and said, "We're going to give Commander Morin, somehow 10% his request. Here is the post check for $5,000.00, or $7,700.00 from Texas.

DELEGATE CASEY, New York: On behalf of myself and the Department of New York and our new Commander, William Burnett, I have three checks to present you today. A $5,000.00 check for Landstuhl Hospital; a $10,000.00 check for The American Legion Legacy Fund and a $31,000.00 check for the National Emergency Fund. That reaches our total of contributions from the Department of New York to over $70,000.00 for the National Emergency Fund.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: They still have an outstanding bill for that helmet that they have to pay for. *[Laughter.]*

MR. SMART, Alaska: I have a $200.00 donation and a personal donation from Past Department Commander, Jim Malone for $100.00.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEIFNER, Iowa: I have two checks from the Sons of The American Legion for $500.00 and The American Legion Post No. 37 for $500.00, a total of $1,000.00.

DELEGATE FREEL and ANN REHBEIN, Iowa: Joining in the Ames Legion family is a check from our Auxiliary Unit for $500.00.

DELEGATE WEBSTER, Michigan: On behalf of the state of Michigan, we'd like to give you a small donation. Having been fortunate to be able to go to Landstuhl when we traveled with Commander Cadmus and saw what they've done over there, this money is well spent.

DELEGATE COX, Minnesota: I have two donations, but I want to say something about the first one. When I received the *Dispatch* and read this article, I knew that I had to do something for that hospital. I went out and talked to this Old Fudge Deli at our Tanger Mall, in North Branch. She would set up a collection for donations. When I found this out, I went back to the local newspaper and put the article in the local newspaper. Then I went back and told the lady that she could go ahead and set up the box. She said that she would match whatever we get in donations. She took in $99.47 but she made a donation of her own of $100.00. That gave almost $200.00. North Branch Post would like to give a check of $250.00.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LANDKAMER, Nebraska: On behalf of the Delegates of the Department of Nebraska, we have a donation of $520.00.

DELEGATE MORMAN, Ohio: As Commander of Post 3, Ralph D. Cole Post, one of the original 20 posts forming this great organization, I'd like to present you a check for $1,000.00 and the post pin.

DELEGATE EBERSOLE, Ohio: When I got your challenge for the Landstuhl project, I went to my small, young post and challenged them for $500.00. They didn't give me a check for $500.00. On behalf of Post No. 797, District 12th of Department of Ohio, I'd like to present you with a check for $600.00.

DELEGATE BAHER, Ohio: On behalf of the 1,000 combined member family of American Legion Post No. 91 in the 13th District in the great state of Ohio, we have a check for $3,000.00 for your project.

DELEGATE SWISHER, Ohio: It's a pleasure for me to come up here to present a check. But before I present you this check, I'd like the Department of Ohio rise and be recognized, because without these people, we could not make these donations. If you look at the date on this check, you will notice that right after you made your announcement, the Department of Ohio made out a check of $15,000.00. We wanted to have at least one-third of that money for you. As I see now, you got a lot more. So, we are presenting you a check for $15,000.00.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I was just quickly adding today from Ohio and their donations. Over $200,000.00 to our programs.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBBINS, New Jersey: From Brick Memorial Post No. 348, Department of New Jersey, a check for $2,000.00.

DELEGATE LEWIS, Connecticut: As Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission, this is my personal contribution in the amount of $250.00.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOZELLA, Colorado: The Department of Colorado would like to offer for the Landstuhl Fund, $500.00. We already gave at your booth. I still have the stamp to prove it. Don't forget to get a $500.00 stamp on your wrist. Our Auxiliary President has also pledged $500.00.

MS. WHITLEY, Colorado: This is just to let you know that yesterday, or Monday, we had a parade of checks. The American Legion Auxiliary will be donating $28,000.00 to Operation Landstuhl.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: When you think it was just in the middle of June that we asked you to step up to the plate and do what's right for those young men and women warriors at Landstuhl, Germany. I had a dream to reach $50,000.00 by the close of this convention that was something I was hoping for. But truly what this American Legion family has done once again, and as you do all the time, it can just blow socks off of everyone. I'm happy to report on behalf of JoAnn and Earl, as of this moment, we have raised $257,360.55. Thank you!

Another story to tell. Mark Lauter, an Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms just since Thursday while he's been here in Reno has signed up 17 new members. Pretty impressive.

The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials & Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs)
Larry J. Besson, Illinois, Chairman

Forty-Five members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and George V. West of New Hampshire as Permanent Secretary, and considered forty-two resolutions, thirty-nine of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and three which was created by the committee. Of these, four (4) were approved; one (1) approved as amended; nine (9) were referred; four (4) were received and recorded and twenty-four (24) were rejected.

Approved

Resolution No. 1: Appreciation To Host City
Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The 89th National Convention has been held in Reno, Nevada, August 28-30, 2007; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Nevada, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of Reno, Nevada; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Nevada, Governor Jim Gibbons; Mayor Robert Cashell; the city of Reno, Nevada, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2007 National Convention Corporation Officers, Dale "Tiny" Salmen, President. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable convention.

Resolution No. 108: Recondition Vietnam Memorial Documents In Washington, DC

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported the Vietnam Memorial Wall which is a source of deep emotional significance to family members, friends, and comrades; and

WHEREAS, The United States Government has a responsibility to ensure that the memorial is properly maintained; and

WHEREAS, The documents available at both ends of the memorial which are used to locate names on the wall are in a state of disrepair and almost illegible; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That it encourage the National Organization to petition the appropriate government agency to update and replace the damaged documents located at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, DC with a sturdy, laminated, clearly legible document.

Resolution No. 177: The American Legion Patriot Award

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, The Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion includes as one of the objectives "…to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, Countless Americans are supporting our men and women in uniform as they fight the Global War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Individual acts of providing support and comfort to our troops are far above normal expectations and deserving of special recognition; and

WHEREAS, Providing public recognition to individual(s), who profoundly and positively affect the lives of veterans and their families, inspires others to follow in their footsteps; and

WHEREAS, A high level award presented during National Convention for selfless acts of patriotism in support of our armed forces and their families is duly good and appropriate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion establish an award presented to outstanding citizens who have demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this annual award shall be named "The American Legion Patriot Award"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commander will determine the recipient(s), if any, of the award to be presented at each National Convention.

Resolution No. 178: District of Columbia World War I Memorial

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)

WHEREAS, There is not a National Memorial honoring the veterans of or those who paid the supreme sacrifice during World War I in Washington, DC; and

WHEREAS, A District of Columbia (DC) WWI Memorial was authorized by Congress in 1924 and dedicated by President Herbert Hoover and General John J. Pershing on Armistice Day 1931; and

WHEREAS, The DC World War I Memorial, a white marble Peristyle Doric Temple Structure standing in a grove of trees, is located in West Potomac Park on the National Mall near the World War II Memorial; and

WHEREAS, Due to a lack of maintenance and upkeep, the DC WWI Memorial is deteriorating as the result of water damage and other environmental factors; and

WHEREAS, The World War I Memorial is now the responsibility of the National Park Service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, founded by the veterans of World War I, firmly believes the DC World War I Memorial is a prominent cultural resource much deserving of overall repair and historic preservation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion strongly urges the National Park Service to place the District of Columbia World War I Memorial at the top of its list of priorities for repair and maintenance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion without financial obligation ensure that adequate attention is given to this issue until such time as the badly needed work on the Memorial is accomplished, and the National Park Service has a plan in place to maintain this place of honor in perpetuity.

Approved as Amended

Resolution No. 47: The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters (Section II)
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail Act: HR 1388 and S 797 have been introduced for action in the Congress of the United States this legislative session; and

WHEREAS, The feasibility study produced by the Northeast Region National Park Service U.S. Department of Interior March 2004 shows the criteria for national trails, as set forth in the National Trails Systems Act, have been applied, and five of the eight trail segments meet all three criteria; and

WHEREAS, The National Historic Landmark criteria for national significance have been applied and have been met by the proposed trail; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned study, Executive Summary attached, concluded that because of its emphasis on partnerships, alternative B provides the greatest flexibility for resource protection while creating a framework for interpretation and visitor experience; and

WHEREAS, A large portion of the proposed trail lies within Maryland and PATRIOTISM, consisting in part of remembering our most significant historical events, is one of the cannons of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been a proponent of the conservation and preservation of American History; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support the Creation of "The Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail" without financial obligation to the National Organization; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Trail be under Federal jurisdiction as set forth in the preferred alternative of the study that calls for a joint partnership between federal, state, and local governments, a dedicated trail organization, and site managers to administer and maintain a federally-designated commemorative trail along the historic routes of the Chesapeake Campaign.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 48 (MD): Subject: Endorsement Of Joseph Gladden For National Commander, Sons Of The American Legion
Resolution No. 56 (OH): Fundraising For The USS Arizona Memorial Museum And Visitor Center, Honolulu, Hawaii

Resolution No. 119 (CA): National Headquarters To Offer Standardize Interactive Forms On Its Website For Department Use
Resolution No. 124 (ME): Establishment Of American Legion Riders As A National Program
Resolution No. 131 (UT): Officer's Guide And Manual Of Ceremonies Printing
Resolution No. 155 (AZ): Support Fairness To All Veterans Act

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Convention

Resolution No. 101 (OH): Recommendation Of Columbus, Ohio As Host Of 2013 National Convention
Resolution No. 117 (CA): Recommendation Of Anaheim, California As Host Of A Future National Convention
Resolution No. 156 (AZ): Freedom Fest For National Convention Of 2008

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 55 (MD): Endorsement Of James C. Morris As National Vice Commander
Resolution No. 71 (ID): Endorsement Of Ronald Derrick For National Chaplain
Resolution No. 77 (MT): Endorsement Of Mervin Gunderson As National Commander
Resolution No. 160 (WI): Endorsement Of David Korth For National Vice Commander

Rejected

Resolution No. 4 (GA) 14 (FL), 18 (IN), 49 (TX), 58 (OH), 84 (VA), 86 (SC), 102 (KS), 115 (CA), 129 (CT), 134 (UT), 154 (AZ), 161 (WI), 166 (TN), 167 (IA): La Societe Des 40 Hommes Et 8 Chevaus (40&8) Seek To Establish A Working Relationship With The American Legion
Resolution No. 7 (CO): Seek Direct Mailing Fundraising Program To Support The NASCAR American Legion Freedom Car 76
Resolution No. 75 (MT): Publication Resumption of "Welcome To The American Legion"
Resolution No. 114 (CA): Recognition Of The Twenty & Four As Part Of The American Legion Family
Resolution No. 116 (CA): Support For The American Stories Project
Resolution No. 120 (CA): Recommendation That Full Disclosure To Members Of The National Executive Committee Of Pending Issues Take Place Not Less Than 60 Days Prior To The Convening Of A National Executive Committee Meeting
Resolution No. 157 (WV): Sons of The American Legion As An Autonomous Organization
Resolution No. 170 (MX): Recommend The Renaming Of The Department Of Mexico To The Department Of Latin America
Resolution No. 171 (MX): Recommend The Establishment Of An Annual Competition For American Legion Internet Websites
Resolution No. 175 (WV): Adoption of "Let's Roll" As A Motto Of American Legion

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Permanent Committee Chairman and Permanent Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

It was also regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Permanent Committee Chairman and Permanent Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of this Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolution(s).

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of Illinois, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motions been made and seconded. On the question. Hearing none. All in favor signify by 'aye.' All opposed? The 'ayes have it. The Report on Credentials and Internal Affairs is adopted.

American Legion Racing

Nearly two years ago, The American Legion embarked upon an ambitious and unique program when it agreed to act as a title sponsor for the NASCAR '76 Freedom car with Team Johnson Motorsports. We haven't won any races yet, but it not from the lack of determination, talent and effort. The American Legion program is young and growing and with our continued support, it will soon become the success that we all wish it to be.

With us this afternoon is our Legion Racing Team, Team Johnson Motorsports owner Jack Johnson and our *'76 Freedom* car driver, Jerick Johnson. I extend my special thanks to those many Legion racing points of contacts in the departments for making it happen with our posts and our racing fans.

Now we will recognize three points of contact who have done an outstanding job of supporting the racing team. Would Chairman Larry Besson assist, along with Jack and Jerick Johnson? Join me when we recognize them. I now call upon National Vice-Commander, Bob Lahiere.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER LAHIERE: An American Legion racing jacket will now be presented to the three individuals for recognition of their individual work on the 'Pledge A Mile' for the 2008 Daytona 500 Race. Their individual fundraising efforts, their ability to energize their individual department and their overall support for The American Legion Race Team.

Those receiving the jackets are: Joe Broe, Department of Washington, Larry Ryan, Department of Minnesota, and another gentleman receiving this award, George Lussier, Department of Virginia. Fellow Legionnaires, let's hope that soon, with the help of God, these gentlemen will be racing for the finish line.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I call on Larry, Jack and Jerick come to the podium for a few words and presentations.

JERICK JOHNSON: It's been a honor and privilege being here for the last few days, meeting and talking with a lot of The American Legion family members. As they say, we are a start-up Busch Team right now, but we are making strides in the right direction. We have attempted six races so far this year in the NASCAR Busch Series that is on national TV. We have qualified and made the race in five of those. In one of those races, we weren't so lucky, and as some of the people that helped me like to say, "We wrecked the car," which makes me feel a little better. But even on that happening, the wreck where we didn't make the race, we probably got more exposure out of that race, than the races that we did make. The wreck was shown on *Sports Center*. The next morning it showed up on TV and a lot of national magazines. It was a good exposure and just one sign of the marketing opportunity The American Legion could have in NASCAR racing.

The army, the navy, the Marines, the coastguard, the air force, all have racecars. It is not because they like racing but it's because it's a very powerful marketing tool. The American Legion has decided to go racing, to go to the NASCAR people that believe in a lot of what we believe, in God and country, that have a prayer, a National Anthem and a flyover before race. We want to show them what The American Legion is, who we are, the kind of programs that we support and most of all, recruit the next generation of American Legion members. But we're not going to the racetrack asking for membership. What we want to do is go to the racetrack so they can see the emblem and the name and let them start asking questions so we can show them what we do and not say, "Would you like to be a member?" We'll tell them what our organization does, and they'll want to joint this great organization.

I'm very proud to be named, in one of the most American of sports, The American Legion Race Car Driver. We thank everybody that has supported this program up until now because it is at its grass roots. When it does become big, you will be able to say, "We were on board when this was still just happening."

One last presentation I'd to make for his support for all of this year. I'd like to give one more jacket away to our Commander Paul Morin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let me say to both of them that traveling throughout The American Legion this year, these two individuals have taken their time to go to conferences and department conventions to be there to speak, to display the car and, besides doing all the racing activity, they truly have a commitment to make this happen, and that we, The American Legion, will be out front. I personally would like to present them with a small token of my appreciation for what they're doing. But more importantly, as you've seen, we recognized three points of contact today. Why? Because those three individuals have gone above and beyond within their department to help sell those racing kits and the racing things, such like this that I have on, this beautiful coat. That you all can do back in your posts to help raise the money, we need to keep this going, because we've made a commitment to support it and that commitment was that we would not take any money from The American Legion general fund to do it. That's why we as individuals need to support this and make it happen.

Do you know what I found most intriguing? When we talked about membership, as Jerick touched on, the largest number of spectators in racing is women. They are veterans, too. We need to work together to make this happen, to see that car *'76* and that American Legion emblem going around the track. But we need to give them the financial support.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes the Honorable Vincent M. Gong of Illinois, Chairman of the Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments for the purpose of making a report.

HONORABLE VINCENT M. GONG, Illinois: I have two good pieces of news. One, this is the last scheduled report of the day. Two, it should be short.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

To the 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Reno, Nevada August 28, 29, 30, 2007.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2007 in the Grand Sierra Resort, Crystal 3, Casino Level. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 38 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was authorized by the members and is hereby submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD), who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a permanent chairman and secretary.

Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Charles G. Mills (NY) was duly elected Secretary. Thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of all the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, and copies of the National Constitution and By-Laws were made available to all members of the Committee.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions to the Committee, which was done.

A motion was duly made by George Cushing (AZ) and duly seconded by William J. Shetz (MX) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting, but not actual delegates to the Convention Committee be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee with regards to the requirements for consideration of resolutions to amend the Constitution of The American Legion, and the details as stated in the Standing Committee's report, he would rule out of order those resolutions which did not meet those requirements.

The Chair announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee on the Constitution and By-laws.

Resolution No. 64 (NM). The Chair announced that it was in agreement with the report of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws and that Resolution 64 (NM) was out of order because it did not provide language in the resolution upon which the National Convention could vote. Accordingly, he ruled Resolution No. 64 (NM) out of order.

Resolution No. 163 (WI) was next considered. The Chair announced that this resolution was also out of order because it did not provide language upon which the National Convention could vote and it was submitted after the date for mailing Amendments to the Departments and NEC (Article XV, Section 1, National Constitution.).

Cecil R. Phillips (SC) made a motion to support the recommendations of the Chairman, seconded by Tom Lannon (MN) that both Resolution No. 64 (NM) and Resolution No. 163 (WI) be rejected.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Convention Committee. Cathy Gorst (WI) made the motion and it was seconded by Terry Rice (KY). The motion carried.

James R. Kent (CO) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by George Cushing (AZ).

The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a delegate to the 89th National Convention of The American Legion, I move that this report be adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motions been made and seconded. On the question. Hearing none, all in favor 'aye.' Any opposed? The 'ayes' have it. The report on Constitutional Amendments is adopted.

If there are any further donations, we'll accept them at this time. A check was brought forth from Fountain Hills, Arizona, American Legion Riders, Chapter 58, for $500.00. I know Massachusetts; they're a little late in getting up here.

DELEGATE JIMMO, Massachusetts: From the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, your home state, I present you with a check for $2,100.00 for the Legacy Fund.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Sergeant-at-Arms, lead us in a salute to the Colors of our country.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS STEEN: Legionnaires, please join me in a salute to the Flag of the United States. One! Two!

The Delegation rose and saluted the Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The time is 2:44 p.m. The Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

…At 2:44 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Thursday, August 30, 2007, at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 30, 2007

…At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates were entertained by Mr. Peter Ole, our organist.

…At 9:00 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the third day of the 89th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

…Announcer introduces National Commander Paul A. Morin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: As we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Maestro Peter Ole. *[Applause.]*

Call to Order
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts. National Commander

The Convention will come to order. Sergeant-At-Arms, lead us to a salute to the Colors of our country. By the numbers. One, two.

…The delegates stood and rendered a right-hand salute to the Colors.

I now call upon the National Chaplain the Reverend Stan J. Gruneich of Flandreau, South Dakota.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN GRUNEICH: During his tenure as President, John Kennedy was walking through the base at Cape Canaveral. At one point in his tour, the President encountered an older man with a broom. The President asked him what his job was. The man responded, "We're sending a man to the moon." It's easy to lose sight of what we do here. Let's keep our sight fixed on the Four Pillars of The American Legion. Each person should know that.

In our prayers today, we will remember John Thompson, Dominion President, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, who is hospitalized and has went under major surgery once, and went back in another time. He needs a lot of prayers and support.

Let us pray.

Invocation
Reverend Stanley J. Gruneich, South Dakota, National Chaplain

As you walk this journey of life, we walk on the mountains and through the valleys, and You are the God of the mountains and God of the valleys. You come to where we are. We pray for John Thompson, that even though he is so far from home, the Legion family will surround him. In his weakness, be his strength. Now give us a vision to see the needs of all the veterans and families. Continue to bless this organization with your wisdom and use us through your will. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Please remain uncovered and join me to the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States.

…The delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Convention is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, National Commander

We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding achievements in journalism that had a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn. It is a testament to the demanding nature of a competition in the quality of entries. This year's award goes to: Jennifer Kraus, Bryan Staples, Kevin Wisniewski of *WTVF TV* Channel 5 Team in Nashville, Tennessee. We have an excerpt for the series.

…At this time, a video was displayed to the delegates.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Jennifer Kraus, Bryan Staples, Kevin Wisniewski
With WTVF-TV News Channel 5, Nashville, Tennessee

ANNOUNCER: A Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism is presented to WTVF-TV News Channel 5 Investigative Team. For your riveting investigative series that uncovered life threatening negligence in the care of elderly veterans at the Tennessee State Veterans Home. Presented at the 89th National Convention, August 30, 2007, Reno, Nevada.

JENNIFER KRAUS: Thank you. This truly means a lot, I can't tell you how much it means to be receiving this from you all. I want to share a little something with you to start off. It is kind of interesting how things come in full circle. I wound up in journalism because when I was about this high, I was exposed to the American Legion Oratorical Contest. When I was very young, I accompanied my father, as he was a judge at American Legion speech contests. A number of years later, when I wound up in junior high and high school, he encouraged me to take part in speech contests through The American Legion. That's what exposed me to public speaking and eventually led me to a career in journalism. So, I thank you for that.

We began following these stories as you saw there, in May of 2006. Unfortunately, now 15 months later, we are still doing these stories. We have continued to find problems with management, with care, with spending, with just the very things our veterans need. On a positive note, as you saw there, the governor's office has gotten involved, state lawmakers have been outraged and called for change. They have changed administrators; there is a new administrative staff in place. The state attorney general's office is now involved and most recently the U.S. Department of Justice has launched a civil rights investigation. Now the federal government has stepped in to look out for the rights of veterans in Tennessee.

Perhaps most rewarding to us, though, has been that the families have told us that we have given them a voice and have helped in our small way to make them feel that their loved ones did not die in vain. This all began with one veteran's story, the story of Dave Lawson, a Marine, who you heard part of his story there, and his family's concern, and their outrage with how he was being cared for by the Tennessee state veterans home, a nursing home run by the state of Tennessee, where you would expect to get the greatest care that you could ever imagine. Like his daughter said, 'five-star care.' And he was getting anything but.

We went on to tell the story of Army veteran Charles Compton. His story was just as shocking. But when we began telling their stories, we never imagined the problems that we would uncover and go on to expose and the problems that we would continue to go on to expose and uncover. It is kind of interesting to know the Commander's big program and platform has been 'Back to Basics.' We can think of no better group more deserving of care than our veterans, those who have served and fought for our country. Basic care, basic respect is what they have earned. We have stayed with this story now for 15

months. We have promised the families, we have promised lawmakers, we have told the administrators, the governor, we have told everyone we can think of, that we will stay with this story until the very end, until there are no more problems. We stand in front of you today, and promise you and especially our Tennessee veterans back there, that we will stay with the story until there are no more problems, until there is no more reason for us to be doing these stories. We will stay with these stories until our veterans get the care they need, until they get care they deserve, until they get the care that they have earned.

We actually received several national awards for this series of reports and for the series of stories and investigations. But I think I speak for Kevin and Bryan in saying that truly this award means the most because it comes from you, because it comes from the nation's largest organization of veterans. You are the reason we have been doing these stories. I cannot tell you how much we are touched and honored to receive it from you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you Jennifer, Bryan and Kevin for a wonderful story. Many of you know I have the opportunity to direct a state veterans home and I will go back to that on Tuesday morning. This is something we never wish to see our veterans going through, especially the staggering number of bedsores. I say to everyone, that is part of our responsibility as veterans, as our representatives to the VA and to the state veterans' homes. Keep our eyes and ears open, listen out for those types of things from patients or family and report them. But what is more important than ever, when you get down to the nitty-gritty, it's whether what we've been doing this past year in fighting for addition funding for the VA. It's the same thing in each and every state in this nation. It's incumbent upon you to get to the bottom, to make sure there's adequate funding for those state veterans' home. But more importantly, ask this question, "What is your nursing staff ratio to the veteran?" If it isn't at least three plus hours a day, it's inadequate. Demand better care for your veterans in those homes. I implore you to go home and do that.

Civilian employees play a critical role in the defense of the nation by complying with the existing employment laws protecting the rights of workers who have served in the Guard and the Reserve components. That is why the Department of Defense created the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, or ESGR, in 1972. ESGR actively promotes cooperation and understanding between the Guard and the Reserve component numbers and their civilian employers. They also assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employees' military commitment. The American Legion strongly supports the initiatives of this fine organization designed to improve the quality of life of our Guard and Reserve warriors and their families. Today, we have with us a key representative of the Employers Support for the Guard and Reserve. Please welcome the Honorable Thomas F. Hall, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve.

At this time, Secretary Hall and I will sign a Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve.

Presentation of Statement of Support Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
Honorable Thomas F. Hall, Assistant Secretary Defense for Reserve Affairs

I'm accompanied by a number of people who make these kinds of things happen in this state and around the country, the Adjutant General of Nevada, Major General Kirkland, members of our ESGR Committee, various military individuals and my military assistants. I'm going to have a few words about the ESGR in that statement, but only a very few.

But first, let me tell you how delighted I am to be here. I'm wearing my post hat from Oklahoma. We have Oklahoma out there, do we? *[Applause.]*I've been a member of that post for a long time. The American Legion has meant a lot to me. I first remember 1945, four and a half years old, hearing fire works going off and asking my mother what was happening. She said, "The war is over. Let's go up to The American Legion post and celebrate." While we were celebrating the war being over, we also recognized that 18 young men in the prime of their life were not coming home.

The next thing that I remember in my hometown is we wanted to play baseball, as all the youngsters did in those years. We didn't have a team. We went to The American Legion and they formed that team for us. The post commander came to me and said, "Do you have transportation?" and I said no. He said, "How old are you?" "Sixteen." "Do you have a license?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I have a brand new Oldsmobile. You take that car and take young players to the games." Now, that was such a thing in leadership for me. I wouldn't allow them to wear their shoes; I wouldn't allow them to get that car dirty because he trusted me. I asked him, "What should I do with this car?" He said, "Just bring it home at night and leave the keys in it and park it on the street." Don't you wish we could have a country again, that we could park a car, with the keys in it? We need to take back America and make that happen again.

When I wanted to go to Boys State, American Legion once again stepped up and sent us to Boys State. Finally for me, as I started this journey that I will be ending next year when I complete my term of office with the President, it will mark 50 years of service to my country in uniform and in this type of uniform. And that was started by going to the Naval Academy. But I was so poor I didn't have enough money to go. A member of The American Legion came to me and said, "How much money do you need?" I said, "Sir, I need $300.00 and a train ticket." He said, "I have a job that you can work." I said, "How much can I earn?" He said, "I think about $300.00 and a train ticket."

So, whatever I was going to do, he was going to make it available and possible for me to go. Throughout my 38 years of active duty in the Navy, I went home every year for Memorial Day. Every year at our cemetery, The American Legion had the honor guard to make sure that we honored Americans who had fallen. They ensure that no veteran will be buried without an honor guard. They continue to carry on that tradition. I congratulate you and The American Legion for that.

Signing of support by your National Commander is yet another affirmation that The American Legion cares for our people and our veterans. One half of our military is in the Guard and Reserve, 1.2 million people, 634,000 of them have been mobilized. Today, on station, 89,000 of them throughout the world are standing there, along side their active duty counterparts against an enemy that you heard from our Commander-in-Chief, my boss, is an enemy that you are either for them or against them. If you are not for them, they intend upon killing you, murdering you and your family. They will not stop and they will be unrelenting. Our Guardsman, Reservist and active duty are our line of defense against that. So this statement of support tells them and their families that no matter whether they are on active duty or not, you care for them. You're the first major veterans' organization to sign this statement of support. I congratulate you and your Commander for what you've done. God bless you and God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Mr. Secretary, thank you for all that you do for our Guard and Reserve.

At this time, we are honored to have Major General Cindy Kirtland, the Adjutant General of the Nevada Guard who has been of an outstanding assistance to us here

through this convention, but also what she does every day on behalf of the Guard and Reserve. Major General, please come forward to say a few words.

MAJOR GENERAL KRITLAND: Welcome to this great state of Nevada. It is such an honor to be present in the midst of a group of individuals who know all too well the sacrifices and struggles that our young men and women in uniform go through every single day. The challenges are I think greater sometimes for our Reserve component members because they have the increased challenge of trying to balance their commitment and passion for supporting this great nation, but they also have civilian employers whom they have a commitment and dedication to, as well, and trying to balance that sometimes is very challenging.

I want to extend an appreciation on behalf of each and every one of them, to your Commander for agreeing to participate in this signing. Although it is somewhat ceremonial, what it does, is that it speaks to the thousands of members that you have scattered throughout this nation and shows the support and dedication you have to those young men and women who are following in your footsteps and who will soon be sharing these seats with you a few years down the road. But your support for them to get through their careers and through their struggles they are facing, your support for that is so important. So, I want to thank you for that commitment and for all of your continuing efforts to ensure that our young men and women in uniform—some of them out there aren't young anymore—who have given so much for this great nation, receive the benefits and the care that they so well deserve. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now, we have two presentations to be made. As you know, we had a little auction yesterday afternoon. The Department of Ohio under its NECman Carl Swisher, owes me $450.00. Are you here to pay? Come on up.

The Department of New York owes me $2200 and they are here to pay. Come on, Dick [Pedro], you can come, too. I want to make sure you sign the check. *[Laugher.]*

MR. CASEY, New York: We did bid $2200 for that helmet yesterday but when we met with our delegation, there arose a slight problem. They didn't want to pay $2200 for it. They wanted to pay $2500. So that's the check we'll contribute today.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: They paid the extra 300 because the model we hired was in high demand. Anyone else have any money? I'll be happy to take it for any projects, just come on up back stage, we'll get you out of here.

I have to tell you a story. I belong to a club back home called "The Beavers Club," one of those animal clubs. They do a lot of community service work. They dropped off at the house, before Elaine left to come, an envelope. They donated $1,000.00 to Landstuhl. So I'm really honored to be a member of that club and thank them for thinking of me and doing that.

UNIDENTIFIABLE MAN: On behalf of District 8, SAL, even though we've been runner-ups, we don't feel like we're losers. We're proud to offer $250.00 to the Legacy Ride Fund for their efforts.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let me give you some numbers. You know that Tuesday, in my opening statement, I read the numbers of what you raised. It continued to grow through this whole convention and it's pretty awesome. National Emergency Fund, $409,490.59; Child Welfare Foundation, $691,129.55; Creative Arts Festival, $118,000.00; The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, $406,618,34, Landstuhl, to care for those precious GIs and giving them what they need, $258,610.55. That truly brings us all back to basics and proves together we can win. You've raised this year for these five programs $1,880,849.03.

The Chair recognizes Michael B. Helm of Nebraska, Chairman of The National Convention Committee on Foreign Relations for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, Chairman

At 8:30 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2007, 45 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno, Nevada. Mr. Michael D. Helm (NE) was elected chairman and Melvin "Doc" Simon was appointed Secretary.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of 5 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

Following this initial meeting an Ad Hoc administrative convention committee met in Meeting Room D-1 Concourse Level of the Reno-Sparks Convention Center to consider the resolutions that had been assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. The following were appointed Chairman and Secretary: Foreign Policy: Chairman Michael D. Helm (Nebraska) and Secretary Melvin (Doc) Simon (Vermont).

The Ad Hoc Committee report contains resolutions that will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide an effective viable foreign relations program for The American Legion. This program will fully support a strong and dynamic U.S. foreign policy to promote democracy around the world and discharge America's responsibility as leader of the free world in the continuing struggle to defend and promote liberty.

General Foreign Policy

Approved

Resolution No. 16: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) Funding
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Many American Service-members are reported as Missing in Action or otherwise unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War and the War in Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf Region and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, The families of the Prisoners of War, Missing Captured, and Missing in Action still suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to the lack of any accurate accounting in spite of the heroic efforts of U.S. search teams; and

WHEREAS, The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) is the direct agency responsible for the administration and policy for military personnel accountability; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA and personnel accountability operations are still inadequate, and that the President's budget and appropriations provided for by the Congress has not been sufficient to fund research and development for new or improved personnel accountability programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled at Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the American Legion urges the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to designate and provide adequate and appropriate funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office (DPMO) for their current and future mission to ensure the accountability for our Nations Servicemen and servicewomen; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort for reasonable accountability for MIA's from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Cold War and those missing and captured in our current conflicts around the world.

Resolution No. 17: The American Legion's Support For World Press Freedom
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, In a democratic society the essential role of the press (News Media, print and electronic) to report on government activities, social movements, scientific developments and other significant events or breakthroughs are one of the basic pillars of our Bill of Rights; and

WHEREAS, Such reporting and expression of speech help to ensure the transparency of the political and social systems that are in place and that an informed and educated public can more effectively participate politically; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that oppressive and restrictive regimes around the world work to deter, manipulate or out-rightly deny their citizens to get unfettered information, or to allow free press to investigate and report in those countries; and

WHEREAS, Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN), are essential news resources to countries whose domestic news sources are oppressed or restricted; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the American Legion urges the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to designate and provide adequate and appropriate funding for the Department of State and U.S. Government News Media Organizations under the Broadcast Board of Governors such as: The Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti TV, and the Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports international press freedom and the protection of international journalists who report and investigate news throughout the world; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recognizes the great value and contributions these unique individuals have made to society and the global community to draw attention to oppression, injustice and tyrannies that threaten open and free societies around the world.

Regional Affairs

Approved

Resolution No. 2: Republic of China Policy Resolution
Origin: Alaska
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a long-time friend, allied, and a major trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese Imperialism during World War II and in the fight against Communism during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of all the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the United States Government encourages the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any negative actions by either side to change the status quo, which would lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 172: Equitable Non-Resident Alien Survivors' Benefits
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 173 (MX))

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to "devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of U.S. military forces are based presently benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled "nonresident alien beneficiaries"; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either:

1. 30 days every six months or
2. one day per month every month of the year, but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the United States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the US-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a bureau of DHS (formerly the "Immigration and Naturalization Service or "INS") exercises the

ability to legally deny entry to non-U.S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the U.S. Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the INS and USCIS have increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS and INS have denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have enjoyed a decorous level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person's domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbitrator as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the U.S. for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested that The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 U.S. Code 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404.463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurance or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404.460 "nonpayment of monthly benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of any new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's own Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; and

WHEREAS, Rules of The American Legion relating to resolutions requiring Social Security legislation are different from resolutions which do not require legislative action by the Congress, the following is submitted as a separate resolution from any other resolution relating to Non-Resident Alien Survivor Beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion petition The Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama necessary to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404.460 of the Social Security Act, thereby

allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of U.S. veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such expedited negotiation apply only to the matter of survivor benefits payments and that other matters related to interests of the Social Security Administration not be included if such negotiation would delay the realization of bilateral agreements relating to survivor benefits payments; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Congress with the Social Security Administration to establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all foreign nationals receiving Social Security survivor benefits so that all such persons shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile

MICHAEL B. HELM: Mr. Commander, as a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Nebraska, I move for the adoption of this entire report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Do I hear a second? On a question. Hearing none. All in favor signify by 'aye.' All opposed. 'nay.' The report on Foreign Relations is adopted. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair recognizes Clarence Hill of Florida, Chairman of The National Convention Committee on National Security for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
Clarence E. Hill, Florida, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 26, 2007, 238 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in Rooms F1 & F8, Concourse Level at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center. At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and his Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Delegates and make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee. Mr. Clarence E. Hill (Florida) was elected Chairman and Paul Martel (Florida) was appointed Secretary.

General Security Ad Hoc
Nancy L. Carder, Illinois, Chairman
Kenneth E. Krizan, Iowa, Secretary
Aerospace
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman
Terry Huisman, Alaska, Secretary
Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness
Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut Chairman
Melvin L. Goslar, Iowa, Secretary
Law and Order
Terence E. Nolan, Florida, Chairman
Dale Movius, Washington, Secretary
Merchant Marine
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman
Charles P. Powell, Jr., Virginia, Secretary
Military Affairs
Clayborn Lofton, Illinois, Chairman
Marie A. Rhyne, Virginia, Secretary
Naval Affairs
Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman
William H. Lienhop, Georgia, Secretary

On Sunday afternoon, August 26, 2007, the delegates again assembled in Rooms F1 & F8, Concourse level, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on Security. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 33 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Nancy L. Carder, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 29: National Security Principles
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Over two centuries ago, our distinguished forefathers wrote the Preamble to the Constitution which began with the words: "We the People" shall "provide for the common defense…" and by so doing, they established the principle that protecting our nation from hostile threats was the fundamental purpose of the Government of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion since its founding in 1919 has always 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"; and

WHEREAS, Although the threat posed by the former Soviet Union is diminished, the United States is faced with a myriad of short and long term threats and challenges which are far more complex, perplexing and difficult to deal with than was the more predictable and unified threat posed by the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, It is urged that the Department of Defense conduct a global posture review; and

WHEREAS, Although the two-war National Security Strategy has been amended, the Armed Forces are fighting the war on terrorism, maintaining homeland security and conducting peace enforcement operations with a reduced strength of 1.5 million and active military force structures composed of only 10 Army Divisions, 11 active Navy aircraft carriers and 13 Air Force fighter wing equivalents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

1. **The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned.**
2. **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. Such a strategy requires that the Armed Forces be more fully structured, equipped and budgeted to achieve this strategy. Active and reserve military end strengths should be increased to an absolute minimum of 2.1 million for the foreseeable**

future. At least twelve full-strength Army Divisions, 11 deployable Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, 3 or more Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces, and 13 or more active Air Force fighter wing equivalents should be retained as the minimum needed baseline foundation. Defense budgets should be funded at least 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during time of peace, 5% during time of war.

3. **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.**
4. **Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies or war.**
5. **Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives in the years ahead. Production of airlift and sealift assets needs to be expedited.**
6. **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 explored and tried.**
7. **Peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations detract from our declining combat power and readiness and our capability to wage the sustained war on terrorism. Such operations should be limited, congressionally approved and separately appropriated on a case-by-case basis.**
8. **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.**
9. **The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable.**
10. **Major incentives for military service should 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.**
11. **Urge the United States Government to retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both short term as well as long term commitments and contingencies.**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 30 (MD): Uniformed Services University Of The Health Sciences
Resolution No. 31 (MD): National Missile Defense System

Aerospace Committee
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 72: Management of Space Assets
Origin: Montana
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Military assets in space are essential to all levels of conflict and all military services; and

WHEREAS, The development of an overall national policy for the deployment of space assets and for the defense of such assets will require vigorous, dedicated, advocacy by the military users of space assets; and

WHEREAS, Successful advocacy of space issues will require the long term development of knowledge and doctrine as experience is gained and requirements evolve in the face of present and future risks such as that presented by the recent Chinese anti-satellite missile test; and

WHEREAS, There is a long and successful history of the Department of Defense assigning single manager responsibility for essential, long lasting, evolving military assets that reach across service boundaries as exemplified by the establishment of single management responsibility for transportation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29,30, 2007, That The American Legion advocate to the Congress that the United States Air Force be given single manager responsibility for the nation's military space programs.

Resolution No. 73: Procurement of Sufficient F-22 Aircraft
Origin: Montana
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, As a result of the last Quadrennial Defense Review, planned procurement of F-22 Raptors is at 183 as opposed to the stated USAF requirement of 381; and

WHEREAS, Reduced procurement has resulted in lesser aircraft per squadron as well as the inability to upgrade squadrons currently equipped with the aged F-15C; and

WHEREAS, The lesser number of aircraft will not only reduce squadron size from 24 to 18 but fail to equip 3 of the 10 Air and Space Expeditionary Forces (AEF); and

WHEREAS, Current limitation on numbers consign the Raptor to a low density-high demand status for decades to come with attendant and ever increasing maintenance, personnel and operational limitations; and

WHEREAS, With continued initial operational experience the Raptor program has demonstrated remarkable performance as shown in Operation Northern Edge defeating a "red threat" of F-15s, F-16s, and Navy F/A-18 Hornets by ratio of 241 to two; and

WHEREAS, The lopsided ratio of kills is a warning that the USAF must be equipped to deal with other versions of 4th generation air superiority fighters such as the MIG-35; and

WHEREAS, Such performance is essential to establish and maintain air dominance that has prevented the American soldier from being exposed to the threat of enemy air since 1953; and

WHEREAS, Nations capable of fielding competitive aircraft have unfortunately displayed an historic tendency to sell such aircraft to any buyer on the international scene; and

WHEREAS, The United States must be ready to fight traditional conflicts as there has been no decline in the threats facing the U.S. that are not irregular or terrorist in nature; and

WHEREAS, Build-up of Army and Marine strength to fight the present long term irregular conflict is vital, it should not be done at the expense of our air and space capabilities that are vital across the entire spectrum of potential conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Potential adversaries whether China, Iran, North Korea or other nation states, will most likely be engaged by air and space assets which will once again require assured air dominance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion advocate to the Congress that the procurement of F-22 Raptor aircraft be approved and funded for the stated USAF requirement of 381; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That such procurement be funded through additional appropriations even if that should result in an increase in the overall National Defense Budget.

Resolution No. 85: Development And Expansion Of The Hyper-X Aerospace Program

Origin: Virginia

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The X-43A Scramjet test flights are part of NASA Hyper-X program, an advance research effort in propulsion technologies for high speed flight with the atmosphere and into Earth orbit; and

WHEREAS, After many years of research and development testing, preliminary indications are that the craft met major milestones propelling itself slightly over Mach 7, seven times the speed of sound, or some 5,000 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, Unlike any other space vehicle that must haul weighty amounts of propulsion fuel, scramjets use the atmosphere as fuel so that scramjet-carrying craft could haul greater payload into orbit and suborbital flights; and

WHEREAS, Scramjet broke its own world record on its third and final flight with a new world speed record for jet-powered aircraft of Mach 9.6 which equates to nearly 7,000 miles per hour; and

WHEREAS, Researchers predict scramjet speed could reach 15 times the speed of sound so that an 18 hour trip to Tokyo from New York City becomes a 2 hour flight; and

WHEREAS, There are few or no moving parts in the scramjet allowing engine ignition and combustion in a matter of milliseconds which is considered a major aerospace engineering achievement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion assembled in National Convention in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That the American Legion urges Congress to direct NASA to continue and expand research and development of the Hyper-X program and to fully fund and continue this revolutionary program which will once again bring the United States to the forefront of Aerospace engineering achievement.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 32 (MD): Support For The United States Air Force

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee

Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 33: The American Legion's Role In Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Since before September 11, 2001, our Nation has been at risk to the new and changing invisible threat of terrorism launched from abroad; the United States, even during the War on Terrorism, has no more important mission than protecting the homeland and her citizens from future terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The National Strategy for Homeland Security aligns and focuses homeland security functions into six critical mission areas, namely, intelligence and warning; border and transportation security; domestic counter-terrorisms; protecting critical infrastructure; defending against catastrophic terrorism; and emergency preparedness and response; and

WHEREAS, The responsibility for providing homeland security is shared between federal, state and local governments, and the private sector; many homeland security activities, such as intelligence gathering and border security, are properly accomplished at the federal level: In other circumstances, like first responder capabilities, it is more appropriate for state and local governments to handle these responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, After the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, Presidential and Congressional budgets identified four priority areas for additional resources and they included: Support first responders, defend against bioterrorism, secure America's borders and to use 21st century technology to secure the homeland; and

WHEREAS, According to the Council for Excellence in Government, the greatest resource the United States has for enhancing homeland security-which has been largely untapped thus far-is the American people; and

WHEREAS, Polls have indicated that over 62 percent of Americans say they would be willing to spend time volunteering with homeland security planning, training and practicing drills in their communities, yet some 84 percent of Americans and first responders polled admitted to low awareness of federal, state and local emergency preparedness plans; and

WHEREAS, As former members of the Armed Forces trained in vigilance and security, who would be more qualified citizens than veterans to assist in many homeland security activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urges its Legionnaires, Posts and Departments to assist in Homeland Security efforts in communities for example, by developing emergency kits and plans; by remaining informed and assisting families, schools, workplaces and communities in developing emergency plans and checklists; by reporting suspicious activity, or working with local councils of the Citizen Corps or community-based organizations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion prepare and distribute Disaster Preparedness and Response Guides for American Legion Posts.

Resolution No. 34: The Citizen Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is composed of grassroots Posts across the Country which have had experience in community civil preparedness; and

WHEREAS, In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, which is an effort to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility through volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps, a component of USA Freedom Corps, is a locally-driven initiative to have every American become an active participant in preventing, preparing for, and responding to crime, natural disasters and other emergencies; and

WHEREAS, The Citizen Corps Affiliate Program expands the resources and materials available to states and local communities by partnering with Programs and Organizations that offer resources for public education, outreach, and training; represent volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer; or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Program Affiliates support Citizen Corps Council activities by helping to establish training and information delivery systems for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and by helping with family preparedness and crime prevention initiatives in a community or across a region; and

WHEREAS, The programs of Citizen Corps are jointly managed by the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Councils help drive local citizen participation by coordinating Citizen Corps programs, developing community action plans, assessing possible threats and identifying local resources; and

WHEREAS, The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and disaster medical operations. Using their training; and

WHEREAS, The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program strengthens communities by helping medical, public health and other volunteers offer their expertise throughout the year as well as during local emergencies and other times of community need; and

WHEREAS, An expanded Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP) Program incorporates terrorism awareness education into its existing crime prevention mission, while also serving as a way to bring residents together to focus on emergency preparedness and emergency response training; and

WHEREAS, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers; and

WHEREAS, The Fire Corps Program has the goal of providing support and supplementing resource-constrained fire departments through the use of civilian volunteers for non-fire suppression related activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That all Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to become involved in their local Citizen Corps activities, and establish their own programs under an affiliation with the Citizen Corps; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reaffirm its Citizen Corps affiliation, and that the Congress be urged to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion annually participate in National Preparedness Month.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 88 (MA): Continued Donation of Blood for Emergencies

Law and Order Committee
Terence E. Nolan, Florida, Chairman
Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 35 (MD): Second Amendment

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 36 (MD): Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense

Military Affairs Committee
Clayborn Lofton, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 38: Military Quality Of Life
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents as well as military retirees, as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this Nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and his family remain in the service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability and regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care and commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families; and

WHEREAS, Over 30,000 Reservists had been activated for homeland security and the war on terrorism and with Reservists performing active duty missions for longer periods of time, their benefits need to be significantly expanded and improved; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; and

WHEREAS, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund such quality of life features including but not limited to, the following:

1. Military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers are direly needed. Pay raises must be competitive with the private sector;
2. Adequate medical, mental and dental health services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities. The Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services;
3. Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components and annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) paid at the same rate and concurrently with other Federal retiree COLAs; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and would undermine morale and readiness;
4. Requiring that the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating veterans;
5. Fully funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees;
6. That, SBP premiums should be paid up after payment for 30 years or until age 70 whichever comes first with DIC benefits;
7. TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement deployment pay, capital gains tax exclusions, tax-free and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea;
8. Congressional re-enactment of Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents;
9. Adequately protecting the American public and the Armed Forces from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions;
10. Urging the Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in Homeland Security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force. Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized at age 85. Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists should be the same as active duty; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills;
11. Military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances;
12. Whenever a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is conducted, The American Legion will urge that certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for

use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families;

13. That Congress enact Traumatic Injury Insurance protection for use during the War on Terrorism;
14. That Walter Reed Army Medical Center not be closed and rebuilt until after the Global War on Terrorism has ended;
15. That the numerous, recurring and serious pay problems experienced by the Active and Reserve Components be immediately resolved;
16. That Traumatic Brain Disorder and Combat Stress be diagnosed and effectively treated in the military; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urge the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features for Active Duty, National Guard and Reservists as well as military retiree veterans and their dependents and military survivors.

Resolution No. 43: Retention And Renovation Of Walter Reed Army Medical Center
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, A recommendation set forth in the 2005 DoD Base Realignment and Closure report (BRAC), which is currently under active consideration, would close the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, and transfer its functions to other proposed and existing facilities in Maryland and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC) is considered to be America's premier military medical facility; and

WHEREAS, The Walter Reed facility was originally established in 1909 as the result of legislation adopted by the Congress, and a new main hospital was dedicated in September 1977; and

WHEREAS, The WRAMC campus hosts several other vitally important organizations including the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology and the Army Physical Disability Agency; and

WHEREAS, Located at the Walter Reed facility are the Mologne House, a 1,111 room hotel where soldiers and their families are comfortably accommodated while receiving outpatient treatment at the hospital, and three Fisher Houses for the comfort of families of hospitalized soldiers; and

WHEREAS, During WWI the hospital's capacity grew from 80 patient beds to 2,500 in a matter of months, and through WWII, Korea and the Vietnam War hundreds of thousands of soldiers were treated there; and

WHEREAS, Today WRAMC serves the military community from the Washington, DC area, and around the world, admitting 16,000 patients a year. As of August 1, 2005, since the onset of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, WRAMC had treated thousands of casualties, including 265 amputees, 37 of whom are multiple amputees; and

WHEREAS, The facility is currently operating at nearly full capacity, treating these casualties of the Global War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, Walter Reed Army Medical Center is a national treasure; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports the mission of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and is convinced that closing the facility and transferring its

functions would be a grave mistake and detrimental to the provision of support to families of casualties, military retiree veterans and their families, complex medical care, graduate education and clinical research, all of which are of the utmost importance in maintaining the fighting strength of the United States Army; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion unalterably opposes the closing of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology and the transfer of its functions to other facilities, as is proposed in the Department of Defense Base Realignment and Closure report.

Resolution No. 44: Increasing The Short And Long-Term Strength Of The Services
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces of the United States were reduced by 35 percent after the Cold War in 1989 had ended and were drawn down from 2.1 million to 1.4 million, and the manpower strength of the volunteer Armed Forces currently numbers only 1.65 million; Army Active and National Guard divisions were severely downsized, and the Navy and the Air Force are also being reduced in manpower and aging warships and aircraft systems: According to the Army Chief of Staff, the Army is long overdue in increasing the Army's end strength and resetting, repairing and replacing its worn- out weapons systems, equipment, and helicopters which will require billions of dollars in the near term to fix; and

WHEREAS, Despite the reduced capabilities of the Armed Forces, peace-keeping missions were on the upswing and our military was spread thin over 130 foreign countries, including countries like Germany and South Korea with whom the United States had treaty agreements; and

WHEREAS, Besides being engaged in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States is concurrently faced with growing nuclear and conventional threats in Iran, North Korea as well as the Peoples' Republic of China; and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has proposed an increase in Active Army endstrength from 482,000 to 547,000 and in the Marine Corps from 175,000 to 202,000 over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, The essence of this resolution was adopted by the National Executive Committee at its Spring Meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, Urges the Department of Defense and Congress to increase the short-term end strength of the Active Army by 65,000 and the Marine Corps by 27,000 while completely resetting the Army force; and that over the long term, the Active Army end strength be increased to its 1990 manpower and readiness levels of 770,000, an increase of 288,000 in 18 active Army division equivalents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That over the long term the Navy and the Air Force cease the current practice of reducing their end strengths and systems inventories, and that both Services rebuild their manpower, readiness, and inventory levels of warships and modernized aircraft so as to maintain a more credible and ready global deterrent; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to maintain defense spending levels of at least five percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during wartime and four percent during peacetime in order to adequately maintain the capabilities of the Armed Forces to better pursue and protect the national security interests of the United States.

Resolution No. 45: Purple Hearts For Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs)
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Purple Heart was established by General George Washington and was reestablished by the President of the United States in War Department General Orders 3 in 1932 and was to be awarded to members of the Armed Forces were wounded or killed in action or died of wounds as a result of combat action with hostile enemy forces; and

WHEREAS, General Washington, in establishing the Purple Heart, "intended awarding or authorizing officers would not make personal judgments based on how more or less serious a wound or injury appeared, and that being wounded in combat-by any degree-was a true distinction of 'military merit'''; and

WHEREAS, While clearly an individual recognition, the Purple Heart differs from all other decorations in that an individual is not "recommended" for the decoration, but, rather, individuals are entitled to it upon meeting certain specific criteria; and

WHEREAS, The signature wound in the Global War on Terrorism has been the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), most often caused by roadside explosions (IEDs), which are medically classified as mild, moderate and severe; and

WHEREAS, Over 14,000 Purple Hearts have been awarded, thus far, of the more than 1.4 million service members who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the DoD reports that 11-28 percent of combat troops may have been exposed to bomb or shell blasts and suffered at least mild TBIs; and 30 percent of Iraq and Afghanistan casualties at Walter Reed Army Medical Center have been diagnosed with mild, moderate or severe TBIs; and

WHEREAS, Military Uniform Regulations currently call for awarding Purple Heart medals for "concussion injuries caused as a result of enemy-generated explosions"; and

WHEREAS, According to the recently published "Rebuilding the Trust" report of the Independent Review Group investigating Walter Reed AMC, it was noted that "no standard administrative codes exist for documenting even mild traumatic brain injuries in medical records"; and

WHEREAS, According to military medical authorities, combat casualty moderate or severe neurotrama TBIs, unlike the psychological Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, may be accompanied by internal wounding to include portions of the brain being damaged and malfunctioning, internal bleeding, and even death, which would dictate the presence of internal TBI physical wounds and justification for the issuance of the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, The essence of this resolution was adopted by the National Executive Committee at its Spring Meetings; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense and Military Services, as appropriate, to review the regulatory eligibility criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart and recognizing the internal and external wounding aspects of Traumatic Brain Injuries for purposes of awarding Purple Hearts for these wounds resulting from combat actions with hostile forces in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the American Legion urges that military medical personnel develop the necessary administrative codes for reporting TBIs for the purposes of detecting, reporting, treatment, and research of traumatic brain injuries to include the awarding of timely Purple Hearts.

Resolution No. 46: Pain Management Research, Treatment And Therapies
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The characteristics of modern warfare, including the global war on terrorists, exposes members of the uniformed services to many adverse and dangerous environmental diseases and living conditions; and

WHEREAS, Today's war zone conditions replete with noxious gases released from explosive devices in Iraq and Afghanistan produce traumatic, life altering, battlefield scars and casualties unheard of in previous wars including infections, instant crushing of protective skull and body bones, loss of sight and limbs, dehydration, blood and other body infections and, in some cases, severely impaired or total loss of mental and physical body motor functions; and

WHEREAS, Military medical rapid response teams provide superb, state of the art, medical and psychological life-saving treatment and care at battlefield sites with an extraordinarily high success rate; and

WHEREAS, Military, Department of Veterans Affairs and some specialty civilian health care treatment facilities are overburdened with caring for the most serious and most painful battlefield casualties ever witnessed from war; and

WHEREAS, The nation's medical and mental health care professionals have not been provided with sufficient resources to adequately research, diagnose, treat and manage acute and chronic pain associated with present day battlefield casualties; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That federal funding for pain management research, treatment and therapies at the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs and at the National Institutes of Health be significantly increased and that the Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to ensure that an effective pain management program be uniformly established and implemented; and, be it, further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs increase its investment in pain management clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at military and VA treatment facilities and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 63: Exempting Mailing Charges For Non-Profit Organizations
Origin: New Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The motto of The American Legion has been "For God and Country" since its founding by Veterans of World War I in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, This service is performed through The American Legion's basic programs; and

WHEREAS, The United States of America is presently in a state of war in Iraq and Afghanistan and several thousand of U.S. Troops are in both countries fighting the enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Our troops in both countries have expressed their desire to receive any items from the United States, items ranging from non-perishable food to toiletries and personal items; and

WHEREAS, Several non-profit organizations and other entities, both personal and commercial have been organizing banks to collect items for the troops and sending such items to both countries, these actions being done through the United States Postal Service; and

WHEREAS, The cost of mailing items to both countries is very expensive and sometimes, the entities do not have the funds to accomplish the mailing and they have to resort to asking for more monies just to mail the items; and

WHEREAS, The authority of the US Postal Service should exempt such mailing costs for non-profit organizations to accomplish the mailings to our deployed troops in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, Department of New Mexico voted that the United States Postal Service exempt the postal mailing charges for packages sent to US Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan by all non-profits, including The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29,30, 2007, That the United States Postal Service exempt the postal mailing charges for packages sent to US Armed Forces deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan by all non-profits associations including The American Legion.

Resolution No. 80: Cold War Victory Medal
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces engaged the forces of International Communism continuously from the end of World War II until the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, The United States, during this extended period, relied for its manpower source on a national service Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps made up of citizens performing their obligated duty to serve and defend the United States; and

WHEREAS, The defeat of the former Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies constituted the greatest success of American Armed Forces since the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Many American citizens served the nation in assigned duties without receiving tangible recognition for that service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, on August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support legislation that would authorize and provide funding for the award of a Cold War Victory Medal to all armed forces members who served on extended active duty during the period 2 September 1945 through December 1991 thereby commemorating service in the Cold War to eliminate the threat of a determined enemy to overpower the freely elected democracies of the World.

Resolution No. 103: Support For Legislation Or Laws Prohibiting Interference With The Rendering Of Military Funeral Honors
Origin: Kansas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Command Authority of all military forces of the United States has deemed it to be necessary for the protection of the interests of the United States and its allies to deploy members of the armed forces of the United States, including the active

and reserve components and members of the several states National Guard organizations; and

WHEREAS, It is a sad and tragic fact of war that a number of Americas brave soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines will be killed, or will die from wounds inflicted, during the present combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, among other places, and their successors will die in future armed conflicts, and that the avoidance of casualties, while desired by all, is impossible; and

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the United States has honored its war dead by a sacred tradition of military funerals, and has always and continues to treat its war dead with sanctity, dignity and honor, and recognizes the ultimate sacrifice made by each and every of its war dead to protect, defend, and preserve the freedoms of and way of life in the United States; and which tradition further recognizes that all members of the armed services of the United States may be ordered to, and will on those orders and without hesitation, engage in combat with an armed enemy and that as a result, they may be killed; and

WHEREAS, It has become fashionable among certain groups of United States citizens who oppose the War on Terror, particularly the armed conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, to protest against all war in general, to protest against all war in general, at the location and time of military funerals of service members who were killed or who died from battle wounds; and

WHEREAS, Such protests as have to this date occurred at the site and time of military funerals have included chants against the President, the United States and its armed forces, which are laced with profanity, insults to the deceased service member and his or her family, desecration of the Flag of the United States and other sacred symbols of our country; and unwarranted disruption of the funeral by loud and obnoxious words, chants and actions, which said protests are not in keeping with the aforesaid traditions of the sanctity of military funerals; and

WHEREAS, Such protests at military funerals have led to confrontations between protestors and family, community members, by persons and groups, including members of veterans organizations who vociferously oppose the positions advanced by the said protestors, and which support and honor the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and others serving in the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, In all events, the said protests diminish the sanctity, decorum, reverence and honor that the United States, and particularly The American Legion, bestows upon military funerals; and

WHEREAS, Under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, it is beyond question that citizens have the right to express by their words their disagreement with the present war or any armed conflict, or any action of the United States; and

WHEREAS, It is not an unreasonable or unconstitutional intrusion of the free speech rights of protestors to preclude them from exercising their rights at a time, place and location, and inclusive of such content and in such a manner so as to intentionally disrupt military funerals and dishonor those service members who have died in armed conflict throughout the world and their families and, indeed, to dishonor and mock all past, present and future members of the armed forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States and the legislatures of the several states and territories can and should enact legislation reasonably and constitutionally restricting the time, place, content and manner of such protests against the present and future wars, or other policies and actions of the United States, that will both safeguard the sanctity, dignity, honor and reverence of all military funerals; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion should endorse reasonable and constitutional legislation by the Congress and the State legislatures of the several states that would reasonably, but explicitly, delimit and demarcate the time, place and manner of protest that may be employed against military funerals of deceased members of the armed forces of the United States, including but not limited to, those funerals at which the deceased is entitled to military honors or American Legion Military Funeral Honors, so that such protests do not interfere with or compromise the traditional sanctity, dignity, honor, and reverence of such funerals.

Resolution No. 105: Designation Of Death Benefits Beneficiaries
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of the Armed Forces on active duty have available to them both Serviceman's Group Life Insurance and a Death Gratuity payable to their designated beneficiaries if they die while on active duty; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary designation for Serviceman's Group Life Insurance is very strictly based on who is designated by the service member; and

WHEREAS, The beneficiary designation for the Death Gratuity is very strictly based on a "next-of-kin" rule; and

WHEREAS, This type of beneficiary designation for the Death Gratuity does not allow for grandparents or other relatives raising children of deceased single parent troops to be designated as beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, The result of this type of designation of beneficiary may not accurately deliver the specific benefits envisioned by the service member as well as the general benefits envisioned by Congress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion support legislation to amend section 1477 of Title 10, United States Code, to provide additional options expanding the designation of the person to receive the Death Gratuity benefit with respect to a member of the Armed Forces who dies without a surviving spouse, but who is survived by a minor child.

Resolution No. 123: Illegal Immigrants And Selected Service Registration
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, United States federal law and regulations require that every male permanently residing in the United States, with certain limited exceptions, must register with US. Selective Service within 30 days of his 18th birthday and must be eligible for military service between his 18th and 26th birthdays; and

WHEREAS, These requirements concern American citizens, resident aliens and illegal aliens, i.e. aliens without documentation evidencing a right to lawfully reside in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to Federal Law a male who fails to register with U.S. Selective Service during the period of eligibility may, if prosecuted and convicted therefore, be fined up to $250,000 and/or sentenced to a prison term of up to five years; and

WHEREAS, Failure to register with U.S. Selective Service may result in denial of civil benefits including citizenship, student financial aid, federal job training and/or federal employment; and

WHEREAS, Illegal aliens should not be granted amnesty for the unlawful failure to register for U.S. Selective Service and thereby enjoy privileges and benefits available for required persons who do register; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion opposes any amnesty or other exemption for illegal aliens from the Federal laws and regulations pertaining to registration with the U.S. Selective Service, and calls on the U.S. Congress and call relevant Executive Branch agencies to enforce laws and regulations requiring registration with U.S. Selective Service without unequal special privileges or immunities for illegal aliens.

Resolution No. 169: Support For The War On Terrorism
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted By: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 40 (MD) and Resolution No. 136 (MN))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans created by an act of the United States Congress in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's membership is composed of veterans of all wars, the majority of which are Vietnam veterans who have endured the consequences of a nation divided in time of war; and

WHEREAS, Warriors, above all other people, pray for peace, for they must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war; and

WHEREAS, Because of the very nature of war, the warrior cannot be separated from the war itself; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, 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; and

WHEREAS, The global war on terrorism is a *just war,* aimed at protecting the very foundations of freedom and freedom-loving people everywhere; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion agrees with our Commander in Chief that the acts of terrorism mentioned heretofore were aimed at "the heart and soul of the civilized world, and the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century—a war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them"; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee meeting in pre-Convention session on August 22, 2005, in Honolulu, Hawaii, adopted this resolution and recommended that the 87th National Convention meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, August 23, 24, 25, 2005, adopt this resolution; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 28, 29, 30, 2007, That The American Legion fully supports the President of the United States, the United States Congress and the men, women and leadership of our armed forces as they are engaged in the global war on terrorism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That 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; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That 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.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 60 (OH): The American Legion's Honoring John Holley
Resolution No. 104 (KS): Atomic Service Medals for Atomic Testing Veterans
Resolution No. 137 (MN): Military Funeral Honors

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 37 (MD): Reducing the Reserve Retirement Age
Resolution No. 39 (MD): Selective Service Registration Program
Resolution No. 41 (MD): Boots On The Ground-The United States Army
Resolution No. 149 (MN): Concurrent Receipt

Naval Affairs Committee
Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman

Receive and Recorded

Resolution No. 42 (MD): Fully Funding the United States Navy and Marine Corps

Mr. Commander, National Officers, and Fellow Delegates. I am particularly pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Awards: National Blood Donor

Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members

Post participation—Department of Ohio

Individual Participation—Department of Minnesota
Category II—70,000 to 99,999 members

Post and Individual participation—Department of Maryland
Category III—40,000 to 69,999 members

Post and Individual participation—Department of Georgia
Category IV—25,000 to 39,999 members

Post and Individual participation—Department of Tennessee
Category V—10,000 to 24,999 members
Post and Individual Participation—No Department Submission
Category VI—less than 10,000 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Alaska

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Most of the fifty departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of over 14,000 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning departments for 2006-2007 are the Departments of Colorado, Alaska, Hawaii, Minnesota, Puerto Rico, South Carolina and Tennessee, which speaks well for these departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

MICHAEL B. HELM: At this point, I'd like to a moment of personal privilege. As most of you know, Mike Schlee will be retiring in October after 39 years of service, mostly as Director of The National Security and Foreign Relations Divisions. This morning, Mike Duggan informed me of his intention to retire early next year as The Deputy Director for National Security after nearly 22 years. I think we owe a round of applause of these two individuals in their 60-plus years of service to this organization.

This concludes the Report of the Convention Committee on National Security. As a duly elected and registered delegate to this Convention from the Sunshine State of Florida, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I heard that second. On a question. Hearing none. All in favor. "Aye." All opposed. The report on National Security is adopted.

A personal thanks to Chairman Hill and Chairman Helms and your Vice-Chairmen for your dedication, outstanding work, and reports. Also, let the record show my thanks to Mike Schlee for his 39 years of service as an employee of The American Legion and we all wish you well Michael. Stand and take another bow.

I believe that the use of music brings love, happiness and peace and should be always used in this world. Peter. *[Instrumental music of* I Did It My Way *being played.]* Yes, I was able to do it my way, with all of you walking by my side in service to The American Legion and to America. I thank each of you for accepting the theme 'Back to Basics, Together We Win,' and standing tall for The American Legion and those principals that were given to us by our founding fathers: to care for our fellow veterans, the children of this nation, Americanism and a strong national defense. I say we did it this year and we did it together, for those Four Pillars.

I leave this podium today feeling in my heart that we have done the job of service to our fellow veterans and to America. To each of you, I say thank you for the honor that you bestowed upon me to serve as National Commander of the greatest veterans organization in this world.

Mr. Adjutant, come forth please. Will you attest that I have turned over the keys of the building, the laptop and printer, cell phones and all of the things such as charge cards requested by you this morning. *[Laughter.]*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: That completes the inventory list. Yes, sir, I attest that all the property of The American Legion has been turned back to The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: As I've said in my opening, my job was made so much easier by an individual who has lead our organization as our National Adjutant for 26 years. That's pretty impressive when you think he has to get reappointed every year. Under his stewardship and the Executive Directors and over 250 staff members throughout our organization, it's by his guidance that this organization stands tall. It's by his credibility, his dedication, his honesty that has kept The American Legion in the forefront. Mr. Adjutant, I salute you and your staff and commend you for your leadership.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Thank you, Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: To each of you, in my heart I feel the mission has been accomplishment. This next group that I ask you to honor has given a lot, not only in this past year, but quite a bit throughout their lives and their support. It is because of each of them that I could stand here as your National Commander. I thank them all for the sacrifices, the commitments that they have made on behalf of me. My mother Lorie, the love of my life Elaine, daughter Stacey, son-in-law Brian and grandson Jacob, son Paul, Jimmy, Pat, Pam, daughter Paige as I said, had a baby on Friday evening and we have a new grandson Joshua. To all of you, thank you and I love you. Take a bow. You deserve it.

I choose the song *I Did It My Way* before my remarks. I have chosen another song to be played, *Happy Days Are Here Again,* and those happy days mean that I am back with my family. *[Instrumental music of* Happy Days Are Here Again*]*

I now call National Vice Commander Lloyd Woods and the National Vice Commanders to the podium.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODS: Commander Morin, please join me at the podium. The National Chaplain along with the National Sergeant-At-Arms is also joining me, the five of us, National Vice Commanders.

Commander Morin, on behalf of your five National Vice Commanders, your National Historian, who had to leave early today, your National Chaplain and your National Sergeant-At-Arms, it gives me pleasure to present to you a token of our appreciation for being such an outstanding commander this past year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Thank you. Do you want me to open this? There are no bombs? It's a beautiful card with many statements of expression, but a wonderful check. I'll have a lot of fun taking care of my 'honey do' *book* with this check. It's my pleasure to present to each of them a pin that I purchased for them to remember their year in office and our service to this great organization together.

Now if my Aide would come up here please. To my Sergeant-At-Arms, Joe Steen, from Massachusetts. Joe and his wife Nancy have been outstanding supporters of me, back within the Department of Massachusetts. They gave so many hours and so much work on behalf of our campaign. I will always be indebted to them. Joe has just served even with some health difficulties this year. He's been everywhere he needed to be and has done an outstanding job, serving as National Sergeant-At-Arms. Joe, I thank you for your commitment to me, your loyalty and your loyalty to our national organization.

To Mark my aide, we traveled to all 55 departments, to Indianapolis, and to Washington many times. It's been a great journey; it's been a lot of fun, a lot of laughs, but a lot of hard work. He was always there, ready to do what needed to be done. He's been a loyal friend, supporter, and an advisor and will always continue to be that to me, because it's his true friendship and his wife, Joyce, that Elaine and I will always cherish. Mark.

I now call upon the National Adjutant, Robert W. Spanogle.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, if I may, through the Chair ask that the two Executive Directors join me. Mr. Wheeler, Mr. Sommer. Ron Brooks, who is the Executive Director of Marketing Service Group had to return to Indianapolis because of a minor health problem.

Commander, there is no great word to describe your leadership. It is simply outstanding at the helm of The American Legion. Your leadership on the Four Pillars and 'Back to the Basics' really took hold, not only with The American Legion family, but also with the staff of The American Legion, who have the honor to serve you and the members of The American Legion. Your stewardship, of the trust placed in you, is simply superlative. I know that you didn't pass up a chance to thank me personally, but I'll take that thanks through the entire staff of The American Legion that I have the honor to lead.

With us today is Dan Wheeler. Dan is the Executive Director of the Indianapolis office. The opening to the National Convention is a direct result of his work and his leadership. So if you enjoyed the opening, it's really Dan's fine hand.

When the Commander and the President of the Auxiliary came back from Landstuhl and saw the needs of our severely wounded servicemen and women, the Commander came back with the idea of leadership to raise $50,000. Through Dan Wheeler and our Public Relations and Magazine Divisions—well you know the story, over $250,000.00. John Sommer heads up our Washington for the White House, the Congress and all the agencies. He does a superlative job. Ron Brooks, Director of Marketing Services Group, which is fairly new, established in about 1990, has put us on the pathway to what I call seamless communication through how ALPOP and AIM which are software programs from the post to the department. In fact, we have a $4 million information technology budget of which $2 million is revenue that comes from the outside of The American Legion and not out of dues dollars. It's because of leadership that inspires the staff to make The American Legion the most modern internal organization that you can find. Maybe because I wear a red cap I get the accolades, but Ron, John and Dan and their staff are really the ones who make it work. Commander, your staff, the executive directors, myself, and the division directors took up a little collection to buy you a gift that hopefully you will treasure and remember us as life goes on, because I can assure you of one thing, we will remember your leadership, your stewardship and your dedication to The American Legion and the Four Pillars that The American Legion stands for. So, I'd like to present you with a small gift that will keep you on time, they tell me.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN*:* Movado watch. It's beautiful. Thank you to all of you. To you, Bob and to John and Dan, I just can't say thanks enough and to the directors. Your generosity is just overwhelming.

I will now call upon National Vice Commander Lloyd Woods. Please take the gavel and preside over the next orders of business.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODS: After serving this past year as national vice commander, I'm honored to represent all members of The American Legion in presiding over this next order of business. This is the time when we present to our National Commander, Paul A. Morin of Massachusetts, the Colors of his office and a plaque. At this time I call upon Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer of Massachusetts to present the Colors.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John 'Jake' P. Comer, Past National Commander (Colors)
Richard M. Pedro, Department Adjutant, New York (Plaque)

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Will the Delegates to this National Convention please rise? I ask for the National Champion Color Guard from Post 49, the 7th District, Department of New Hampshire to bring the Colors of the National Commander to center stage.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Hand salute.

...Color Guard enters.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: Two! Ladies and gentlemen of this convention, I have been singularly honored by our National Commander Paul Morin in making the presentation of his outstanding Colors to represent his year of service. I do this on behalf of all of the members of the Department of Massachusetts. I do this on behalf of his wonderful family and his mother who are here today.

Twenty years ago when I stood here as your national commander, Paul Morin was the commander of the Department of Massachusetts. We knew at that time that he had all of the abilities necessary to replace me one day, and boy he did. So, I could not be more proud of the man I call son to see him complete his year of national commander. These Colors have traveled with him throughout the representation of 55 departments and many European countries. These Colors have represented by him the continuation and the honor of the four principles of our organization. These Colors are represented by him to raising almost $2 million for many various and important programs of The American Legion.

These Colors have represented by him, as he traveled throughout the European countries, traveling into Poland for the first time, a country which is recognized as one of the future leaders of NATO and for the first time, having the Polish veterans' organization assembled here at this convention. We hope this will be a continuation for many years to come. And these representative Colors are representative of a national commander who has met with the President of the United States and who has always stood firm before all of the committees in Washington. He has backed down from no one. He has been the most outstanding national commander in my history. I'm so honored to present the Colors of our Country, the National Colors of The American Legion so that he can display properly back home in the Department of Massachusetts, who is ready to welcome him back as their favorite son. Commander, I present to you your Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I accept these Colors with great honor. I will always cherish them. They will always be by my side. To Past National Commander Comer, when this journey started some years back, I said to you the only thing that I could promise you, was to make you proud. I feel I have kept that commitment to you. I thank you for being my mentor. As I've said to each of you, we have that responsibility to mentor those who will follow in our footsteps. You have truly been a mentor of supreme support, not only to myself, but also to Elaine and our children. Yes, you are my second dad and I thank you for all you have done for me, not only in The American Legion, but personally and for the Morin family. We will always be grateful.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Color Guard. Retire my Colors. Hand salute.

...Color Guard retires Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN*:* Two!

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER COMER: I call on Department of New York Adjutant, Richard M. Pedro to present the flag to our outgoing National Commander.

DEPARTMENT ADJUTANT PEDRO, New York: I'm privileged to stand before you this morning to make a presentation to a very dedicated and devoted Legionnaire. But before I do that, I would like to take the personal privilege of offering my deep congratulations to a great leader of this organization of the determined dedication,

judicious activities and representations will be presented at this time. We are so proud of him. He has set a standard for this great organization, for the greatness and, at this time, I'm privileged to present on behalf of the National Executive Committee to National Commander Paul A. Morin, elected by the National Convention to serve the high office of National Commander of The American Legion, for the year 2006-2007, in appreciation of his dedicated leadership, in recognition of his dedicated service to God and country and in token of the highest esteem of his fellow Legionnaires, the citation on the plaque is presented to him by the authority of the National Executive Committee. Mr. Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Dick, thank you for your friendship and for your many years of guidance, but especially to you and Jean. Elaine and I could not ask for better friends. Jean was always there for Elaine, and you've always been there for me. I will always appreciate that friendship and your guidance for years to come.

I ask Past National Commander Geiger to come forth, because without these three individuals, I would not be standing here. They have given their life and service as past national commanders and a department adjutant of one of our largest departments, but they've been here to guide many before me. They will be here to guide many after me. But the words of wisdom, their commitment, but more importantly, their love and dedication to the wellbeing of The American Legion is above reproach. Their loyalty to each of us who have had the opportunity to serve is above reproach. I thank you for your commitment to me and to this outstanding organization.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: We have now come to a special order of business, the election of national officers. The National Judge Advocate, Philip Onderdonk of Maryland, will read the Rules of the Convention governing the nominations and elections of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ONDERDONK: Rules for election for National Officers. Rule 15, final sentence. Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17. Prior to the election of National Officers, the National Commander shall appoint subject to approval of the Convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary, provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of his choice.

Rule 18. Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on Roll Call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19. Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20. When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the Convention, except in the election of National Vice-Commanders.

Rule 21. In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until (a) majorities and (b) pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions: If, on any ballot taken, less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate of candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to

be filled. The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22. The Convention will nominate and elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23. At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of National Officers.

Election of the National Commander of The American Legion

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: As Chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as Judge of the Elections Leslie McKittrick, Jr., Adjutant, Department of Massachusetts and as tellers of the election, Terry L. Woodburn, Adjutant, Department of Illinois, John A. Derner, Adjutant, Department of Iowa and Michael McDaniel, Adjutant, Department of Florida.

Will the judges and tellers of the elections please come forward? They are in position. National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle will now call the roll of the departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Turn on all floor mics and lights in the house and have the delegation chairman line up. Thank you. Alabama.

(The National Adjutant calls each department in turn)

DELEGATE FRAZIER, Alabama: Being a newly elected delegate to this great body, I stand to inform you today, as a son of the great state of Alabama, for the purpose of yielding to the gentleman from the great state of Illinois for the purpose of making a nomination. To the commander and outgoing commander, it has been a privilege and an honor for me to serve as one of your department commanders. I salute you for your outstanding service to this great nation, this country, our servicemen and women, our veterans and especially to The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Alabama yields to Illinois.

DELEGATE GONZALEZ, Illinois: Luis Gonzalez from Illinois. Request the chair recognize Past Department Commander Clay Lofton for the purpose of nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Clay Lofton, Past Department Commander of Illinois, for the purpose of a nomination.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER LOFTON, Illinois: Our purpose today is to nominate and elect a person for national commander of The American Legion for the year 2007-2008. We in Illinois feel we have such a person, a man who has distinguished himself in many fields. Let me point out that his family is here to support him in his great endeavor, his wife, two of their three sons, their three grandchildren, two of their three daughters-in-law, his mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law, two nieces, two uncles, and an aunt. In this group, there are Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion members, Junior Auxiliary members and a complete Legion family.

Our candidate's first challenge came in the military, where through hard work and continuing education, he retired in 1996 after 26 ½ years of service, obtaining the rank of sergeant major in the Illinois Army National Guard where he received several citations

and decorations. He is a Vietnam-era veteran. His next challenge was when he was elected post commander of Lincoln Post No. 102 in De Land, Illinois, where the membership is less than 150. He realized immediately what a great organization The American Legion was and started to increase his knowledge about this great organization.

After several years, he was elected commander of the Piatt County Council in Illinois, when again he was still learning about The American Legion. As his knowledge progressed, so did his challenges, as he was elected 19th district commander for the year 1989 and 1990, then 4th division commander for the year 1993-94, which covers, 23 counties in the state of Illinois. From there he advanced to Membership and Post Activities Committee on the national level. He was elected department commander of Illinois for the year 1997-98. He served as the first Department of Illinois Membership director. During his tenure as membership director; the Department of Illinois obtained 100% in membership. As time went on, he set his goal of becoming national commander. Illinois endorsed him as a candidate from Illinois for national commander. He has served on several committees and commissions on the national level, two years as chairman of legislative, as mentioned earlier, membership and post activity, serving as chairman two years. This has brought him where he is today.

After several years of hard work and service to The American Legion, we think our candidate will be an outstanding national commander. He will work to make sure every veteran receives the fair treatment they are entitled to at the VA Medical Centers. He will continue to strive for full funding for the VA and service in the VA for every veteran. He will campaign to maintain a strong national defense for our country. He will continue with his belief that we should have a constitutional amendment to protect the flag of our country.

Mr. Commander, on behalf of the Department of Illinois, his family, I now nominate for the very high office of National Commander of The American Legion, for the years 2007-2008, Martin 'Marty' Conatser, from the great Department of Illinois.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let the record show that Marty Conatser has been placed in nomination for the high office of National Commander. Continue the roll.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PISA, Alaska: The Department of Alaska yields to the Department of New York.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CASEY, New York: James Casey, Chairman of the Delegation for the great Department of New York. I move that the Chair recognize Past National Vice Commander, Fang A. Wong for the purpose of seconding the nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Past National Vice Commander Fang Wong for the purpose of seconding the nomination.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WONG: It's both an honor and privilege to stand before this distinguished body today and second the nomination of Martin Conatser as our next National Commander.

Marty has a long history of service to this great nation. He is a Vietnam-Era veteran, received his basic and advanced individual training at Fort Polk, Louisiana in 1971. He then joined the Illinois Army National Guard and after an outstanding 26-year career, which included 21 years serving in the Illinois Army National Guard Active Program. Marty retired in January 1996 as the operations sergeant major for recruiting in the Illinois Army National Guard. As a Legionnaire, Marty has over 30 years of membership with the Lincoln Post No. 102 in De Land, Illinois. Through his dedication and outstanding service to Lincoln Post 102, Marty was awarded a life membership in 1996.

Marty held numerous positions with Post 102 and served two terms as the post commander. First he was elected in 1982 and then again in 2001. He was also very active in the county, district, division and department levels. He served in numerous

commission and committee positions. He was a county commander in 1988 and district commander 1989 and division commander in 1993 and, ultimately, Marty commanded the Department of Illinois in 1997. Throughout his American Legion career, Marty has been involved with the Legion programs at every level. His assignments and appointments are well-devised to cover all facets of the Legion activities. Special notice must be given to his service of four years as first department membership director for the Department of Illinois. His other department chairmanship included internal affairs, scholarship and education, and Americanism. He served as a member of the Department Commander's Advisory Committee and also served as the chairman for Citizens Flag Alliance for the Department of Illinois.

At the national level, Marty served within the membership and post activities for seven years, from 1991 to 1998. He was then the Chairman for Membership and activities for Legion year, 2002-2003. He also served for the Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee and he also was the National Legislative Commission chairman. As you can see, this outstanding and dedicated Legionnaire is well prepared to lead this great organization to the next level of excellency. Therefore I, Fang A. Wong, a duly registered delegate to this convention from the great Department of New York, is honored and proud to second the nomination of Martin Conatser as our National Commander for Legion year, 2007-2008.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let the records show there's been duly a seconded for Marty Conatser for National Commander. Continue the roll.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COSGROVE, Arizona: Mr. Chairman, as Delegate Chairman for the Grand Canyon state, host for the next year's National Convention, to which we promise everybody a very warm welcome. We yield to the state of Nevada.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Chair so recognizes.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN VAUGHN, Nevada: The delegate chairman for the great state and host of this 89th Convention, the 'Battle Borne State' of Nevada, asks the Chair to recognize Delegate Tim Tetz, Past Department Commander of Nevada, for the purpose of a second.

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER TETZ: As a delegate from the Department of Nevada, it is my honor to help in the process of nominating Marty Conatser for the National Commander of The American Legion. Marty possess the leadership, motivation and stamina necessary to move The American Legion through another year of successes and accomplishments.

Many of us may remember our first American Legion meeting and perhaps our first election in a post. It was that day that we recognized the draw to move from a card-carrying member of our organization and make that additional investment. For some, it was a willing decision. For others the term 'railroad' can describe the process. Marty may be a bit of both. With the regional baseball tournament coming to his home field, Marty, a card carrying Legionnaire and Legion baseball coach, realized the need to ask for assistance from his sponsoring post. To accomplish this, he went to his first Legion meeting. After being recognized by the commander, Marty says, "I ripped them for the embarrassing conditions of the field." Halfway through his tirade, he was interrupted by one of those stalwart members of The American Legion. Yes, we all have one in our posts, the grizzled veteran. "Stop!" the old man said. "What do you want?" When Marty replied that he wanted a work crew, a tractor and a workday to repair the field, his fellow post member replied, "So, moved." Marty will tell you he didn't understand what the term, "So, moved," meant, but by the time the motion received a second and the commander had assigned the work crew, tractor and workday, he realized his mission had been accomplished. He began to see a better field and look forward to the tournament.

As Marty sat down celebrating the ease of his success, the commander opened the next order of business, the nominations for office. That same grizzled veteran, the one who become the hero in proposing a work party, was first to stand up. "I nominate the young mouthy one," he said. Now coach Marty may not have understood the motion process earlier, but realized there was a train running down the track, and he was about to be the victim.

Marty, after your decades of involvement in The American Legion, I'm quite certain you understand the motion process now. Sometimes you get what you need. Sometimes you meet the train. It's all a matter of outcome and perspective, but like that grizzled veteran who rose to support you then, and those who joined in helping you transform your baseball field for the regional tournament, I rise to support you today. You've been replaced by other young mouthy ones, but we'll gladly grab our tools, comrades, and show up for a work day. We'll let's make it a work year for The American Legion.

As a delegate from the Department of Nevada, I proudly second the nomination of Marty Conatser for National Commander.

…Herein a demonstration of support took place.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CROUCH, Arkansas: Arkansas Chairman Delegation Bucky Crouch would like to second the nomination for Marty Conatser and place our 27 votes for him.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DARTER, California: California here. The land of Mickey Mouse, Disneyland and the fun things of the United States. We love you, too, Florida. We would like to cast all its votes for our next National Commander, Marty Coatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BOZELLA, Colorado: From the top of the 14,000 foot peaks of the Rocky Mountain to the valley of amber waves of grain, Colorado casts its 33 votes in unanimity for the high office of Commander of The American Legion in favor of Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LaCOURSIERE, Connecticut: The great state of Connecticut cast all 34 delegate votes for Marty Conatser as our next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WHITE, Delaware: Delaware casts its first state's votes of 18 for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RIVERA, District of Columbia: The District of Columbia casts all its Delegate votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WEHRLI, Florida: The great state of Florida acknowledging California, casts its 149 votes for the next National Commander, Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAGGAN, France: Department of France, the birthplace of The American Legion, proudly casts its 10 delegate votes for Marty Conatser for National Commander, 2007-2008.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BARNETT, Georgia: From the great state of Georgia and home of the 2007 Little League World Champions from Warner Robins, Georgia, we cast our 59 votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SEIGFRIED, Hawaii: The Aloha state of Hawaii cast our 10 votes for the next National Commander Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MITCHELL, Idaho: Idaho casts 19 votes for Marty.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SOMERVILLE, Indiana: Tom Somerville, Delegation Chairman from the great state of Indiana, the home of your National Headquarters, the home of the Indianapolis 500 and Brickyard 400, and don't forget the

World Champion Indianapolis Colts, the great state of Indiana casts all votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEIFNER, Iowa: Dale Heifner, Delegation Chairman from the great 'Hawkeye' state of Iowa, casts all 72 delegate votes for Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CULVER, Kansas: The 'Sunflower' state seconds the nominations for Marty.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COFFMAN, Kentucky: Randall Coffman, National Executive Committee in the Department of Kentucky, home of the 2009 National Convention and the Kentucky Delegation, proudly seconds the nomination of Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TRAVIRCA, Louisiana: Forrest Travirca, III, Delegation Chairman from the great state of Louisiana, the 'Bayou Land,' it's also the 'Land of the 'Twisted Sisters,' Rita and Katrina, votes its entire delegation strength to Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN OWEN, Maine: Robert Owen, National Executive Committeeman from the Department of Maine, chairman of this delegation Pro-tem, home of the Past National Commander William J. Rogers and Anthony Jordan, proudly casts its 35 delegate votes to Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HAGGARD, Maryland: Butch Haggard, Delegate Chairman for that great Department of Maryland, home of the past national commanders Clarence Bacon and Ric Santos, casts its 82 for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PLUMMER, Massachusetts: As a member of Post No. 102, from the great state of Massachusetts, home of Past National Commander 'Jake' Comer and National Commander Paul Morin, casts 64 votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATE HAYES, Mexico: NEC John Hayes, delegate to this convention. The Department of Mexico, number one in membership and consisting of posts in six countries in North America and Central America, enthusiastically seconds the nomination of Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WEBSTER, Michigan: Michigan happily presents its voting strength for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COX, Minnesota: John Cox, Delegate Chairman from the great state of Minnesota and the home of Past National Commander Dan Ludwig, casts all its votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN TREST, Mississippi: Mississippi casts all of its votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JENNEMANN, Missouri: Dave Jennemann, Delegation Chairman for the state of Missouri, 'The Show Me' state, proudly seconded the endorsement of Marty Conatser for National Commander and cast all our delegate votes for him.

DELEGATE PALMER: Elmer Palmer, Vice Commander of the Department of Montana, the 'Big Sky Country,' seconds the nomination of Marty F. Conatser and cast their 19 votes for him.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LANDKAMER, Nebraska: Jerry Landkamer, Delegation Chairman for the great state of Nebraska, proudly held the Past National Commander William Galbraith, home of the Big Red Nebraska Corn Huskers, and one of three departments who successfully completed 100% of the Consolidated Post Report, proudly casts 54 votes for Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BEALE, New Hampshire: Delegate Chairman for the Granite State of New Hampshire, home of the 'Old Man of the Mountain' who fell from

his lofty perch, May 3, 2003 and is just now another pile of rocks, now cast our 30 votes for Marty Conatser of Illinois.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBBINS, New Jersey: The great state of New Jersey casts 74 votes for Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MIRANDA, New Mexico: Audilio Miranda, Commander of New Mexico. We proudly cast all our votes to our new incoming National Commander Marty Conatser.

MR. NEVILLE, North Carolina: Richard Neville, duly elected delegate from the great state of North Carolina, from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Smoky Mountains and the home of Past National Commander Ray Smith, proudly endorses or seconds the endorsement of Marty Conatser for the National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PETERSON, North Dakota: Harvey Peterson, Delegate Chairman of North Dakota, from the great 'Peace Garden State,' and home of former National Commander 'Sparky' Gierke, casts 27 votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ANDERSON, Ohio: Ed Anderson. The great 'Buckeye State' casts all our delegate's strength for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATE PEDIGO, Oklahoma: Wayne Pedigo, Oklahoma, casts all 30 of its votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HEALY, Oregon: The great state of the Oregon, home of the two-time winners of the Beavers, casts all votes for Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JUNKERMAN, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania, the Keystone State and the largest department of the national organization and the home of two national commanders, Dominic DiFrancesco and Ron Conley; Dr. Sebastionelli, duly elected delegate at this convention, is proud to cast all 231 votes for the next national commander, Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KELLY, Philippines: On behalf of the Department of the Philippines, I am very proud to cast our seven votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RODRIGUEZ, Puerto Rico: The Department Commander of Puerto Rico casts all its votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LeVASSEUR, Rhode Island: The 'Red Rooster State,' the Department of Rhode Island, casts 14 votes for Marty Conatser for high office of the National Commander.

DELEGATON CHAIRMAN WALSH, South Carolina: Our delegation casts all 36 votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BAATRUP, South Dakota: Gunner Baatrup, Delegate Chairman from South Dakota, the time birthplace of American Legion Baseball and the shrine of democracy, Mount Rushmore in the beautiful Black Hills, is proud to second the nomination of Mr. Marty Conatser for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DRENNON, Tennessee: As a delegation chairman from the great 'Volunteer State' of Tennessee and now the official home of the 2007 American Legion World Baseball Series Champions, we cast all our votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SPARKS, Texas: C.W. Sparks, Delegate Chairman from the great state of Texas, home of our President George Bush, two past national commanders and super mentor Joe L. Matthews and John Brieden, and, I call her my first lady, Catherine Morris, the state of Texas proudly cast all of our votes from this E-9 to another retired E-9, Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN FISHER, Utah: Richard Fisher, the Delegate Chairman, proudly casts its 17 votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NORMANDEAU, Vermont: Leonard Normandeau, Delegation Chairman from the great state and the 'Green Mountain State' of Vermont, home of world famous maple syrup, casts all our delegation's votes of 22 for Marty Conatser for the next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN HOWARD, Virginia: Jerry Howard, Delegation Chairman from the Department of Virginia, all-time membership high for 2006 – 2007, cast our votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LAYTON, Washington: Roy Layton, Delegate Chairman for the great state of Washington, the 'Evergreen State,' casts all of our ballots for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SINKEWITZ, West Virginia: West Virginia, home of Miles Epling, Past National Commander, casts its votes for Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KURTZ, Wisconsin: The Department of Wisconsin seconds the nomination and pledges our 81 votes to Marty Conatser.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SWANLUND, Wyoming: Gary Swanlund, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Wyoming, proudly seconds the nomination for Marty Conatser.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATE NYLEN, Washington: Mr. Commander, Kathy Nylen, Department Service Officer, Department of Washington, where liquid sunshine prevails and the trees are ever green, a duly appointed delegate to the 89th National Convention, I move that nominations for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Microphone 2.

DELEGATE MCCAMMON, Alaska: Mr. Commander, from the great land of Alaska, of the Department of Alaska, in view of the fact that there is but one candidate for National Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention, close nomination and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength at this convention, and that Marty Conatser, from the Land of Lincoln of the great Department of Illinois, be elected National Commander by acclimation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election of the National Vice Commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nominations and elections of the National Vice Commanders, which rule shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for the National Vice Commanders. The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor, signify by saying 'aye.' All those opposed Signify by saying, 'nay.' Let the records show it was a unanimous vote.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Chair recognizes microphone 4, Kathy Nylen.

KATHY NYLEN: Mr. Commander, I move that nominations for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Do I hear a second?

...Second by numerous.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying

'aye.' All those opposed, signify by saying, 'nay.' Let the records show that it is a unanimous vote.

The Chair recognizes microphone 4, Warren Post.

MR. POST, Florida: Warren Post, Department Commander from the state of Florida, duly elected and registered delegate at this convention. I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Marty Conatser be elected National Commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Is there a seconded?

...Second by numerous.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: There is a motion before us that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Marty F. Conatser be elected National Commander by acclamation. All those in favor of this motion signify by saying 'aye.' All those opposed. The 'ayes' have it by a unanimous vote.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Mr. National Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention for the election of Martin F. Conatser as the National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I now declare Martin Conatser of Champaign, Illinois the National Commander of The American Legion for the years 2007 – 2008. Will the National Sergeant-at-Arms assist the new National Commander of The American Legion to the platform? He will be escorted with his sons Richard Conatser and Rick Malloch and his grandson Tanner, who will escort him to this stage. Proceed Sergeant-at-Arms.

...Here follows a demonstration of support.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair now recognizes Marty's wife, Sharon, to place the cap upon his head. She will now place the lapel pin of the National Commander. She will now place the badge of the office of National Commander.

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander John Geiger of Illinois for the purpose of administering the Oath of Office to the new National Commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander
John H. Geiger, Illinois, Past National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Congratulations to you, Legionnaire Martin F. Conatser, upon your nomination and election as the National Commander of The American Legion for the year 2007-2008. This exciting event forms a lifelong memory for your proud family, and the dedicated and faithful members of your Department of Illinois.

The delegates to this convention recognize your long dedication to America's security, through the Illinois National Guard and in other ways, to our nation's war veterans, to The American Legion and to your state and community. Your strong planning, leadership and team-building skills must now be directed to reinforcing and advancing our great organization throughout the entire United States.

The primary objectives of your term of leadership will be defined by the mandates of this national convention and will often be adjusted by events throughout the world and American politics. Every officer of The American Legion, our national staff, and the members of the Legion family must remain alert and prepared for your calls for action.

Each of us here in Reno and at home should join us in a personal pledge to actively support you in this great responsibility of service to our God and country.

Martin Conatser, if you agree to assume this high office, please step forward to pledge your oath of office to all of us. The audience will please rise.

...National Commander-elect Martin F. Conatser repeated the Oath of Office following the lead of Past National Commander Geiger.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Congratulations! National Commander Marty Conatser.

...Standing applause.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Your new National Commander, Marty Conatser. Please be seated.

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Martin F. Conatser, Illinois

What a day! I'm going to do some introductions first before I get sidetracked here and forgetting and really getting into trouble. I want to introduce my son, Richard, his wife, Patsy, and my granddaughter Kayla; my son Rick, his wife Michelle, and Tanner, I don't where he went. There he is, my little hero. Addie is back awake trying to figure out what those bright lights are. My mother, Ruth Conatser. Years ago, my father was so pleased that I joined the military so I would keep my short hair. He'd be really proud today, I have no hair.

My mother- and father-in-law, Irene and Clay Lofton; my sister and brother-in-law, Pam and Butch Ray; and my niece, Sarah Ray, who abandoned and went to school at the Big O, Ohio State. I told her that's okay, I guess. My other niece, Amy Ray and her boyfriend, C.J. Stevens; Uncle Herman Brewer. We're a family that's been kind of stretched thin to some extent with the travels and everything. I was so pleased and surprised that uncle Mel and aunt Liz Schwartz came.

As I started the journey towards National Commander, I left a full-time job a little over five years ago. But I needed to work. If you ever want to try to find a job, when you go in for the interview and you tell them you need a week every month to do Legion stuff for the next year and a half and after that you're going to need about two weeks every month off and then, in about four to five years, you're going to take another eighteen months off, but they ought to hire you, because you're a great guy. Well, the next gentleman did hire me and has been a great supporter along with the Wordon-Martin Auto Group, Mr. Wayne Webber.

We have Luis Gonzales and his wife, Darlene, the outgoing Department Commander from Illinois. They've had three years of the campaign and a lot of fun. We have Myron and Sandy Kirby, dear friends and who happens to be the incoming Department Commander. We have Louise Jones, the incoming Department President. We have Rodger Bennett and Diane Reager. Rodger is the current NEC for about another hour. We also have our new NEC, Ken Trumbull. We have the man who is going to give a year of his life to travel with me as my aide, Bill Flanagan, and his wife, Ann.

In every campaign, you have great support, but there are some people I would be remised not mentioning. They did a lot of work on the campaigning, doing anything I've asked them this year, Gene and Marian Thompson and Gary and Becky Wickery.

We had a little trouble finding a band. We couldn't afford to hold the Joliet Band here for four extra days and high school went back in session. So we had a little trouble finding a band. But our one-man-band today is Bud Phillipe, a good friend from back home who just happens to be the sound man for this convention, so we thank him for that

and to the 'Clique,' you know who you are. All of Team Illinois are special people to me. Thank you.

I've prepared for this day and the challenges of being your National Commander for a long time, but along the way you always have special people, people that without even knowing it, have done tremendous things to help you. One of those people is John Geiger, coming from Illinois. His guidance, help and assistance have been invaluable. I thank him so much for doing my swearing in.

Tim told you a little story about how I got pulled toward The American Legion. But there are two people who did a lot very early in my career who had no clue that this would happen. Mo Henderson is a great friend, kind of a crazy Vietnam vet who told me it was time to stand up and do something. I thank him. He's a great friend and a good Legionnaire. I've got a special friend who I wished could have been here today. We affectionately call him 'Big Richard Burton.' He probably meant more to helping me be something in The American Legion than he'll ever know.

I thank Team Illinois, the Red Shirts. The great people who have gone through this five-year journey, raised the money and did everything that we needed to do and did it in great style. I'm here to tell you how I'm so proud of Team Illinois and all of Illinois. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the great 19th District, my district for all they stepped up and did for me.

What a great honor it was and how cool can it be to have your father-in-law make your nomination for National Commander. I was a little worried to be honest. Clay is kind of like me. You wouldn't think it but we're a little emotional once in a while. But he did an outstanding job and I thank him for it. It meant so much to me. To Fang Wong who did a second and Tim who did the seconding, I certainly appreciate their support and their effort. It was a great thing.

I need a really special thanks to Commander Paul Morin for his friendship and advice. I thank him for jumpstarting my year. He gave me the opportunity to visit Iraq about a month ago and to give me some deep insight into what is probably going to be one of our key issues in the coming year. Paul, I can't ever thank you enough for that.

NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: All the best.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: I want to talk a little bit about my visit to Iraq. I went with some very preconceived ideas. I think I was, like most Americans, very concerned that the Iraqi Army wasn't standing up, that the Iraqis weren't trying to make progress. That was the concept I had when I left. After a mere seventeen hours on a plane, we got into Kuwait. They took us immediately over and drew our battle gear, which is your vest, your helmet, all those wonderful things. They put us on a plane into Baghdad International. We had the opportunity to see firsthand and talk to soldiers firsthand, from General Petraeus himself who took about forty-five minutes, one to one, with myself, the VFW National Commander, and the Military Officers Association President.

We didn't get a briefing, we didn't get a slide show. He sat down very candidly and talked about what he thought was going right, what he thought was going wrong. He allowed us to ask questions. For a commanding general to be that one-on-one with you is quite an experience in itself. But then we told him we weren't getting to see enough soldiers. So he made arrangements and we got to go out and see soldiers.

I got a couple of messages I want to give you from our soldiers from Iraq. There was not a single group of enlisted soldiers that I went into and when I walked into a group of soldiers I normally did something very simple, "I'm Marty Conatser, I'm with The American Legion," and without exception, someone in that group said thank you, thank you to your Auxiliary, your Sons, your Legionnaires for staying in touch with the words

from back home, sending them care packages and taking care of them. They knew we were there to support them. Sometimes we think that what we do isn't noticed. I'm here to tell you the young soldiers knew. That was very heartening. We hear a lot of the negatives and we hear a lot of the problems. There are serious problems in Iraq. Have no doubt in your mind, there are serious problems, but there is progress being made.

We had the opportunity to take a four-hour patrol up Haifa Street in downtown Baghdad with a Stryker Brigade out of Fort Lewis, Washington. Those of you who don't know what a Stryker is, it's a infantry vehicle. It's basically a wheeled-tank. But during January of this year, they fought their way into Haifa Street, probably one of the most bloody battles in Iraq. They took us up Haifa Street, parked the Stryker vehicles, got out and walked Haifa Street, walked through a market there and were amazed at the progress that had been made. A young PFC was riding in the back of the Stryker vehicle with me. I said, "Now tell me the truth, is it really better?" He's from Texas. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "I haven't been shot at in thirty-two days." That struck me. I can understand a soldier knowing when he was last shot at, but thirty-two days? I said, "How can that be?" He said, "Now when they shoot at us, we go get 'em and they don't like that."

They moved a forward operating base into that neighborhood and they stay there. I had the opportunity to walk down Haifa Street with an interpreter and talk to anybody I wanted to talk to. Without exception when I talked to the local Iraqis, their theme was the same, "We don't want you here forever, but we darn well don't want you leaving now, until we can take up for ourselves." The real feeling I got was that the average Iraqi, not the five percent Sunni or Shiite who are the extremist, but the average Iraqi just wants to go back to a peaceful Iraq. But the five percent on both sides of the spectrum can cause a lot of trouble. I asked an older gentleman why he preferred the Americans in his neighborhood, because I was having a very strange feeling at that point. I was walking the streets in full battle gear, surrounded by eight armed soldiers and I got to thinking, if someone came down my street in full battle gear, surrounded by eight armed soldiers how would I feel? Ponder that question a minute; it went through my mind when I was there. So I asked one of the gentlemen why he was so pro-American and his comment was, "You don't shoot us in the head." Many of the extremists use intimidation to make their points, to keep the civilian population in check. Americans don't do that, and that was his point.

I had the chance to spend some time with an Iraqi Brigade with an outstanding general. We asked him the question, "Why aren't the Iraqis standing up more than we see or hear?" He said, "Do you understand we're taking casualties at a rate of four times more than the rate of the American casualties. We don't have the equipment, but we're standing brigades up everyday." We met many of the soldiers and talked about the challenge it is to be in the Iraqi Army. Our soldiers sacrifice a lot, but they're not concerned about their families being kidnapped and killed. Many soldiers in the Iraqi Army are. So, I have a different feeling and impression of the problems in the Iraqi society. Again, I can't thank Paul Morin enough for giving me the opportunity to gain that insight.

While I was there, General Petraeus gave me one of his challenge coins. Most of the military people in the room understand what a challenge coin is. When you challenge another soldier, you slap your coin on the bar and if he doesn't have one, he gets to buy. Well, I'm challenging every Legionnaire, every member of the Legion family this simple prospect for the year: if we put soldiers in boots and we put those boots in harm's way, it is our responsibility as a family to support them in every way.

My message this year is simple. It is as straightforward and as meaningful as it can ever be. It's not the cost of membership; it's the value of membership. We as leaders, we as the mainstay in The American Legion Family, have got to talk about the value of our membership, the value to the card-carrying Legionnaire who never steps foot in our posts or unit or our squadrons. We have to talk about the value of our Boys State Program. We have to talk about the value of how The American Legion has touched every part of this country. We have to talk about the value of our youth programs—baseball, High School Oratorical Contests, Junior Shooting Sports, Boy Scouts. Is there a value to them? Is a part of your dues going to support those organizations and those programs? Of course there is. Why aren't we saying that? Why aren't we talking about the value of our membership.

How many of you have seen Veterans Day when the local post or the local TV station or radio station comes down because they don't know what to do on Veterans Day? They show up at your post a day or so before Veterans Day. They go into the canteen and stick the microphone under some guy and turn the camera. They ask the guy who has been sitting at the end of the bar, "How's The American Legion?" and the old boy says, "We're all getting too old to march no more and the young ones don't want to join." We've all seen it happen, when, in fact, your post just gave away scholarships, you've got Boy Scouts running for Eagle Scout, you've got great things going on, but the guy at the end of the bar can only talk about the old days. We've got to stop that. When that young veteran sees that 10 second clip, does that make him or her want to run down and join The American Legion? Of course not. But if they saw the positive things your post, your units and your squadrons are doing, maybe they would.

Everybody wants to be part of a winner and the leaders of this organization have to show a person that the quality of what we are is the value of their membership. Sure, we have direct member benefits, prescription drug programs, eye care programs, rent a car and hotel discounts. Those are direct benefits. But we're not telling people what the real value of membership is. That's our problem and that's what we're going to attack this year.

National Emergency Relief Fund. I'll tell you one story. When we had the major flood along the Mississippi in Illinois, I had the opportunity to go over and help fill out paper work for temporary financial assistance and other things through the NEF. I'm in a hot building and filling out applications and a young veteran came up and plopped down in front of me. He asked, "What can you do for me?" I said, "Okay, we have a National Emergency Relief Fund. We can get you some money started. Now just hand me your Legion card or give me your Legion membership number and we'll get you started." He said, "I'm not a member of the Legion. I'm a VFW." I said, "Great, their table is over there." He said, "No, you can take my dues out of the check." I said, "This is not how this works. This is Legionnaires helping Legionnaires."

The National Emergency Relief Fund and what you did here this week is outstanding. Do we ever explain that, do we ever talk to anyone about that? I don't know if there's anybody here from Flora, Illinois, that got hit by a tornado. But they can tell you the value of membership. They got money from the National Emergency Relief Fund for a local disaster.

Temporary Financial Assistance. Over 1100 children were assisted this year by the Temporary Financial Assistance. Do you think that might be a value membership? Do you think that could be an asset to your community?

Resolution number 169. It's the right thing to do. The soldiers know about Resolution 169. They might not know it by the number, but they know that 2.7 million Legionnaires are standing with them, trying to get them what they need and deserve. But

that is one story. I walked up to a group of about eight working on a Chinook Helicopter. The front strut was knocked off the night before in Iraq. It was 131 degrees. They were trying to bleed the hydraulic system on that strut. There was a young Spec. 4 laying underneath it on blacktop at 130 plus degrees, half soaked in hydraulic oil and not necessarily having a very good day I walked up and said, "I'm Marty Conatser, I'm with The American Legion." He immediately said, "What the hell is The American Legion?" and before I could open my mouth one of the other soldiers started telling him about what his local post does and what they've done for him and what they do for active duty soldiers. If you want your heart to feel good, that did. It tells us that our message and all the work that you have done is making a difference.

The Family Support Network. Over 1500 requests for support. I ran into a young man in Iraq, whose wife had got assistance from The Family Support Network, the 800 number. He was telling his soldiers around him about that number. What we're doing is right. You know we're doing it and the message is out there and we just have to keep working on it.

Heroes to Hometowns. Helping injured soldiers. Could that be a value to membership? How many people even think about that when someone says, "What's in it for me?" When we sign up new members or we're trying to sign up new members and they say, "What's in it for me?" do we talk about the value of membership. You don't have to buy a membership card to go to the bar to drink. We've got to get over that. We're a family organization and we're going to see more and more of that.

The Blue Star Banners. Do we ever tell people we resurrected that program? State Service Officers and assistants who are filing claims and appeals, do we talk about that as a valued membership? Shouldn't we be? Sure, we help all people, but part of their dues goes to help support those things. Volunteers at the VA Hospital, what a great value of membership.

This year our grass roots lobby legislative efforts have been outstanding. A budget without timelines for withdrawal was because you, The American Legion Family, cared enough to get on the phone and push that issue. We stood tall. Our Commander stood next to the President on that issue. I had a member say, "I don't understand that, your National Commander standing with the President." So on that issue, we absolutely agree with the President. "So you're a Republican organization?" I said, "Did you see two weeks later when we stood shoulder to shoulder with Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid and announced the largest increase in the veterans' budget in the last twenty years probably? Our representatives of The American Legion were standing side by side with them. We are an issues organization and let's not forget that.

Immigration is a perfect example. The American Legion has published a very clear document of our stand on immigration. And again because of the grass roots effort on the Legislative issues. That issue on amnesty was put aside. That fight is not over, but we need to know what the Legion's stand on those things are. Is that a value of membership? You bet it is.

Standing for Old Glory, doing what's right for America. Is that a value of membership? You bet it is. Standing for what we can teach our children, that's a value of membership.

What a great organization we are that stays true to the Four Pillars that were established in 1919. How we go about in the programs we use to support those pillars will change and evolve, and we know that. How many organizations can truly say that in their entire history, they have stayed true to their founders, true to their principles of what we are and why we are.

I went to the Southern Bloc breakfast the other morning. They raised a lot of money and they had a lot of fun. They had a lot of camaraderie and fines and things. I laughed and told them that was the value of membership. Sometimes we work so hard on our programs we forget to have fun. We've got to have some fun, too. That's a value of membership in the camaraderie, the family spirit that is in our family. I hear a lot of people talk about the 'good old days.' Well, I'll tell you what; my good old days are today. I'm building my good old days right now. The friendships that you bind and grow year to year in The American Legion, the close knit family that we are, is truly a value of membership.

A little over seven years ago now, our family was hit very hard by cancer. My father-in-law, and myself, I can truly tell you the value of the friendships, the prayers and the support we got during that period. That's absolutely a value of membership and I thank you for that.

As we start this year, I want no mistakes. No one should have any false impression about what I'm about. We have great chairmen. We have great people in programs throughout The American Legion. I'm a membership guy. I used to say a lot of times that there are two things I am that everybody loves. I used to be a military recruiter and a car salesman. *[Laughter.]* How many of you walked here today? But we're going to change the leadership's attitude, we're going to talk about the good things The American Legion does and we're going to talk about the value of membership for this year. We're going to have a great time and I certainly appreciate the trust that you have given me, the absolute support, the Team Illinois and all of Illinois gave me. I will pledge you one thing, we'll work as hard as we can to be a positive force for The American Legion.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair will recognize microphone 3. The Chair recognizes James Higuera.

DELEGATE HIGUERA, California: I am James T. Higuera, a duly elected delegate to this 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. From the 'Golden State' of California and the home of 19th District Commander Robert Mitchell and our favorite son, Past National Commander Bruce Thiesen. Since the rules of this convention have been suspended, I move that the nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this convention.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Chair needs a second. Second. Motion has been made and seconded. All in favor. 'Aye.' All opposed. We will now entertain nominations for office of Vice Commander from the floor.

The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN PISA, Alaska: As Department of Alaska Delegation Chairman, I yield the microphone to NEC Jim Van Horn.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Jim Van Horn.

DELEGATE VAN HORN, Alaska: It is my great pleasure and honor today to place in nomination the name of a great Legionnaire to the esteemed office of National Vice Commander. This Legionnaire has served in practically all positions in our post and several that are not in the *Post Officers Guide*, such as head custodian and chief electrician. Many of you know what I'm talking about. She's a veteran of the United States Army, having served as a communication specialist in Germany. She's moved through all the chairs in the Department of Alaska. She was an executive committeemen, chaplain, sergeant-at-arms, second vice, first vice, and in 2005 was 2005-2006 department commander. She's a great Legionnaire. It would be a great honor to place in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion, from Robert G. Blair Post No. 17 in Kodiak, Alaska, Peggy Dettori.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The name of Peggy Dettori has been placed in nomination. The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WHITE, Delaware: Don White, the duly elected Delegate Chairman for the Department of Delaware, the first state; the state that first signed the instrument that began the formation of this great and free nation; the home of Benjamin Wallace, the 2007 Boys Nation President; the 'Small Wonder State' that delivered $7,010 to National Commander Morin at this awesome 89th National American Legion Convention; a meeting of the world's largest veterans' service organization through the auspices of The American Legion Scholarship Fund Run, our second ride from the Atlantic shoreline of Delaware to this oasis known as Reno, Nevada; the department that has garnered an 8th all-time high in its Legion membership and is a member of the DE Citizenship Corps, and has reached a memorandum of understanding with the Delaware Homeland Security Agency to train Delaware citizens and act as first responders in assessing damage during natural or manmade disasters. The department actively serving the "Heroes to Hometowns," the Delaware National Guard Family Support Group and Operation Military Kids Programs. The Department that works all Legion programs humbly requests the recognition of Delaware's National Executive committeeman, the Honorable John J. Jackson for the purpose of nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes John Jackson for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE JACKSON, Delaware: It is an honor and privilege to introduce and nominee a true blue cap Legionnaire from the Department of Delaware for the office of National Vice Commander. Thomas L. Burns, Jr. is a starter from the state that serves our great nation, the United States of America. He started and organized his own post Dagsboro Post No. 24 in Dagsboro, Delaware. He was a 100% membership post commander for seven years. He appreciated and realized the importance of having an American Legion Auxiliary Unit in the post. He carries the formation of Unit No. 24 to further the aims and purposes of The American Legion and Post 24. He equally recognized the importance of the Sons of The American Legion by forming Squadron 24. Today he remains active in the squadron as their adjutant.

He has served his post and held every elected appointed office. He was elected as commander for the 4th District and won the race to the top twice. Tom, as he is affectionately called by his peers, served as commander of The American Legion, Department of Delaware. Again, he led the way achieving an all-time high in membership. He served the national organization in many capacities, including the position of National Executive Committeemen for six years. Tom resides in Dagsboro, Delaware with his wife Marsha who is a leader in her own right as past president of the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Delaware.

Therefore, on behalf of the Department of Delaware, representing the Legionnaires from the first state, the 'Diamond State,' I am proud to place in nomination Thomas L. Burns, Jr. for the high office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion for the Legion administrative year 2007-2008.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Now, I made a mistake, if you can believe that. *[Laughter.]*" I need a second on Peggy Dettori nomination.

...Seconded.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Seconded. All in favor. All opposed. The 'ayes' have it. Now I need a second on Thomas L. Burns. I heard many seconded. On the question. Hearing none. All in favor. All opposed. The 'ayes' have it.

The Chair now recognizes microphone 4.

DELEGATE RICE, Kentucky: Terry Rice, duly elected delegate from the Department of Kentucky, requests the Chair recognize National Committeeman Randall Coffman for a very proud nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Randall Coffman for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE COFFMAN, Kentucky: It is an honor to place in nomination the name of an Air Force Vietnam Era veteran with 28 years continuous membership in The American Legion. Randall Fisher joined David-Rankin Post No. 257 of The American Legion shortly after his service to our country. A struggling little post with roughly 30 members and no purpose, he saw the need for leadership after a couple of years of knowing what The American Legion was all about. A former Gold Brigade Recruiter, he took this little post and now it's a thriving post nearing 300 members, with a purpose and a real credit to the community. He served commander of this post. He served as district commander for the Department of Kentucky as area commander, senior vice commander and department commander.

Nearing the 2003 National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, the Department of Kentucky suffered a tragedy. Our service director passed away. The American Legion of Kentucky turned to Randall Fisher to help us during this time of need. He has served us four years as our service director and has helped many veterans file claims, taking care of the veterans of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. He has served the national level on the Distinguished List Committee, currently serving as vice chairman of the VA&R Commission and is currently serving two terms as Alternate National Executive Committeeman. That's a little bit about Randall Fisher and his Legion career.

Once Randall Fisher got out of the Air Force, he chose a career of helping veterans, being a nurse. He decided to work in the VA Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. He retired with 32 years of service to the VA, helping all the veterans of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. One of the first questions Randall would ask them, "Are you a member of The American Legion?" and then he would ask them, "Are your injuries or illnesses due to your service to your country?" He would help them file a claim or get them to the correct Legion service officer to get their claim in to help the veterans.

His wife, Marion, has 32 years as a nurse at the VA Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. She's helped many veterans and last year they recognized her as employee of the year at the VA Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. Few people can say that they spent their entire adult life helping the veterans. Randall Fisher is one of those. It's certainly a privilege and an honor for me to place the name and nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander, Randall Fisher from the Department of Kentucky.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The name of Randall Fisher has been placed in nomination. Do I hear a seconded? Seconded by many. All in favor? All opposed? The 'ayes' have it. So nominated. The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN COX, Minnesota: John Cox, Chairman of the Delegation from the great of Minnesota. I ask you to recognize Past National Commander for a very proud delegate of the state of Minnesota for National Vice Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Past National Commander and a submariner, Daniel A. Ludwig, for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE LUDWIG, Minnesota: It is, indeed, an honor and a special privilege for me to present a great friend and fellow Legionnaire from the Department of Minnesota for the high office National Vice Commander.

Don Hayden is a long-time member of Post No. 108 in Le Center, Minnesota. Don, a U.S. Navy veteran, served from 1958 to 1962 and was honorably discharged as a hospital corpsman 2nd class. Don served his post and various committees and offices that

include the executive board, vice commander and commander in 1993-1994. He served as Le Center County Council Commander in 1994-1996 and again in 1998-2000. Don's involvement in service continued in the thundering 3rd District as sergeant-at-arms, vice commander and commander in 1996-1997. Don's dedication and effective leadership has been and continues to be recognized in the department level where he has served since 1997 on the Public Relations Committee. He has served as our membership chairman, 1998-1999 and as an outstanding department commander, 2002-2003.

Don's presence in his community is, to say the least, high profile. He is a past president to the Community Club, past president of the Lions Club and he is a member of the Knights of Columbus, the Isaac Walton League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He is a member of the board of directors of the Queen of Peace Hospital, and he also serves on the hospital foundation. Don serves as the Region 9 Development Commission Revolving Loan chairman and on the board of directors for the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation. Don is employed as an executive director of the Economic Development Authority and the Chamber of Commerce for Le Center, Minnesota.

Don and Mary Louise, his bride of forty-six years, have two sons and two grandchildren. They are active members of St. Mary's Catholic Church. Don has spent his entire life in preparation and again stands ready to serve The American Legion. Post 108 in Le Center, Minnesota are proud of him. The thundering 3rd District and the Department of Minnesota are proud of him, and I am proud to place the name of my friend, Don Hayden, in nomination for the office of National Vice Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The name of Don Hayden has been placed in nomination. Is there a seconded?

...Seconded.

Seconded by many. All in favor, signify by saying 'aye.' All opposed. The 'ayes' have it. The Chair recognizes microphone 2.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KURTZ, Wisconsin: The Department of Wisconsin requests the Chair recognize Past National Vice Commander Russell Hanseter of Post No. 106 in Seymour, Wisconsin for the purposes of a nomination.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The Chair recognizes Past National Vice Commander Russell Hanseter, for purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE HANSETER, Wisconsin: The Department of Wisconsin, 'Land of milk, cheese and fermented beverages,' the Milwaukee Brewers, the Green Bay Packers and University of Wisconsin Badgers, is proud to place in nomination the name of David A. Korth as a candidate for National Vice Commander.

David A. Kurtz through service in the U.S. Navy 1961-1965, during the Vietnam Era, is a duly qualified Legionnaire. He is a Paid-Up-For-Life Member of Post No. 54 of Marshfield, Wisconsin, having served in many positions at the post and district levels. David has served the Department of Wisconsin as National Executive Committeeman, as Alternate National Committeeman, Department of Wisconsin commander, department vice commander, Department History Book Committee, Chairman of the Legislative Committee, as a member of the Department Museum Committee, as Vice Chairman of the Badger Legionnaire and as interim office manager.

David A. Korth has served the national organization as a vice chairman of the National Security Council, as both vice chairman and chairman of the National Foreign Relations Council, a member of the Foreign Relations Commission, NEC Liaison to Committee on Internal Affairs, Sub-Committee on Resolutions and as chairman of the Americanism Council.

David is a graduate of Mount San Antonio College in California with an associate degree in science. He's retired from GTE/Verizon and married to Diane. They have a son

David and a daughter Denise, a grandson Davy and two granddaughters Riley and Skylor. David will continue his dedication to The American Legion and will serve you well in the high office of National Vice Commander. He has been endorsed by the past department commanders and the delegates of the 2007 Department Convention. Our candidate from the Department of Wisconsin, David A. Korth.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: The name of David A. Korth has been placed in nomination. Do I hear a seconded?

...Seconded.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Seconded by many. All those in favor signify by saying, 'aye.' All those opposed 'nay's.'' The 'ayes' have it. The Chair will now recognize microphone 1.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN SWANLUND, Wyoming: Gary Swanlund, Delegation Chairman from the Department of Wyoming. I move that the nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be closed.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: A motion has been made.

...Seconded.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Seconded. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favor, signify by saying, 'aye.' All those opposed. The 'ayes' have it. The motion is carried. The Chair recognizes microphone 3.

DELEGATE DELLINGER, South Carolina: Dave Dellinger, duly elected and registered delegate from the 89th National Convention. I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegation strength of this convention and that five vice commanders, Peggy Dettori from Alaska; Thomas L. Burns, Delaware; Randall Fisher, Kentucky; Donald Hayden from Minnesota; and David A. Korth from Wisconsin be elected National Vice Commanders by acclamation.

...Seconded..

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Motion has been made and seconded. On a question. Hearing none. All those in favor.

... 'Aye' from the floor.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Opposed. The 'ayes' have it. The five National Vice Commanders. Mr. Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this convention for Thomas L. Burns of Delaware; Peggy Dettori of Alaska; Randall Fisher of Kentucky; Donald 'Don' Hayden of Minnesota; David A. Korth of Wisconsin for the offices of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I declare Thomas L. Burns, Peggy G. Dettori, Randall 'Randy' A. Fisher, Donald Hayden, David Korth elected National Vice Commander.

Will the newly elected National Vice Commanders, please come to the platform.

I now present your new National Vice Commanders and your new National Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: I now call on Past National Commander Anthony Jordan of Maine to present the Colors to our incoming National Commander.

Presentation: Colors To Incoming National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: For the presentation of our National Colors by the Color Guard of Post No. 49 Tilton, New Hampshire to the National

Commander Marty Conatser. Color Guard, present the Colors of the new national commander of The American Legion.

...At this time the delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: Marty, please join me here at the podium.

You stand before this convention having received the unanimous vote of confidence in your ability to represent not only our fellow Legionnaires, but also those American veterans in the coming months. Commander Marty, you truly justify what it takes to be a leader and to serve in the high capacity of National Commander. I've known you and your lovely wife, Sharon, and many of your family members for a long time. You were an outstanding department commander, serving under my leadership. You have been a true friend, not only to me, but my wife, Claudette. I want to thank you for allowing me to be with you and be a part of this special day and moment.

The Department of Illinois and the Legionnaires across this great nation have put their trust in you. Before you are your Colors, the flag of this great country, as well as the Colors of our national organization. As you carry the torch of leadership this year, your Colors you represent will always be with you. As you know, you have now made a commitment to defend and protect these Colors during your year as national commander. May you have an outstanding year, with safe travel as national commander, and I wish you the best, my friend.

Color Guard, return the Colors of the national commander of The American Legion to Post. Right hand salute.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Thank you my friend.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER JORDAN: I'm really pleased to have you here.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: On special days, it's always a great pleasure to have people that are near and special to you to take part in those days. I want to thank you, Tony. It means so much to me.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: At this time. Sharon, come up here. I now ask a group of past national commanders' wives, who serve so well this department as first ladies in the past years to come forth for a presentation.

This is an exciting time of any national convention. We have elected a new national commander and look forward to a time of growth in community involvement. This is also the time when the American Legion Auxiliary elects a new president, as this important part of our Legion family is also poised for a bright future.

The woman chosen to lead the American Legion Auxiliary has worked many for veterans and their family. She is a paid up life member of William-Lancing Unit 360 in Waunakee, Wisconsin. Please welcome from Madison, Wisconsin, Mrs. Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, national president of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Greetings: Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Wisconsin, National President American Legion Auxiliary

Mr. Commander, Legionnaires and friends, what a thrill it is to stand here this afternoon to bring my very first greetings to The American Legion as the National President. What an awesome journey it's been. The number of years that I've worked in the national organization has culminated in this awesome, wonderful experience of being elected and installed today as the National President of the largest and greatest patriotic women's organization in the world.

Representing the almost 900,000 members of the American Legion Auxiliary, I today pledge to all of you and to your commander and officers our wholehearted support

of your programs for the ensuing year. I certainly want to congratulate your newly elected commander, Team Illinois, and the Department of Illinois for choosing a wonderful gentleman to serve with me as National Commander of this coming year.

Marty and Sharon and I and my husband have been friends for a number of years and that makes it even more special to have the opportunity to serve with someone who not only is a wonderful Legionnaire, but a very special friend.

We have a very large program ahead of us this year as well. My focus is going to be on kids. They are one of the pillars of our organization and certainly a part of our mission. We have a steering committee of 21 people, who are going to work for the National President's Scholarship Fund this year. We are calling it "Educating the Children of Warriors." There are 1.2 million kids who are military and we are going to work very diligently this coming year to collect $1.2 million to fund that endowment. You will be hearing more about that because we're also going to come to you, looking for some handouts as well.

I would like to take a personal privilege, Mr. Commander, if I may, to congratulate the gentleman from Wisconsin, who was elected your Vice Commander this morning, David Korth. Congratulations David.

I was in the back listening to your commander's address to this group of people. I heard him talk about values and I'm very impressed with that because I, too, think we need to get back to the very basics of this organization. I have charged our members with going out this coming year, door to door and with phone calls to members to tell them how important they are to our organization. Then we can tell them what benefits they have by membership in both of our organizations. I think that it is critical to this success of both of our programs and the Sons program and the Sons do it so much better than we do. We can learn from them.

Congratulations to your newly elected officers. If I could, Mr. Commander, I would like to introduce the two guests I brought with me. Here is our National Vice President from the Department of Ohio, Desi Stoy. Desi and I have been close friends for many years. We always said it would be a wonderful opportunity if we could follow one another in the chairs. And that's what happened. Desi in truth is my twin. You're supposed to laugh! She's about seven inches shorter than I am and dark hair, dark-eyed. I do have an identical twin sister, however, so that's not too farfetched. Also with us today is Pam Gilley, our National Secretary.

Once again, congratulations to your newly elected officers. Certainly I pledge our support of all of our Auxiliary members to your programs, to your Commander, to your officers. We will definitely work as an American Legion family. I want to thank you for your support and encouragement throughout all these years, because one does not do this alone. We need the help of many. I've always had that and I treasure your support and I treasure your friendship. Thank you so much. Until the next time we meet, God bless and God bless America.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Ladies and gentlemen, National Commander Marty Conatser and National President Jan and National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion Ray, your dynamic leadership team for the coming year.

I would like to take this last opportunity to thank you all for making our Landstuhl fundraising project and The American Legion Legacy Run such a huge success. Thanks to your generosity, as of today, you have given to Landstuhl $258,610.55 to provide for our wounded warriors at Landstuhl. $406,618.34 for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. You all applaud yourself. You deserve it. Together we have gone back

to basics and we have won. This time I call upon the National Adjutant for announcements.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Pursuant to the National Constitution and By-Laws, the post convention meeting of the National Executive Committee must be held within the convention city within 24 hours. Therefore, the post National Executive Committee meeting is called immediately following the adjournment of this 89th Annual National Convention in the Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Reno-Sparks Convention Center, Room F10, Concourse Level immediately after the adjournment of this convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Like all new and good commanders, I made a mistake. I forgot to introduce Denver Phelps, a gentleman you'll get to know more of this coming year. National Vice Commander would like to make a special presentation to you.

PAST NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WOODS: Good afternoon, Commander. Congratulations. When you were in our department, we have a Past Department Commander that likes to play with wood and he was unable to be here today because of health, so he asked me to make a presentation to you. So it is with great pleasure that I give you two presents from him. One of them you can use at your next meeting and the other one you can put in your pocket. They call it a pocket knocker. *[Laughter.]*

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Okay!

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER WOODS: There's a letter from Past Department Commander, Don Simoneau to you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONATSER: Good.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Is there any further business to come before this convention? Hearing none, please uncover as the outgoing National Chaplain, Reverend Stan Gruneich, offers benediction.

Benediction
Rev. Stanley J. Gruneich, South Dakota, Past National Chaplain

Holy God, we are grateful for the leaders who continue to raise up in The American Legion Family. Remembering our servicemen and women around the world, use us now to uplift our injured and wounded. Now give our leaders and each of us the vision to see the need, the courage to do what is right and the strength to do it. Amen.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Let's hear it one more time for an outstanding National Chaplain.

The Color Guard will retire the Flag of the United States. The delegates will remain standing and hand salute on my command. Color Guard, retrieve the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MORIN: Hand salute. Two!

The time is now 1:00 p.m. I now declare this 89th National Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*.

...At 1:00 p.m., the 89th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: The Honorable Richard Neal, United States House of Representatives, representing Massachusetts' 2nd Congressional District

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity, and playing ability.
RECIPIENT: Chris Carpenter—St. Louis Cardinals

Bob Feller Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Aaron Davidson—Bryant, AR

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: American Legion Post 19—Columbia, TN

Dr. Irvin L. "Click" Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Aaron Tapia—Tucson, AZ

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.
RECIPIENT: Eden Prairie, MN (OS) outside sponsor

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Department of Maryland

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.
RECIPIENT: Blaine T. Drozd—Genoa, NE

The Howard P. Savage Trophy: Awarded annually to that department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: American Legion Post 19—Columbia, TN

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.
RECIPIENT(s): Joel Kercado, Eddie Allred, Chris Ivie

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.
RECIPIENT: Holden Killen, Columbia, TN

Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.
RECIPIENT(s):

Precision Team:	**DuBois Rifle & Pistol Club (Pennsylvania)** **Aaron Holsopple, Michael Kulbacki, Justin Pentz, Kyle Smith**
Precision Individual:	**Ethan Settlemires—Cross Roads Sport Shooting (Mississippi)**
Sporter Team:	**R.L. Paschal H.S. JROTC (Texas)** **Amanda Aguilera, Xentri Garza, Dean Harmon, Daniel Hilario, Jr.**
Sporter Individual:	**Micaela Jochum—Homestead 4-H Shooting Club (Nebraska)**

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: Kevin Hussey—Tucson, AZ

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.
RECIPIENT: Department of Maryland

Rawlings "Big Stick" Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Marc Damon—Tucson, AZ

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.
RECIPIENT: Department of Florida

Francis M. Redington Sportsmanship Award: Awarded annually to the athlete competing in The American Legion Junior Air Rifle National Championship who best exemplifies good sportsmanship and fair play.

RECIPIENT(s):
Kaitlyn Martin—Peralta, NM
Valencia County 4-H Shooting Sports—Post 85, Los Lunas, New Mexico

William Randolph Hearst Trophy: Awarded annually to that department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports, and supporting department narrative.
RECIPIENT: Department of Alaska

American Legion & Scouting Square Knot Award: This award is designed to recognize American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion members who are actively involved in the Scouting program. This award is not meant to be a selective or limited award, but one that is available to any American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member who completes the requirements for the award. The Award is meant to recognize dedication and work required by an American Legion, American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary or Sons of The American Legion member to assist in furthering the Scouting program in The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): 2006—Barry F. Struse, Michael C. Tangen, John R. Pease. 2007—Daniel C. Briscoe, Anthony W. Renner, Donald T. Currier, Thomas W. Hallett, Dr. Todd K. Fetsch, Stephen J. Dean, Chris Glass, Sr., Michael J. Feist, Albert Blumer, Donald L. Farris, Shaun Guhl, Kathy M. Bisek, Tracy L. Murray, LuWanda M. Ford, Leonard C. Ford, James M. Gates, Michael Demsko, Charles J. Weber, Jr., Don Jackson, Ray D. Airy, John J. Schillo, David R. Manore, Nancy Ann Peto, Allan D. Hale, Richard Miller, Russell L. Hauser, Jr., David R. Murphy, Craig Murray, Richard "Dick" McCoy, Stephen Suga, David Sears, Herbert C. Vinson, Troy S. Jenkins, Eric K. Doerr, John M. Pickard, William A. Falconer. (as of: 10/25/07)

Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s):
Harvey Shevalier, submitted by American Legion Post 39—Forsyth, MT
Don Wood, submitted by American Legion Post 904—Alexandria Bay, NY
Omer "Turk" Brunet, submitted by American Legion Post 147—Madawaska, ME

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post reports.
RECIPIENT: Department of Nebraska, Department of Montana

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.
RECIPIENT(s): 2006 Winners
Category I Employment Source Projects with Industry (PWI)— Fayette, NC

Category II **Alutiiq and Wackenhut Security Services—Redstone Arsenal, AL**
Category III **Nielsen Ford/Mercury—Bloomer, WI**

Note: The 2007 Employer of the Year Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2007.

Employment Service Awards: Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.

RECIPIENT(s): 2006 Winners

LVER of the Year: **Walter A. Pollock, Jr.—Columbus, GA**
DVOP of the Year: **James E. Warren—Tyler, TX**
ES Office of the Year: **Idaho Commerce and Labor, Coeur d'Alene Local Office—Coeur d'Alene, ID**

Note: The 2007 Employment Service Awards will not be determined until December 31, 2007.

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

RECIPIENT(s): 2006 Winner

None awarded for 2006

Note: The 2007 Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons will not be determined until December 31, 2007.

National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.

RECIPIENT(s):
Department of South Dakota (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Ohio (One-Year Yearbook History)

National POST History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

RECIPIENT(s):
Sykesville Memorial Post 223—Sykesville, MD (One-Year Narrative History)
Landt Thiel Post 470—Saukville, WI (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): None for 2007

The Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.
RECIPIENT(s): The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, United States Senate

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I—200-1,000 members; II—1,001-3,000 members; III—3,001-6000 members; IV—6001-12,000 members; V—12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.
RECIPIENT(s): 2006 Winners

Category I	**Detachment of North Dakota**
Category II	**Detachment of Alabama**
Category III	**Detachment of Arizona**
Category IV	**Detachment of California**
Category V	**Detachment of Pennsylvania**

Note: The 2007 Houghton awards will not be determined until December 31, 2007.

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).
RECIPIENT(s):

Category I	**None awarded for 2007**
Category II	**None awarded for 2007**
Category III	**None awarded for 2007**
Category IV	**None awarded for 2007**
Category V	**None awarded for 2007**
Category VI	**Department of Puerto Rico**

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.
RECIPIENT: Department of Texas

The Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.
RECIPIENT: Department of Nevada

The North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the department, not included among the several state departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.
RECIPIENT: Department of Philippines

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Department of Puerto Rico

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Brian J. Pascuzzi and Cadet Alicia M. Stirewalt

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.
RECIPIENT: Ensign Michael L. Flint

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Benjamin D. Hayes

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.
RECIPIENT: Cadet Gregory J. Stevens

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: Ensign Joseph B. Hess

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s):
Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members:
Post Participation: Department of Ohio
Individual Participation: Department of Minnesota
Category II—Departments with 70,000 to 99,999 members:

Post Participation: Department of Maryland

Individual Participation: Department of Maryland
Category III—Departments with 40,000 to 69,999 members:

Post Participation: Department of Georgia

Individual Participation: Department of Georgia
Category IV—Departments with 25,000 to 39,999 members:
Post Participation: Department of Tennessee
Individual Participation: Department of Tennessee
Category V—Departments with 10,000 to 24,999 members:

Post Participation: No Department Submission
Individual Participation: No Department Submission
Category VI—Departments with less than 10,000 members:
Post Participation: Department of Alaska
Individual Participation: Department of Alaska

National Law Enforcement Officer Of The Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.
RECIPIENT:
Police Sergeant Julie A. Asmus, Willmar State Police Dept.—Willmar, Minnesota

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.
RECIPIENT(s):
Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee.

Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.
RECIPIENT: Jennifer Kraus, News Channel 5—Nashville, TN

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: Extreme Makeover Home Edition—Los Angeles, CA

The Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Joliet American Legion Band—Joliet, IL

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No contest in 2007

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
RECIPIENT: No contest in 2007

The Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: American Legion Post 49—Tilton, NH

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Joliet American Legion Band—Joliet, IL

National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No contest in 2007

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.
RECIPIENT: Department of Minnesota

The American Legion Patriot Award: Awarded to outstanding citizens who have demonstrated a profound and exceptional commitment to military personnel and their families. In addition to the award, the national winners will receive expense-paid round trip travel to Convention to include airfare and lodging.
RECIPIENT(s): Michael G. Reagan and Kaziah Hancock

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC
Member Horwath International

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statements of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2006 and 2005 and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2006 and 2005, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole. The supplementary information listed in the table of contents is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the consolidated financial statements. The consolidating information is presented for purposes of additional analysis of the consolidated financial statements rather than to present the financial position, results of operations, and cash flows of the individual entities. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the consolidated financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the consolidated financial statements taken as a whole.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC
Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
April 10, 2007

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2006 AND 2005

	2006	2005
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,194,217	$ 1,917,159
Accounts receivable		
Emblem Division	68,333	100,047
Publications Division	1,423,414	1,176,332
Other	1,734,093	847,634
Prepaid expenses and deposits	703,643	616,721
Deferred membership expense	8,054,464	7,330,341
Inventories		
Emblem Division	1,904,223	1,910,534
Publications Division	599,288	658,333
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	46,938	48,012
Beneficial interest in trust	382,000	405,500
Prepaid pension expense	16,598,154	16,703,768
	33,708,767	31,714,381
Investments		
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	23,503,303	22,790,512
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,311,976	2,146,419
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	934,935	916,163
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	35,938,716	35,119,582
Other	32,463,188	33,969,589
Special account - Endowment Fund	2,074,751	2,079,362
General account - Endowment Fund	5,880,916	5,862,361
	103,107,785	102,883,988
Property and equipment		
Washington, D.C. real estate		
Land	80,000	80,000
Building	4,484,147	4,484,147
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,611,779	3,611,779
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana	4,746,636	4,673,647
Washington, D.C.	860,533	1,010,105
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	1,036,280	886,830
	15,208,639	15,135,772
Accumulated depreciation	(8,497,895)	(8,123,834)
	6,710,744	7,011,938
	$ 143,527,296	$ 141,610,307

(Continued)

	2006	2005
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 1,888,718	$ 2,178,275
Scholarships payable	958,760	874,044
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	104,731	102,001
Deferred advertising income	125,225	148,691
Deferred dues income	20,939,414	19,356,625
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	2,012,732	2,546,874
Accrued vacation benefits	620,676	540,107
Other liabilities	525,188	895,280
Notes payable	2,614,781	2,774,142
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	14,396,317	14,156,061
Life memberships due to state and local posts	24,357,149	23,908,013
	68,543,691	67,480,113
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted - general	20,401,519	21,589,719
Unrestricted - designated		
Citizens Flag Alliance	46,938	48,012
Computer reserve	500,000	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	100,000
Convention stabilization	280,980	240,275
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	697,601	411,711
Real estate reserve	3,115,407	2,553,096
Reserve fund	2,170,264	2,198,448
Restricted fund	21,313,681	20,573,647
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	3,180,744	3,659,892
Veterans' rehabilitation/child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	542,152	511,754
Tedrow fund	962,975	961,255
American Legion Endowment Fund	(190,282)	(155,287)
	55,221,979	55,292,522
Temporarily restricted		
Buick scholarship	710,552	682,716
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	936,505	922,137
Samsung scholarship	2,390,847	2,437,232
American Legacy Fund	1,564,493	1,051,284
National Emergency Fund	1,979,189	1,524,788
Others	632,499	695,476
	8,214,085	7,313,633
Permanently restricted		
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	6,547,541	6,524,039
	11,547,541	11,524,039
Total net assets	74,983,605	74,130,194
	$ 143,527,296	$ 141,610,307

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2006

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 19,674,156	$ 2,107,854	$ 21,782,010	$ -	$ -	$ 21,782,010
Direct membership solicitations	4,512,009	-	4,512,009	-	-	4,512,009
Member service fees income	1,212,994	402,531	1,615,525	-	-	1,615,525
Affinity income	427,628	-	427,628	-	-	427,628
Sales of emblem items	11,098,300	-	11,098,300	-	-	11,098,300
Advertising	9,655,322	-	9,655,322	-	-	9,655,322
Contributions	1,054,780	-	1,054,780	1,045,241	84,519	2,184,540
Label and printing fees	1,645,489	-	1,645,489	-	-	1,645,489
Sales - HPC	302,516	-	302,516	-	-	302,516
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $274,026	682,582	1,419,172	2,101,754	837,529	-	2,939,283
Net realized gains (losses)	(143,151)	(339,307)	(482,458)	(759)	(44,368)	(527,585)
Other	1,203,702	895,000	2,098,702	-	-	2,098,702
	51,326,327	4,485,250	55,811,577	1,882,011	40,151	57,733,739
Net assets released from restriction	651,232	293,599	944,831	(944,831)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	5,250,273	(5,250,273)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	57,227,832	(471,424)	56,756,408	937,180	40,151	57,733,739
Expenses						
Salaries	11,739,820	-	11,739,820	-	-	11,739,820
Employee benefits	2,979,361	-	2,979,361	-	-	2,979,361
Cost of sales - Legion	8,383,689	-	8,383,689	-	-	8,383,689
Cost of sales - HPC	45,165	-	45,165	-	-	45,165
Direct publication	11,714,999	-	11,714,999	-	-	11,714,999
Executive and staff travel	799,325	-	799,325	-	-	799,325
Commission and committee	1,492,729	-	1,492,729	-	-	1,492,729
Printing and postage	3,007,256	-	3,007,256	-	-	3,007,256
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,386,448	-	1,386,448	-	-	1,386,448
Office and other operating	10,772,621	-	10,772,621	-	-	10,772,621
Occupancy and usage	2,109,024	-	2,109,024	-	-	2,109,024
Special projects and programs	3,447,692	-	3,447,692	-	-	3,447,692
	57,878,129	-	57,878,129	-	-	57,878,129
Change in net assets from operations	(650,297)	(471,424)	(1,121,721)	937,180	40,151	(144,390)
Net unrealized gain - PUFL annuity	1,066,923	-	1,066,923	-	-	1,066,923
Amortization of pension loss	(437,336)	-	(437,336)	-	-	(437,336)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	47,642	373,949	421,591	(36,728)	(16,649)	368,214
Change in net assets	26,932	(97,475)	(70,543)	900,452	23,502	853,411
Net assets, beginning of year	21,589,719	33,702,803	55,292,522	7,313,633	11,524,039	74,130,194
Transfer of funds	(1,215,132)	1,215,132	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 20,401,519	$ 34,820,460	$ 55,221,979	$ 8,214,085	$ 11,547,541	$ 74,983,605

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2005

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 20,446,989	$ 2,053,836	$ 22,500,825	$ -	$ -	$ 22,500,825
Direct membership solicitations	2,324,017	-	2,324,017	-	-	2,324,017
Member service fees income	1,476,238	392,935	1,869,173	-	-	1,869,173
Affinity income	402,585	-	402,585	-	-	402,585
Sales of emblem items	9,979,778	-	9,979,778	-	-	9,979,778
Advertising	8,481,743	-	8,481,743	-	-	8,481,743
Contributions	326,013	-	326,013	3,053,881	564,630	3,944,524
Label and printing fees	1,728,606	-	1,728,606	-	-	1,728,606
Sales - HPC	612,992	-	612,992	-	-	612,992
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $125,804	596,060	1,434,707	2,030,767	789,486	-	2,820,253
Net realized gains (losses)	(48,501)	(230,850)	(279,351)	(199,491)	(40,666)	(519,508)
Other	1,914,922	265,419	2,180,341	-	-	2,180,341
	48,241,442	3,916,047	52,157,489	3,643,876	523,964	56,325,329
Net assets released from restriction	2,561,581	294,935	2,856,516	(2,856,516)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	4,536,315	(4,536,315)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	55,339,338	(325,333)	55,014,005	787,360	523,964	56,325,329
Expenses						
Salaries	11,103,087	-	11,103,087	-	-	11,103,087
Employee benefits	2,872,249	-	2,872,249	-	-	2,872,249
Cost of sales - Legion	7,864,453	-	7,864,453	-	-	7,864,453
Cost of sales - HPC	474,656	-	474,656	-	-	474,656
Direct publication	10,635,653	-	10,635,653	-	-	10,635,653
Executive and staff travel	752,508	-	752,508	-	-	752,508
Commission and committee	1,651,630	-	1,651,630	-	-	1,651,630
Printing and postage	2,121,720	-	2,121,720	-	-	2,121,720
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,384,524	-	1,384,524	-	-	1,384,524
Office and other operating	9,470,847	-	9,470,847	-	-	9,470,847
Occupancy and usage	2,329,963	-	2,329,963	-	-	2,329,963
Special projects and programs	5,059,366	-	5,059,366	-	-	5,059,366
	55,720,656	-	55,720,656	-	-	55,720,656
Transfer from convention stabilization to general fund	366,497	(366,497)	-	-	-	-
Change in net assets from operations	(14,821)	(691,830)	(706,651)	787,360	523,964	604,673
Net unrealized gain - PUFL annuity	6,401,784	-	6,401,784	-	-	6,401,784
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	(84,119)	(1,831,177)	(1,915,296)	(134,686)	(155,071)	(2,205,053)
Change in net assets	6,302,844	(2,523,007)	3,779,837	652,674	368,893	4,801,404
Net assets, beginning of year	15,493,870	36,018,815	51,512,685	6,660,959	11,155,146	69,328,790
Transfer of funds	(206,995)	206,995	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 21,589,719	$ 33,702,803	$ 55,292,522	$ 7,313,633	$ 11,524,039	$ 74,130,194

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2006 AND 2005

	2006	2005
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ 853,411	$ 4,801,404
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	749,570	812,432
Loss on sale of fixed assets	4,168	1,535
Realized (gain) loss on sale of investments	527,585	519,508
Unrealized (gain) loss on investments	(368,214)	2,205,053
(Gain) loss on Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	(1,066,923)	(6,401,784)
Amortization of pension loss	437,336	-
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	(84,519)	(564,630)
Accounts receivable	(1,101,827)	(112,738)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	18,692	(84,142)
Deferred membership expense	(724,123)	(3,034,205)
Inventories	65,356	17,889
Beneficial interest in trust	23,500	(405,500)
Accounts and scholarships payable	(204,840)	283,793
Deferred income	2,346,890	(689,460)
Other accrued liabilities	(289,523)	411,575
Net cash from operating activities	1,186,539	(2,239,270)
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(452,544)	(422,139)
Purchase of investments	(44,895,949)	(80,525,205)
Sales and maturities of investments	44,512,780	83,295,123
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	1,074	13,797
Net cash from investing activities	(834,639)	2,361,576
Cash flows from financing activities		
Contributions restricted for long-term purposes	84,519	564,630
Payments on loan	(159,361)	(151,152)
Net cash from financing activities	(74,842)	413,478
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	277,058	535,784
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	1,917,159	1,381,375
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,194,217	$ 1,917,159
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid, net of refunds received	$ 161,198	$ 296,928
Interest paid	143,195	151,404

See accompanying notes to consolidated financial statements.

NOTE 1 – NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Nature of Organization: The American Legion National Headquarters (Legion) is a national veterans organization that was declared to be a corporate body by an act of the U.S. Congress on Sept. 16, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Approximately 45 percent of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 15 percent is generated through advertising for *The American Legion Magazine*. Another significant source of income is Emblem Sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry and other items bearing the American Legion emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs, including *The American Legion Magazine*, Emblem Sales, veterans assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion Baseball, the National Oratorical Contest and Boys Nation.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC); the American Legion Endowment Fund Corp. (ALEF); and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material interorganizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc., an Indiana corporation, is a full-service, direct marketing and advertising agency whose services include innovative marketing and creative automated mailing. The majority of its sales are to the Legion. The remaining sales are made primarily within the State of Indiana. American Legion Endowment Fund Corp., a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of U.S. veterans and assistance to their orphans. The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and posts.

Basis of Accounting: The financial statements have been prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in the United States of America.

Financial Statement Presentation: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 117, Financial Statements of Not-For-Profit Organizations. SFAS No. 117 requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Use of Estimates in Preparation of Financial Statements: The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: Cash and cash equivalents consist of bank deposits in accounts that are federally insured up to $100,000 per financial institution. Additionally, for purposes of the consolidated statement of cash flows, the Legion considers all highly liquid investments purchased with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights, and is stated at the lower of cost or market. Inventory items are valued at average cost. Supplies not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments held by Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Legion, are classified as held-to-maturity securities and are carried at amortized cost. Realized gains or losses are determined based on the amortized cost of the specific security sold. Interest and divident income, adjusted by amortization of purchase premium or discount, is included in earnings. Securities with declines in fair value below amortized cost that are other than temporary are written down to fair value by a charge to earnings.

All other Legion investments are carried at fair value. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets and are greater than $300 are capitalized at cost. The Legion provides for depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation on buildings is computed on the straight-line method using a 30-year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Collections: The Legion owns many collectible military-related items and historical documents that were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires – that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished – temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis.

In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct-marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and written off in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these organizations is considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. The Legion paid and incurred expense of $0 and $65,928 in income taxes in 2006 and 2005.

HPC records income tax expense based on the amount of taxes due on its tax return plus deferred taxes computed based on the expected future tax consequences of temporary differences between the carrying amounts and tax bases of assets and liabilities, using enacted tax rates. Federal and state income tax expense is recorded for HPC, a for-profit corporation, as incurred, and is disclosed in Note 14.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion approximate their fair values, with the exception of held-to-maturity investments as disclosed in Note 5.

Expense Allocation: Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

NOTE 2 – COLLECTIONS

The Legion owns many collectible military related items and historical documents that were not recorded as they were acquired. It is often impracticable to determine a value for collections and accordingly, the Legion has concluded that they need not be capitalized. These items have been appraised, or are in the process of being appraised for insurance purposes and are as follows:

	Appraisal Date	Replacement Value
World War I Posters	2/10/2005	$461,769
World War II Posters	03/11/2005	$472,919
Military Unit Histories	03/18/2005	$112,410
Fine Art Collection	10/14/2005	$695,600
Firearms and Uniforms Collection	3/24/2006	$99,950
Original GI Bill	not complete	
Other Collections	not complete	

NOTE 3 – INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA) for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering Congress and the states to enact legislation to protect the flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a decrease in net assets of $1,074 and $13,797 in 2006 and 2005, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been decreased by these amounts and corresponding charges have been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2006 and 2005.

NOTE 4 – BENEFICIAL INTEREST IN CHARITABLE LEAD TRUST

The ALEF has been named a beneficiary of a charitable lead trust. Under the charitable trust, the ALEF is to receive quarterly distributions in the amount of $9,919 until December 2020, or until the funds of the trust are exhausted. Based on the terms of the trust and a 5.6-percent discount rate in 2006 and a 5.4-percent discount rate in 2005, the present value of future benefits expected to be received by the ALEF was estimated to be $382,000 and $405,500 at Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005, respectively.

NOTE 5 – INVESTMENTS

The carrying amount, unrealized gains and losses, and fair value of agency and municipal bonds held-to-maturity held by HPC at Dec. 31, 2006 are as follows:

2006	Carrying Amount	Unrealized Gains	Unrealized Losses	Fair Value
Due within 1 year	$451,197	$ -	$1,760	$449,437
Due 1-5 years	448,142	-	7,986	440,156
Due more than 10 years	300,000	-	-	300,000
Total	$1,199,339	$ -	$9,746	$1,189,593

2005	Carrying Amount	Unrealized Gains	Unrealized Losses	Fair Value
Due within 1 year	$221,970	$ -	$345	$221,625
Due 1-5 years	671,358	-	10,841	660,517
Total	$893,328	$ -	$11,186	$882,142

The carrying amount plus accrued interest for these investments was $1,214,221 and $901,381 at Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005, respectively.

The market and cost values for all other investments held by the Legion at Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005 are as follows:

	2006		2005	
	Cost	Market	Cost	Market
Money market accounts	$19,497,293	$19,497,293	$12,501,403	$12,501,403
U.S government obligations	62,443,938	60,943,089	68,577,930	67,039,360
State and municipal bonds	139,352	144,057	148,080	156,999
Corporate bonds	11,318,553	11,080,688	11,769,042	11,650,031
Foreign bonds	42,315	41,002	32,775	31,817
Common and preferred stocks	6,910,473	8,061,809	8,402,868	9,200,989
Mutual funds	1,073,204	1,177,004	378,516	383,173
Accrued interest	-	948,622	-	1,018,835
	$101,425,128	$101,893,564	$101,810,614	$101,982,607

NOTE 6 – LONG-TERM DEBT

In 2003, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt on its facility for Emblem Sales, information technology, member benefits and HPC. This debt is payable in monthly installments of $25,213, including interest, beginning July 30, 2003, with a stated rate of 5.3 percent and final payment due Aug. 1, 2018. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $2,614,781 and $2,774,142 for 2006 and 2005.

The future maturities of the long-term debt are as follows:

2007	$ 167,276
2008	176,561
2009	185,939
2010	196,036
2011	206,682
Thereafter	1,682,287
Total	$ 2,614,781

Interest expense was $143,195 and $151,404 for the years ended Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005, respectively.

NOTE 7 – LEASES

The Legion has several noncancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment and copiers that expire at various dates through the year 2010. Rent expense under these leases for the years ended Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005 approximated $382,522 and $412,508, respectively.

Minimum lease commitments are as follows:

2007	$ 374,860
2008	282,276
2009	279,660
2010	256,380
	$ 1,193,176

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through June 30, 2010. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for eight additional four-year periods. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance for 2006 and 2005 was approximately $543,000 and $505,000, respectively. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 8 – PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership Fund are segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 9 – RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee of the Legion. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10 percent of the prior year's defined net income to the restricted fund. The Legion transferred $0 and $48,198 in 2006 and 2005.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 10 – LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

During October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legion's Life Insurance Trust. Upon dissolution in April 1993, funds remaining in the Trust totaling $4,285,984 were transferred to a segregated bank trust account (named The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion for use in youth programs.

The Legion's National Executive Committee has directed that monies within The American Legion Life Insurance Plan used to fund the National Oratorical Contest, Boys Nation, American Legion Baseball, and other youth programs of the Legion. At Dec. 31, 2006, $1,062,442 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 2007.

NOTE 11 – PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

The Legion received $5,000,000 from The Samsung Group during 1996. The principal is to be permanently endowed and the income is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendants of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Such scholarships are administered by the Legion.

Contributions to The American Legion Endowment Fund are recorded as increases in permanently restricted net assets, the income from which is to be used to support the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth activities of the Legion.

NOTE 12 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DESIGNATION

Net assets were released from designations by satisfying the designations previously established.

	2006	2005
Purpose designations accomplished		
Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	$ 2,332,230	$ 2,269,325
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	1,089,623	1,078,262
Sons of The American Legion	599,520	456,015
Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc.	661,074	138,797
Other	567,826	593,916
	$ 5,250,273	$ 4,536,315

NOTE 13 – NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2006	2005
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas Graves Decoration	$ 24,412	$ 25,921
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	564,836	2,535,660
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation and Children & Youth programs	355,583	294,935
	$944,831	$ 2,856,516

NOTE 14 – INCOME TAXES

The provision for income taxes consists of the following:

	2006	2005
Income tax expense		
Currently payable		
Federal	$158,843	$ 191,408
State	44,588	53,663
Deferred		
Federal	(1,300)	5,760
State	(1,800)	1,440
	$200,331	$ 252,271

The components of the net deferred tax (liability) asset are as follows:

	2006	2005
Asset		
Net operating loss carry-forward	$ 15,300	$ 11,300
Liability		
Other	(51,800)	(50,900)
	$(36,500)	$ (39,600)

The deferred tax asset and liability are included in other prepaid expenses and deposits and other liabilities, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

The tax provision is higher than the statutory provision due to the effect of non-deductible expenses.

NOTE 15 – EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined-benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's National Convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations.

The plan's assets consist of investments in equity and debt securities. The asset investment policy is a lower risk strategy. The following table sets forth the Legion's target allocation for 2006 and percentage of plan assets at Dec. 31, 2006 and 2005.

Asset Category and Target Allocation	2006	2005
Equity Securities (30-40%)	33%	31%
Debt Securities (50-70%)	65%	67%
Other (0 - 10%)	2%	2%

Historical returns of multiple asset classes were analyzed to develop a risk free real rate of return and risk premium for each asset class. The overall rate for each asset class was developed by combining a long-term inflation component, the risk-free real rate of return, and the associated risk premium. A weighted average rate was developed based on those overall rates and the target asset allocation of the plan.

	2006	2005
Weighted-average assumptions		
Discount rate	5.58%	5.50%
Expected return on plan assets	8.00%	9.00%
Rate of compenation increase	2.00%	2.00%

NOTE 15 - EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (Continued)

The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 2006 and 2005.

	2006	2005
Benefit obligation	$ (44,143,935)	$ (41,765,955)
Fair value of plan assets	48,541,349	46,824,232
Funded status	$ 4,397,414	$ 5,058,277
Accumulated benefit obligation	$ 42,153,214	$ 39,889,243
Prepaid benefit cost recognized in the statement of financial position	$ 16,598,154	$ 16,703,768
Benefit cost	$ 379,962	$ (26,395)
Employer contribution	260,274	178,532
Benefits paid	1,855,425	1,921,273
Measurement date	12/31/2006	12/31/2005

Estimated future benefit payments:

2007	$ 2,220,777
2008	2,358,331
2009	2,550,758
2010	2,769,314
2011	2,857,509
Years 2012 - 2016	15,891,040

HPC maintains a defined-contribution plan under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Elective deferrals are available to employees twenty-one years of age who have completed one year of eligible service. HPC may make discretionary contributions to this plan. HPC's discretionary contributions to the plan in 2006 and 2005 were $53,673 and $51,114, respectively. In September 2006, the FASB issued SFAS No. 158, Employers' Accounting for Defined Benefit Pension and Other Postretirement Plans – an amendment of FASB Statements No. 87, 88, 106 and 132(R). This Statement requires an employer to recognize the overfunded or underfunded status of a defined benefit postretirement plan as an asset or liability in its statement of financial position and to recognize changes in the funded status in the year in which the changes occur through comprehensive income. Defined benefit plan assets and obligations are to be measured as of the date of the employer's fiscal year-end. An employer without publicly traded equity securities is required to adopt this standard for fiscal years ending after June 15, 2007. Accordingly, the Legion will adopt this standard at year end 2007.

NOTE 16 - FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

	2006	2005
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$ 31,934,970	$ 32,855,425
Americanism and children and youth activities	2,783,695	2,735,629
Flag education and legislation	661,075	138,797
	35,379,740	35,729,851
Supporting services		
Management and general	13,765,917	14,537,769
Member development	8,653,729	5,402,751
Fund raising	78,743	50,285
	22,498,389	19,990,805
	$ 57,878,129	$ 55,720,656

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $6,104,646 and $3,110,065 for the years ended December 31, 2006 and 2005.

NOTE 17 - LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the National Judge Advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial position of the Legion.

RECONCILIATION OF INTERNAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2006 AND 2005

	2006	2005
Change in net assets - unaudited internal financial statements	$ (650,297)	$ (14,821)
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials		
Unrestricted designated	(471,424)	(691,830)
Temporarily restricted	937,180	787,360
Permanently restricted	40,151	523,964
	(144,390)	604,673
Net unrealized gain - PUFL annuity	1,066,923	6,401,784
Amortization of pension loss	(437,336)	-
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments		
General	47,642	(84,119)
Unrestricted designated	373,949	(1,831,177)
Temporarily restricted	(36,728)	(134,686)
Permanently restricted	(16,649)	(155,071)
	368,214	(2,205,053)
Change in net assets - audited financial statements	$ 853,411	$ 4,801,404

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,455,778	$ 18,453	$ 16,588	$ 703,398	$ -	$ 2,194,217
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	68,333	-	-	-	-	68,333
Publications	1,423,414	-	-	-	-	1,423,414
Related party	-	-	495	502,548	(503,043)	-
Other	1,733,851	-	-	49,778	(49,536)	1,734,093
Prepaid expenses and deposits	623,890	1,959	-	77,794	-	703,643
Deferred membership expense	8,054,464	-	-	-	-	8,054,464
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	1,904,223	-	-	-	-	1,904,223
Publication division	599,288	-	-	-	-	599,288
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	46,938	-	-	-	-	46,938
Beneficial interest in trust	-	382,000	-	-	-	382,000
Prepaid pension expense	16,598,154	-	-	-	-	16,598,154
	34,508,333	402,412	17,083	1,333,518	(2,552,579)	33,708,767
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	23,503,303	-	-	-	-	23,503,303
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,311,976	-	-	-	-	2,311,976
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	934,935	-	-	-	-	934,935
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	35,938,716	-	-	-	-	35,938,716
Other	29,286,861	-	1,962,106	1,214,221	-	32,463,188
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,074,751	-	-	-	2,074,751
General account - Endowment Fund	-	5,880,916	-	-	-	5,880,916
Investment in HPC	2,704,491	-	-	-	(2,704,491)	-
	94,680,282	7,955,667	1,962,106	1,214,221	(2,704,491)	103,107,785
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,484,147	-	-	-	-	4,484,147
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,746,636	-	-	-	-	4,746,636
Washington, D.C.	860,533	-	-	-	-	860,533
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	1,036,280	-	1,036,280
Accumulated depreciation	(7,735,731)	-	-	(762,164)	-	(8,497,895)
	6,436,628	-	-	274,116	-	6,710,744
Total assets	$ 135,625,243	$ 8,358,079	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,821,855	$ (5,257,070)	$ 143,527,296

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,082,727	$ 820	$ -	$ 308,214	$ (503,043)	$ 1,888,718
Scholarships payable	958,760	-	-	-	-	958,760
Accounts payable - Legion	-	2,000,000	-	49,536	(2,049,536)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	104,731	-	-	-	-	104,731
Deferred advertising income	125,225	-	-	-	-	125,225
Deferred dues income	20,939,414	-	-	-	-	20,939,414
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	2,012,732	-	-	-	-	2,012,732
Accrued vacation benefits	620,676	-	-	-	-	620,676
Other liabilities	365,576	-	-	159,612	-	525,188
Notes payable	2,614,781	-	-	-	-	2,614,781
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	14,396,317	-	-	-	-	14,396,317
Life memberships due to state and local posts	24,357,149	-	-	-	-	24,357,149
	68,578,088	2,000,820	-	517,362	(2,552,579)	68,543,691
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted - general	20,801,517	-	-	-	(399,998)	20,401,519
Unrestricted - designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	46,938	-	-	-	-	46,938
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	280,980	-	-	-	-	280,980
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	697,601	-	-	-	-	697,601
Real estate reserve	3,115,407	-	-	-	-	3,115,407
Reserve fund	2,170,264	-	-	-	-	2,170,264
Restricted fund	21,313,681	-	-	-	-	21,313,681
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	3,180,744	-	-	-	-	3,180,744
Veterans' rehabilitation / child welfare	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	542,152	-	-	-	-	542,152
Tedrow fund	962,975	-	-	-	-	962,975
Endowment Fund	-	(190,282)	-	-	-	(190,282)
	55,812,259	(190,282)	-	-	(399,998)	55,221,979
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	710,552	-	-	-	-	710,552
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	936,505	-	-	-	-	936,505
Samsung scholarship	2,390,847	-	-	-	-	2,390,847
American Legacy Fund	1,564,493	-	-	-	-	1,564,493
National Emergency Fund	-	-	1,979,189	-	-	1,979,189
Others	632,499	-	-	-	-	632,499
	6,234,896	-	1,979,189	-	-	8,214,085
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
Endowment Fund	-	6,547,541	-	-	-	6,547,541
	5,000,000	6,547,541	-	-	-	11,547,541
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,905,916	(1,905,916)	-
Total net assets	67,047,155	6,357,259	1,979,189	2,304,493	(2,704,491)	74,983,605
	$ 135,625,243	$ 8,358,079	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,821,855	$ (5,257,070)	$ 143,527,296

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2005

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,105,216	$ 20,348	$ -	$ 791,595	$ -	$ 1,917,159
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	100,047	-	-	-	-	100,047
Publications	1,176,332	-	-	-	-	1,176,332
Related party	-	-	25,516	486,822	(512,338)	-
Other	825,540	77	-	43,083	(21,066)	847,634
Prepaid expenses and deposits	589,122	1,924	-	25,675	-	616,721
Deferred membership expense	7,330,341	-	-	-	-	7,330,341
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	1,910,534	-	-	-	-	1,910,534
Publication division	658,333	-	-	-	-	658,333
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	48,012	-	-	-	-	48,012
Prepaid pension expense	16,703,768	-	-	-	-	16,703,768
Beneficial interest in trust	-	405,500	-	-	-	405,500
	32,447,245	427,849	25,516	1,347,175	(2,533,404)	31,714,381
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	22,790,512	-	-	-	-	22,790,512
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	2,146,419	-	-	-	-	2,146,419
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	916,163	-	-	-	-	916,163
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	35,119,582	-	-	-	-	35,119,582
Other	31,508,259	-	1,559,949	901,381	-	33,969,589
Special account - Endowment Fund	-	2,079,362	-	-	-	2,079,362
General account - Endowment Fund	-	5,862,361	-	-	-	5,862,361
Investment in HPC	2,402,294	-	-	-	(2,402,294)	-
	94,883,229	7,941,723	1,559,949	901,381	(2,402,294)	102,883,988
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,484,147	-	-	-	-	4,484,147
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,673,647	-	-	-	-	4,673,647
Washington, D.C.	1,010,105	-	-	-	-	1,010,105
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	886,830	-	886,830
Accumulated depreciation	(7,422,740)	-	-	(701,094)	-	(8,123,834)
	6,826,202	-	-	185,736	-	7,011,938
Total assets	$ 134,156,676	$ 8,369,572	$ 1,585,465	$ 2,434,292	$ (4,935,698)	$ 141,610,307

CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2005

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,371,915	$ 820	$ 60,677	$ 257,201	$ (512,338)	$ 2,178,275
Scholarships payable	874,044	-	-	-	-	874,044
Accounts payable - Legion	-	2,000,000	-	21,066	(2,021,066)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	102,001	-	-	-	-	102,001
Deferred advertising income	148,691	-	-	-	-	148,691
Deferred dues income	19,356,625	-	-	-	-	19,356,625
Deferred income - direct membership solicitation	2,546,874	-	-	-	-	2,546,874
Accrued vacation benefits	540,107	-	-	-	-	540,107
Other liabilities	741,551	-	-	153,729	-	895,280
Notes payable	2,774,142	-	-	-	-	2,774,142
Deferred dues income - Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	14,156,061	-	-	-	-	14,156,061
Life memberships due to state and local posts	23,908,013	-	-	-	-	23,908,013
	67,520,024	2,000,820	60,677	431,996	(2,533,404)	67,480,113
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted - general	21,989,717	-	-	-	(399,998)	21,589,719
Unrestricted - designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	48,012	-	-	-	-	48,012
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	240,275	-	-	-	-	240,275
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	411,711	-	-	-	-	411,711
Real estate reserve	2,553,096	-	-	-	-	2,553,096
Reserve fund	2,198,448	-	-	-	-	2,198,448
Restricted fund	20,573,647	-	-	-	-	20,573,647
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	3,659,892	-	-	-	-	3,659,892
Veterans' rehabilitation / child welfare	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	511,754	-	-	-	-	511,754
Tedrow fund	961,255	-	-	-	-	961,255
Endowment Fund	-	(155,287)	-	-	-	(155,287)
	55,847,807	(155,287)	-	-	(399,998)	55,292,522
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	682,716	-	-	-	-	682,716
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	922,137	-	-	-	-	922,137
Samsung scholarship	2,437,232	-	-	-	-	2,437,232
American Legacy Fund	1,051,284	-	-	-	-	1,051,284
National Emergency Fund	-	-	1,524,788	-	-	1,524,788
Others	695,476	-	-	-	-	695,476
	5,788,845	-	1,524,788	-	-	7,313,633
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
Endowment Fund	-	6,524,039	-	-	-	6,524,039
	5,000,000	6,524,039	-	-	-	11,524,039
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,603,719	(1,603,719)	-
Total net assets	66,636,652	6,368,752	1,524,788	2,002,296	(2,402,294)	74,130,194
	$ 134,156,676	$ 8,369,572	$ 1,585,465	$ 2,434,292	$ (4,935,698)	$ 141,610,307

CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2006

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,782,010	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 21,782,010
Direct membership solicitation	4,512,009	-	-	-	-	4,512,009
Member service fees income	1,615,525	-	-	-	-	1,615,525
Affinity income	427,628	-	-	-	-	427,628
Sales of emblem items	11,098,300	-	-	-	-	11,098,300
Advertising	9,655,322	-	-	-	-	9,655,322
Contributions	1,528,831	84,519	571,190	-	-	2,184,540
Label and printing fees	1,840,370	-	-	-	(194,881)	1,645,489
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	7,828,079	(7,525,563)	302,516
Interest and dividends, net of fees	2,440,522	384,761	66,893	47,107	-	2,939,283
Net realized gains	(476,443)	(51,142)	-	-	-	(527,585)
Other	2,288,630	-	-	-	(189,928)	2,098,702
American Legion Endowment - Fund income	380,375	-	-	-	(380,375)	-
Net income in subsidiary	302,197	-	-	-	(302,197)	-
	57,395,276	418,138	638,083	7,875,186	(8,592,944)	57,733,739
Expenses						
Salaries	11,739,820	-	-	-	-	11,739,820
Employee benefits	2,979,361	-	-	-	-	2,979,361
Cost of sales	8,463,041	-	-	-	(79,352)	8,383,689
Cost of sales - HPC	-	-	-	6,211,540	(6,166,375)	45,165
Direct publications	11,714,999	-	-	-	-	11,714,999
Executive and staff travel	799,325	-	-	-	-	799,325
Commission and committee	1,492,729	-	-	-	-	1,492,729
Printing and postage	3,007,256	-	-	-	-	3,007,256
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,386,448	-	-	-	-	1,386,448
Office and other operating	11,094,889	32,960	-	1,119,489	(1,474,717)	10,772,621
Occupancy and usage	2,056,992	-	-	241,960	(189,928)	2,109,024
Special projects and programs	3,264,042	380,375	183,650	-	(380,375)	3,447,692
	57,998,902	413,335	183,650	7,572,989	(8,290,747)	57,878,129
Change in net assets from operations	(603,626)	4,803	454,433	302,197	(302,197)	(144,390)
Net unrealized gain - PUFL annuity	1,066,923	-	-	-	-	1,066,923
Amortization of pension loss	(437,336)	-	-	-	-	(437,336)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	384,542	(16,296)	(32)	-	-	368,214
Change in net assets	410,503	(11,493)	454,401	302,197	(302,197)	853,411
Net assets, beginning of year	66,636,652	6,368,752	1,524,788	2,002,296	(2,402,294)	74,130,194
Net assets, end of year	$ 67,047,155	$ 6,357,259	$ 1,979,189	$ 2,304,493	$ (2,704,491)	$ 74,983,605

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
CONSOLIDATING STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2005

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 22,500,825	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	22,500,825
Direct membership solicitation	2,324,017	-	-	-	-	2,324,017
Member service fees income	1,869,173	-	-	-	-	1,869,173
Affinity income	402,585	-	-	-	-	402,585
Sales of emblem items	9,979,778	-	-	-	-	9,979,778
Advertising	8,481,743	-	-	-	-	8,481,743
Contributions	1,012,388	564,630	2,367,506	-	-	3,944,524
Label and printing fees	1,728,606	-	-	-	-	1,728,606
Sales - HPC	-	-	-	7,175,641	(6,562,649)	612,992
Investment income, net of fees	2,366,424	384,176	45,665	23,988	-	2,820,253
Net realized gains	(445,691)	(33,112)	(40,705)	-	-	(519,508)
Other	2,180,341	-	-	-	-	2,180,341
American Legion Endowment - Fund income	384,929	-	-	-	(384,929)	-
Net income in subsidiary	384,235	-	-	-	(384,235)	-
	53,169,353	915,694	2,372,466	7,199,629	(7,331,813)	56,325,329
Expenses						
Salaries	11,103,087	-	-	-	-	11,103,087
Employee benefits	2,872,249	-	-	-	-	2,872,249
Cost of sales	8,011,033	-	-	-	(146,580)	7,864,453
Cost of sales - HPC	-	-	-	5,556,287	(5,081,631)	474,656
Direct publications	10,635,653	-	-	-	-	10,635,653
Executive and staff travel	752,508	-	-	-	-	752,508
Commission and committee	1,651,630	-	-	-	-	1,651,630
Printing and postage	2,121,720	-	-	-	-	2,121,720
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,384,524	-	-	-	-	1,384,524
Office and other operating	9,725,218	27,497	-	1,018,771	(1,300,639)	9,470,847
Occupancy and usage	2,089,628	-	-	240,335	-	2,329,963
Special projects and programs	2,941,842	384,929	2,117,524	-	(384,929)	5,059,366
	53,289,092	412,426	2,117,524	6,815,393	(6,913,779)	55,720,656
Change in net assets from operations	(119,739)	503,268	254,942	384,236	(418,034)	604,673
Net unrealized gain - PUFL	6,401,784	-	-	-	-	6,401,784
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	(2,004,051)	(215,885)	14,883	-	-	(2,205,053)
Change in net assets	4,277,994	287,383	269,825	384,236	(418,034)	4,801,404
Net assets, beginning of year	62,358,658	6,081,369	1,254,963	1,618,060	(1,984,260)	69,328,790
Net assets, end of year	$ 66,636,652	$ 6,368,752	$ 1,524,788	$ 2,002,296	$ (2,402,294)	$ 74,130,194

Abbreviations

ABC	American Broadcasting Corporation
AEF	Air and Space Expeditionary Forces
ASVET	Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training
BAH	Basic Allowance for Housing
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CBOC	Community Based Outpatient Clinics
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CMN	Children's Miracle Network
COLA	Cost-of-living adjustment
DC	District of Columbia
DECA	Defense Commissary Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIC	Dependents Indemnity Compensation
DMS	Direct Mail Solicitation
DMZ	De-militarized Zone
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DoD	Department of Defense
DOL	Department of Labor
DPMO	Defense POW/MIA Accounting Office. Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office
DVA	Department of Veterans Affairs
DVET	Director of Veterans Employment and Training
DVOP	Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
ESGR	Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
FDA	Federal Drug Administration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
JPAC	Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps
LSEL	Life Support Equipment Lab
LVER	Local Veterans Employment Representative
MBN	Middle East Broadcasting Network
MGIB	Montgomery GI Bill
MIA	Missing in Action
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps

NASA	National Aeronatics and Space Administration
NASCAR	National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	Non-commissioned Officers
NEC	National Executive Committee National Executive Committeeman
NEF	National Emergency Fund
NVTI	National Veterans Training Institute
NWP	Neighborhood Watch Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PERA	Public Expression of Religion Act
PL	Public Law
POW	Prisoner of War
POW/MIA	Prisoner of War/Missing in Action
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
SAR	Sons of the American Revolution
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SBP	Survivor Benefits Plan
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injuries
TVC	The Veterans Corporation
UN	United Nations
USC	United States Code
USCIC	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USERRA	Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VA&R	Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
VAC	Veterans Affairs Commission (Republic of China)
VETS	Veterans Employment and Training Service
VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VHA	Veterans Hospital Administration
VIP	Very Important Person
VIPS	Volunteers in Police Service
VSO	Veterans Service Organizations
WHO	World Health Organization
WO	Warrant Officer
WRAMC	Walter Reed Army Medical Center
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

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