105th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 105–214

PROCEEDINGS OF 79*th* NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

Orlando, Florida

September 2–4, 1997

1997 : 79th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 1997

105th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 105–214

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 79TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 79TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA FROM SEPTEMBER 2, 3 AND 4, 1997 AS WELL AS A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

FEBRUARY 24, 1998.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

---

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

46–666 WASHINGTON : 1998

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, January 30, 1998.

Hon. NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law we herewith transmit for printing as a House document: a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, proceedings of our 79th annual National Convention held in Orlando, Florida from September 2, 3 and 4, 1997 as well as a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the Convention.

Sincerely,

STEVE ROBERTSON,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

Enclosures.

C O N T E N T S

	Page
National Conventions and Officers of The American Legion, 1919–1997	00

TUESDAY SESSION—SEPTEMBER 2, 1997

Call to Order—National Commander Joseph Frank	1
Invocation—National Chaplain Dr. Charles H. Richmond	1
Greetings:	
Honorable Glenda E. Hood, Mayor of Orlando	5
Ray Weaver, Department Commander, Florida	6
Robert Proctor, Pres., American Legion Nat'l. Convention Corporation	6
Presentation—Plaque to City of Salt Lake City, UT by Past Nat'l Commander Ludwig	7
Report of Committee—Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section 1	8
Reading of Convention Call—National Adjutant Robert Spanogle	10
Report of Committee—Legislation and Rules	12
Greetings—Mrs. Phyllis Bachman, National President, American Legion Auxiliary	13
Addresses:	
Honorable Hershel Gober, Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs	14
Honorable Newt Gingrich, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives	19
Honorable Chuck Hagel, United States Senate (NE)	25
Honorable Charles Canady, U.S. House of Representatives (FL)	30
Honorable Michael Bilirakis, U.S. House of Representatives (FL)	34
Presentation—Certificate of Appreciation to Nat'l Chaplain Dr. Richmond	39
National Commander's Convention Report	40
Report to Committees:	
Finance	45
Americanism	46
Awards:	
Frank Belgrano, Jr	48
Ralph T. O'Neil Education	49
William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy	49
Presentation—Representatives of The American Legion Youth Programs	50
Presentation—Ken Wechselberger, Asst. Genl. Sales Manager, Buick Motor Division	53
Message to Convention—George W. Bentley, Society of American Legion Founders	54
Presentation—International Amity Award to Carlos Garduno, Dept. of Mexico	54
Addresses:	
A.W. (Akmal) Khan, Dominion President, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada	57
Joseph Kobolak, Dominion President, Royal Canadian Legion	57
Graham Downing, Chairman, Royal British Legion	58

Page

Addresses—Continued
Lt. General Chao Yu, Vice Chrmn., Veterans Affrs. Commission, Republic of China ... 59
Lt. General Choi Kap-Jin, Vice President, Korean Veterans Association ... 61
Presentation—Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion ... 62

WEDNESDAY SESSION—SEPTEMBER 3, 1997

Call to Order—National Commander Joseph Frank ... 64
Special Report—Major Gen. Patrick Brady (USA Ret.), Chrmn, Citizens Flag Alliance ... 65
Addresses:
Mr. John Schneider, Actor/Singer ... 70
Honorable Orrin Hatch, United States Senate (UT) ... 71
Honorable Max Cleland, United States Senate (GA) ... 73
Honorable Sanford Bishop, U.S. House of Representatives (GA) ... 75
Award—Employer of The Year ... 81
Report of Committee:
Employment and Veterans' Preference and Other Economic Matters ... 83
Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section III ... 95
Presentation—Department Membership Awards ... 96
Addresses:
Vernon Peterson, Department Commander of Utah ... 97
Dr. Bernard Rostker, Special Asst. for Gulf War Illnesses, Dept. of Defense ... 99
Lt. Genl. Claude Kicklighter (Ret.), Deputy Under Secretary of the Army 102
Honorable Buddy McKay, Lieutenant Governor of Florida ... 105
General John Shalikashvili, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff ... 107
Mr. Michael Bennett, Author ... 111
Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught (USAF Retired), President, Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation ... 113
Diane Carlson Evans, Chair & Founder, Vietnam Women's Memorial Project ... 115
Mr. Peter C. Lemon, Author ... 117
Honorable Alexis Herman, Secretary of Labor ... 120
Mr. Bruce Henderson, Seabury & Smith ... 125
Bill Plackett, Account Executive, Kirke-Van Ordel ... 126
Report of Committee—Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation ... 127
Presentation—Distinguished Service Award to Honorable Robert Dole, Former United States Senator (KS) ... 137
Addresses:
Maj. Genl. John Herrling (Ret.), Sec., American Battle Monuments Commission ... 139
Herman Harrington, Member, World War II Advisory Committee ... 142
Report of Committee—Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (cont.) ... 143
Presentation—William F. Lenker Natl. Service Award to Department of Florida ... 148
Report of Committee—Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section II ... 148
Special Report—National Emergency Fund, by Herman Harrington ... 151
Report of Committee—Children and Youth ... 154
Presentation: Garland Murphy Award to Department of Florida ... 155
Report of Committee—Foreign Relations ... 156
Presentation—Natl. Law Enforcement Officer of the Year ... 163
Report of Committee—Constitutional Amendments ... 164

Page

THURSDAY SESSION—SEPTEMBER 4, 1997

Call to Order—National Commander Joseph Frank 169
Address—Honorable William Cohen, Secretary of Defense 170
Presentation—Fourth Estate Award 176
Report of Committee—National Security 177
Presentation—National Vice Commanders to Outgoing National Commander . 191
Election of National Commander 197
Address—National Commander, Joseph J. Frank 205
Election of National Vice Commanders 209
Greetings—Mrs. Barbara Kranig, President, American Legion Auxiliary 213
Benediction—Outgoing National Chaplain, Dr. Charles Richmond 214

APPENDIX

Annual Awards 215

THE AMERICAN LEGION 79TH ANNUAL REPORT

Foreword, National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle 221
Excerpts from the Constitution of The American Legion 222
National Executive Committee 224
Reports of National Vice Commanders:
Robert L. "Bob" Bowen, Virginia 226
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey 229
Wilson R. Timmons, Florida 231
Orland H. Taylor, Hawaii 232
Roger L. Wild, Nebraska 233
Reports:
National Chaplain 234
National Historian 235
National Judge Advocate 237
Administrative Services 249
Library, Museum and Internet Operations 250
Management Information Services 253
Americanism Commission 254
Counter-Subversive Activities Committee 258
Education Committee 259
The American Legion Citizens Flag Alliance 261
Children & Youth Commission 264
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc 273
Convention Commission 00
Economic Commission 00
Employment Committee 00
Veterans Preference Committee 00
Finance Commission 00
Emblem Committee 00
American Legion Life Insurance Committee 00
Foreign Relations Commission 00
Internal Affairs Commission 00
Constitution and By-Laws Committee 00
Resolutions Assignment Committee 00
Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee 00
Membership and Post Activities Committee 00
The Sons of The American Legion 00
Legislative Commission 00
National Security Commission 00

Page

Reports—Continued
National Security Commission—Continued
Aerospace Committee 00
Defense Civil Preparedness Committee 00
Law and Order Committee 00
Merchant Marine Committee 00
Military Affairs Committee 00
Naval Affairs Committee 00
National Security Council 00
Public Relations Commission 00
American Legion Magazine Commission 00
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission 00
Report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary 00
Consolidated Financial Statements with Supplementary Information 00

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS AMERICAN LEGION, 1919 to Date

Note: In the following list it should be noted that the terms of each group of officers expire with that particular convention under which they are listed.

* indicates deceased.

HONORARY COMMANDERS

General John J. Pershing*
Marshall Ferdinand Foch*

PARIS CAUCUS

Paris France, March 15 to 17, 1919
Temporary Chairman: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention.)
Permanent Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1926 National Convention.)
Chairman Pro Tempore: Thomas W. Miller*, Delaware. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1968 National Convention.)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1955 National Convention.)
At the Paris Caucus an Executive Committee was elected to complete arrangements, the chairman and secretary of which were:
Chairman: Milton J. Foreman*, Illinois. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1921 National Convention.)
Secretary: George A. White*, Oregon.

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS

St. Louis, Missouri, May 8 to 10, 1919
Temporary Chairman: Theodore Roosevelt, Jr.*, New York. (Voted title of Past National Commander at 1949 National Convention.)
Permanent Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas.
Vice Chairmen: John J. Sullivan*, Washington; Fred Humphrey*, New Mexico; P.C. Calhoun*, Connecticut. (Voted titles of Past National Vice Commanders at 1933 National Convention.)
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania.
Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1921 National Convention.)

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION

Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 10 to 12, 1919
Chairman: Henry D. Lindsley*, Texas. (Voted title of Past National Commander at the 1919 National Convention.)
Vice Chairman: Bennett C. Clark*, Missouri.
Secretary: Eric Fisher Wood*, Pennsylvania.
Treasurer: Gasper G. Bacon*, Massachusetts.
Chaplain: Thomas H. Wiles*, Colorado.

2nd NATIONAL CONVENTON
Cleveland, Ohio, September 27 to 29, 1920
Commander: Franklin D'Olier*, Pennsylvania.
Vice Commanders: James O'Brien*, California; Allan Tukey*, Nebraska; Joyce S. Lewis*, Minnesota; Alden B. Chambers*, Massachusetts; William Follett*, Oregon.
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Chaplain: Rev. Francis A. Kelly*, New York.

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Missouri, October 31 to November 2, 1921
Commander: Frederick W. Galbraith, Jr. *, (died in office June 9), succeeded by John G. Emery*, Michigan.
Vice Commanders: John G. Emery*, Michigan; Thomas Goldingay*, New Jersey; Claudius G. Pendill*, Wisconsin; James G. Scrugham*, Nevada; E. Jackson Winslett*, Alabama.
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. John W. Inzer*, Tennessee.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

4th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, October 16 to 20, 1922
Commander: Hanford MacNider*, Iowa.
Vice Commanders: H. Nelson Jackson*, Vermont; George L. Berry*, Tennessee; Raymond O. Brackett*, Massachusetts; Charles H. Kendrick*, California: John A. McCormack*, Colorado.
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Earl A. Blackman*, Kansas
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, California, October 16 to 19, 1923
Commander: Alvin M. Owsley*, Texas.
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Barrett*, Wisconsin; Watson B. Miller*, District of Columbia; E. Erle Cocke, Sr.*, Georgia; Robert O. Blood*, New Hampshire; Chiles P. Plummer*, Wyoming.
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. William F. O'Connor*, Ohio.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Paul, Minnesota, September 15 to 19, 1924
Commander: John R. Quinn*, California.
Vice Commanders: Lester Albert*, Idaho; Celora M. Stoddard*, Arizona; William B. Healey*, Pennsylvania; F. Ryan Duffy*, Wisconsin; Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina.
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington, succeeded by Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Ezra Clemens*, Minnesota.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

7th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Nebraska, October 5 to 9, 1925
Commander: James A. Drain*, Washington.
Vice Commanders: Frank H. McFarland*, Kansas; Eugene P. Armstrong*, Connecticut; A.L. Perry*, Panama; Peyton H. Hoge, Jr*, Kentucky; William Stern*, North Dakota.
Adjutant: Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana (resigned), succeeded by James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph M. Lonergan*, Illinois.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

8th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 11 to 15, 1926
Commander: John R. McQuigg*, Ohio.
Vice Commanders: Joseph Y. Cheney*, Florida; Hughes B. Davis*, Oklahoma; Vincent A. Carroll*, Pennsylvania; Raymond B. Littlefield*, Rhode Island; James A. Howell*, Utah.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. William E. Patrick*, California.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

9th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, October 18, 1927
Paris, France, September 19 to 22, 1927
Commander: Howard P. Savage*, Illinois.
Vice Commanders: C. Thomas Busha, Jr. *, Montana; Stafford King*, Minnesota; John G. Sims*, Tennessee; John E. Curtis*, Nebraska: John G. Towne*, Maine.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph L.N. Wolfe*, Pennsylvania.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana.

10th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, October 8 to 11, 1928
Commander: Edward E. Spafford*, New York.
Vice Commanders: John T. Raftis*, Washington; Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas; Paul R. Younts*, North Carolina; Dan Spurlock*, Louisiana; John M. Henry*, Minnesota.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Chaplain: Rev. Gill Robb Wilson*, New Jersey.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois.

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Kentucky, September 30 to October 2, 1929
Commander: Paul V. McNutt*, Indiana.
Vice Commanders: Lawrence E. McGann, Jr. *, Illinois; George W. Malone*, Nevada; Edward L. White*, Connecticut; Miller C. Foster*, South Carolina; Walton D. Hood*, Texas.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Chaplain: Rabbi Lee J. Levinger*, Delaware.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois.

12th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, October 6 to 9, 1930
Commander: O.L. Bodenhamer*, Arkansas.
Vice Commanders: Milt D. Campbell*, Ohio; John J. Dugan*, Delaware; Morton M. David*, Colorado; Frank Schoble, Jr. *, Pennsylvania; Willis M. Brewer*, Michigan.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Chaplain: Rev. George K. Kettell, D.D. *, New York.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois.

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Detroit, Michigan, September 21 to 24, 1931
Commander: Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas.
Vice Commanders: Bert S. Hyland*, Vermont; Roland B. Howell*, Louisiana; Harry B. Henderson, Jr. *, Wyoming; Dr. James A. Duff*, West Virginia; Dr. Neal D. Williams*, Missouri.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph N. Barnett*, Wisconsin.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois, succeeded by Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

14th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Oregon, September 12 to 15, 1932
Commander: Henry L. Stevens, Jr. *, North Carolina.
Vice Commanders: Richard F. Paul*, Massachusetts; Forrest G. Cooper*, Mississippi; Roy L. Cook*, New Mexico; Frank N. Brooks*, Washington; Harold L. Plummer*, Wisconsin.
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa.
Chaplain: Rev. H.A. Darche*, Illinois.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana.
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts.
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana.

15th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, October 2 to 5, 1933
Commander: Louis A. Johnson*, West Virginia.
Vice Commanders: Russell Meadows*, Arizona; Robert D. Flory*, Nebraska; William Easterwood, Jr. *, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Irvin Q. Wood*, Idaho.
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana, succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts (died January 22, 1933), succeeded by Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana.

16th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Florida, October 22 to 25, 1934
Commander: Edward A. Hayes*, Illinois.
Vice Commanders: Charles R. Mabey*, Utah: Robert L. Gordon*, Arkansas; Miguel Munoz*, Puerto Rico; Ed W. Carruth*, Kansas; Charles L. Woolley*, Rhode Island.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. White*, Massachusetts.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Remster A. Bingham*, Indiana.

17th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Missouri, September 23 to 26, 1935
Commander: Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. *, California
Vice Commanders: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts; Harold J. Warner*, Oregon; John K. Kennelly*, North Dakota; Milo J. Warner*, Ohio; Quimby Melton*, Georgia.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. Park W. Huntington*, Delaware.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: James A. Drain*, Washington.
Judge Advocate: James A. Drain*, Washington.

18th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, September 21 to 24, 1936
Commander: Ray Murphy*, Iowa.
Vice Commanders: Raymond F. Gates*, Connecticut; Dr. W.E. Whitlock*, Florida; Oscar W. Worthwine*, Idaho; Dr. F. Whitney Godwin*, Virginia; Louis R. Probst*, Wyoming.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Thomas D. Kennedy*, Missouri.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

19th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, September 20 to 23, 1937
Commander: Harry W. Colmery*, Kansas.
Vice Commanders: Salvatore Capodice*, California; Leo A. Temmey*, South Dakota; Leonard Sisk*, Tennessee; J. Fred Johnson, Jr. *, Alabama; Jack Crowley*, Vermont.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Bryan H. Keathley*, Texas.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

20th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, California, September 19 to 22, 1938
Commander: Daniel J. Doherty*, Massachusetts.
Vice Comanders: Drury M. Phillips*, Texas; Phil Conley*, West Virginia: Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F. Daniel,
Jr. *, South Carolina; James R. Mahaffy*, Hawaii.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

21st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, September 25 to 28, 1939
Commander: Stephen F. Chadwick*, Washington.
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Quinn*, Maine; Charles W. Crush*, Virginia: Earl T. Ross*, Nevada; James T. Crawley*, Mississippi; Henry C. Oakey*, Wisconsin.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome L. Fritsche
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

22nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, September 23 to 26, 1940
Commander: Raymond J. Kelly*, Michigan.
Vice Commanders: Leo E. Ray*, New Hampshire; Charles Q. Kelly*, Arkansas; Matthew J. Murphy*, Illinois; James B . Fitzgerald*, Maryland; H. Elwyn Davis*, Colorado.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Patrick N. McDermott*, Iowa.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

23rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 15 to 18, 1941
Commander: Milo J. Warner*, Ohio.
Vice Commanders: Erwin A. Froyd*, Wyoming; James L. McCrory*, Nebraska; Harold P. Redden*, Massachusetts; Edward R. Stirling*, Pennsylvania; Alcee S. Legendre*, Louisiana.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain:Rev. Brigadier William G. Gilks, Texas.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Missouri, Septemebr 19 to 21, 1942
Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North Dakota.
Vice Commanders: W.C. Sawyer*, Arizona; William DeLacey Allen*, Georgia; Charles E. Booth*, West Virginia; V.M. Armstrong*, Indiana; John F. Sullivan*, Vermont.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas.
Chaplain: Rev. Frederick J. Halloran*, New Jersey.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

25th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Omaha, Nebraska, September 21 to 23, 1943
Commander: Roane Waring*, Tennessee.
Vice Commanders: John T. Batten*, Alabama; Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut; Fred G. Fraser*, District of Columbia; Herman H. Lark*, Missouri; Jefferson Davis Atwood*, New Mexico.
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas (died July 25), succeeded by Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan, Acting Adjutant.
Chaplain: Rev. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*, Idaho.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

26th NATIONAL CONVENTON
Chicago, Illinois, September 18 to 20, 1944
Commander: Warren H. Atherton*, California
Vice Commanders: Martin V. Coffey*, Ohio; E.A. Littlefield*, Utah; Robert "Roy" McMillan*, North Carolina; Edward A. Mulrooney, Delaware; Hector G. Staples*, Maine.
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. John F. McManus*, Kansas.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

27th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, November 18 to 21, 1945
Commander: Edward N. Scheiberling*, New York.
Vice Commanders: Bascom F. Jones*, Tennessee; Frank E. McCaffrey, Rhode Island; Dan M. McDade*, Oregon; Ray S. Pierson*, Kansas; William P. Shadoan*, Kentucky.
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. DeWitt C. Mallory*, Florida.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, California, September 30 to October 4, 1946
Commander: John Stelle *, Illinois.
Vice Commanders: R. Graham Huntington*, New Jersey; Fred LaBoon*, Oklahoma; Sam L. Latimer, Jr. *, South Carolina; H. Dudley Swim*, Idaho; Jeremiah Twomey*, Massachusetts.
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Smith*, Iowa.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: John Ruddick*, Indiana, succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, August 28-31, 1947
Commander: Paul H. Griffith*, Pennsylvania.
Vice Commanders: Joseph W. Brown*, New Hampshire; Martin B. Buckner*, Michigan; Richard C. Cadwallader*, Louisiana; Ernest H. Dervishian*, Virginia; Edward J. Sharkey*, California.
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Arthur L. Rustad*, Minnesota.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Florida, October 18 to 20, 1948
Commander: James F. O'Neill*, New Hampshire.
Vice Commanders: L.W. Barns*, South Dakota; Albert A. Cree*, Vermont; Richard B. Ott*, Washington; Myron R. Renick, West Virginia; Joe W. White*, Georgia.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank L. Harrington*, Montana.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

31st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 29 to September 1, 1949
Commander: S. Perry Brown*, Texas.
Vice Commanders: James Lane, Alabama; Leonard W. Moody*, Arkansas; James Annin*, Montana; Walter E. Alessandroni*, Pennsylvania; Edward J. Kelly*, Connecticut.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Thomas Grice*, California.
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

32nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, California, October 9 to 12, 1950
Commander: George N. Craig*, Indiana.
Vice Commadners: Milton G. Boock*, Minnesota; David H. Fleischer*, Missouri; Frank E. Lowe*, Maine; J.E. Martie*, Nevada,: Dr. D.R. Perry*, North Carolina.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward J. Carney*, O.S.A., Massachusetts.
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

33rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Florida, October 15 to 18, 1951
Commander: Erle Cocke, Jr., Georgia.
Vice Commanders: Joe Adams*, Florida; Herbert J. Jacobi*, District of Columbia; Felix Pogliano*, Colorado; Lewis K. Gough*, California; Fred C. Bramlage*, Kansas.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rabbi David Lefkowitz, Louisiana.
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, August 25 to 18, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia.
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*, Massachusetts; Thomas E. Paradine*, New York; Oscar B. Rohlff*, Wyoming; Audley H. Ward*, South Carolina.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Olaf G. Birkeland*, Wisconsin.
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Missouri, August 31 to Septemebr 2, 1953
Commander: Lewis K. Gough*, California.
Vice Commanders: William R. Bourdon*, Arizona; Lyon W. Brandon*, Mississippi; Wilbur C. Daniel*, Virginia; Harry V. Groome*, New Jersey; J. Addington Wagner, Michigan.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John E. Duff*, Ohio.
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

36th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., August 30 to September 2, 1954
Commander: Arthur J. Connell*, Connecticut.
Vice Commanders: John A. High*, New Hampshire; Dr. Deward H. Reed*, New Mexico; Truman C. Wold, North Dakota; Thomas W. Bird*, North Carolina, Herbert M. Walker*, Pennsylvania.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Dr. Tom B. Clark*, Oklahoma.
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

37th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Florida, October 10 to 13, 1955
Commander: Seaborn P. Collins*, New Mexico.
Vice Commanders: Leonard L. Jackson*, Lousiana; Patrick H. Mangan, Jr.*, Vermont; Howard C. Kingdom*, Ohio; Dr. Carl J. Rees*, Delaware; Robert L. Shelby*, Utah.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska.
Chaplain: Rev. Albert J. Hoffman*, Iowa.
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

38th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Los Angeles, California, September 3 to 6, 1956
Commander: J. Addington Wagner, Michigan.
Vice Commanders; Guy Stone*, Georgia; John H. Van Horn*, Alaska; L. Everett Page*, Texas; Gilman H. Stordock*, Wisconsin; James V. Day*, Maine (resigned Jan. 1, 1956), succeeded by William J. Holliman*, District of Columbia.
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska (resigned), succeeded by E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph MacCarroll*, New Jersey.
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocatc: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 16 to 19, 1957
Commander: W.C. "Dan" Daniel*, Virginia.
Vice Commanders: Gaylor M. Brown*, Iowa; George T. Lewis, Jr.*, Tennessee; Carl R. Moser*, Oregon; John F. Stay, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Bernard W. Gerdon, Indiana.
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

40th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, September 1 to 4, 1958
Commander: John S. Gleason, Jr. *, Illinois.
Vice commanders: William A. Cottrell*, Hawaii; Ramon R. Guas*, Puerto Rico; Harry W. Miller*, West Virginia; Lee A. Lemos*, Rhode Island; Isadore Levine*, Indiana.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Feltham S. James*, South Carolina.
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey.
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 24-27, 1959
Commander: Preston J. Moore, Oklahoma.
Vice Commanders: C.D. DeLoach, District of Columbia; John W. Collins, Pennsylvania; James B. Kerrigan*, Missouri; Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana; James C. Bangs*, Idaho.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Twiss*, Massachusetts.
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana.

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, October 15 to 20, 1960
Commander: Martin B. McKneally*, New York.
Vice Commanders: William A. Brennan, Jr., Indiana; A. Layman Harman*, South Carolina: Nate V. Keller*, Minnesota; Irven Frank Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed September 14, 1960, to fill vacancy created July 25 by the death of Nate V. Keller); Willard W. Brandt, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal*, California; Corydon T. Hill*, California (appointed May 4, 1960, to fill vacancy created January 27 by the death of Charles McGonegal).
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn, D.H.L., Texas.
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana, succeeded by Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colorado, September 9 to 14, 1961
Commander: William R. Burke, California.
Vice Commanders: George K. Walker, Massachusetts; James M. Wagonseller, Ohio; Vincent J. Maxheim*, Iowa; Dr. Harry Kretzler*, Washington; R.C. Godwin*, North Carolina.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*, Tennessee.
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Lad Vegas, Nevada, October 5 to 11, 1962
Commander: Charles L. Bacon*, Missouri.
Vice Commanders: Walter W. Barnard*, Montana; Edward T. Hoak*, Pennsylvania; Wilson H. Morrison, Michigan; J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma; Edward Wysocki, New Jersey.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Robert G. Keating*, Connecticut.
Historian: Earl David Young*, Colorado.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, September 6 to 12, 1963
Commander: James E. Powers*, Georgia.
Vice Commanders: Harold D. Beaton*, District of Columbia; James W. Doon*, New Hampshire; Claude A. Hamilton*, South Dakota; Paschal C. Reese*, Florida; Victor F. Whittlesea*, Nevada.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rabbi Albert M. Shulman, Indiana.
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Dallas, Texas, September 22 to 24, 1964
Commander: Daniel F. Foley, Minnesota.
Vice Commanders: Earl D. Franklin, Jr., Colorado; Emilio S. Iglesias*, Vermont; Garland D. Murphy, Jr. *, M.D., Arkansas; George Emory Sipple*, Wisconsin; Harry Wright*, Mexico.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. John J. Howard*, Virginia.
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Oregon, August 24 to 26, 1965
Commander: Donald E. Johnson, Iowa.
Vice Commanders: David Aronberg*, Kentucky; Herbert D. Black*, South Carolina; Ward W. Husted*, Wyoming; Edward H. Lynch, Jr*, Connecticut; Joseph Paul*, Michigan.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Morris N. Dummet*, Louisiana.
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., August 30 to Septemebr 1, 1966
Commander: L. Eldon James*, Virginia.
Vice Commanders: Dr. A.R. Choppin*, Louisiana; William E. Galbraith, Nebraska; Robert O. Phillips*, Philippines; William J. Rogers, Maine; Soleng Tom, Arizona.
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming.
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson, New York.
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, August 29 to 21, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota.
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich, Texas; Harry V. Klein, Jr.*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts; James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico.
Adjutant: Earnest N. Schmit, North Dakota.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York.
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

50th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, September 6 to 12, 1968
Commander: William E. Galbraith, Nebraska.
Vice Commanders: Hugh C. Nolen, Oklahoma; Louis R.J. Malo, Rhode Island; Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edward L. Peterson, Utah; Marvin W. Roth, Wisconsin.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward P. Nolan*, Pennsylvania.
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlanta, Georgia, August 22 to 28, 1969
Commander: William C. Doyle*, New Jersey.
Vice Commanders: C. Russell Huber*, Alaska; John A. Jones*, West Virginia; Howard E. Lohman*, Minnesota; Lewis E. McCray*, Alabama; Maurice Parisien*, Maine.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. C.J. Olander*, Mississippi.
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Oregon, August 28 to September 3, 1970
Commander: J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma.
Vice Commanders: Kent. T. Lundgren*, Michigan; Roland D. Marble, Mississippi; Raymond F. Mudge*, New Hampshire; Earl R. Norgard*, Oregon; Gilberto M. Font*, Puerto Rico.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. William D. Curtis, Minnesota.
Historian: John A. May*, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, August 27 to September 2, 1971
Commander: Alfred P. Chamie*, California.
Vice Commadners: Claude Carpenter, Arkansas; Max Hanson*, Idaho; *Robert E.L. Eaton*; Maryland; Gabriel T. Olga*, Massachusetts; John E. Gilbert, Pennsylvania.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Milton B. Faust*, North Carolina.
Historian: Howard M. Swinney*, Kentucky.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, August 22 to 24, 1972
Commander: John H. Geiger, Illinois.
Vice Commanders: Howard W. Fann, Kentucky; Arthur M. MacCarthy*, Florida; Roy Sweet, Vermont; Harry G. Wiles, Kansas; Wallace C.S. Young, Hawaii.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Paul J. Schwaab, Nebraska
Historian: G. Greer McCallister*, Ohio.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, August 21 to 23, 1973
Commander: Joe L. Matthews, Texas.
Vice Commanders: Tim T. Craig*, North Carolina; Sam Gray*, California; Donald L. Gruenbaum, Ohio; Albert J. Moeller*, New Jersey; Raymond J. Novak, South Dakota.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. L.P. Fitzpatrick*, Iowa.
Historian: Mrs. Loretta O. Phillips*, California.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, August 20 to 22, 1974
Commander: Robert E.L. Eaton*, Maryland.
Vice Commanders: John N. Roberto, Connecticut; Frank C. Brooks*, Washington; Gilbert E. Sheeks, Indiana; Merrick W. Swords Jr. *, Louisiana; N.E. Brown*, South Carolina.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Jerome D. Fortenberry, Missouri.
Historian: R. Robert Filter*, Wisconsin.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 19 to 21, 1975
Commander: James M. Wagonseller, Ohio.
Vice Commanders: Boyd H. Clemens, North Dakota; Jack W. Flynt, Texas; Jay E. Harville, Tennessee; Donald H. Jeffery, Pennsylvania; William A. Lindsay, Montana.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Harvey T. Goodling*, Oregon.
Historian: Nolie C. Deas, Sr., Florida.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Washington, August 24 to 26, 1976
Commander: Harry G. Wiles, Kansas.
Vice Commanders: John W. Adams, Jr., Kentucky; Fred W. Anderson, Jr., Nevada; Leo F. Malloy, Massachusetts; Thomas W. Miller, Arkansas; James F. Walker*, Minnesota.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Claude E. Smithmier, Georgia.
Historian: Mrs. Dorothy Grimes, Colorado.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colorado, August 23 to 25, 1977
Commander: William J. Rogers, Maine.
Vice Commanders: Lloyd J. Berken*, Wisconsin; Thomas B. Coll, District of Columbia; Robert B. Grauberger*, Colorado; Frank A. Kelly, Georgia; Wilbur Walker, Virginia.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. James C. Tuxbury, North Dakota.
Historian: Alton H. Carpenter, New York.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, August 22 to 24, 1978
Commander: Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana.
Vice Commanders: Eugene V. Lindquist, Minnesota; Roger A. Munson, Ohio; John J. O'Connell*, Rhode Island; Chester Phillips, West Virginia; Irving B. Selmer*, Wyoming.
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana, succeeded by Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Walter D. Power, Maryland.
Historian: Arnold J. Stockstad*, North Dakota.
Treasurer: Francis Polen*, Indiana, succeeded by Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, August 21 to 23, 1979
Commander: John M. Carey, Michigan.
Vice Commanders: L. Max Connoly*, Arizona; Alvin F. Grauerholz, Kansas; Joseph F. Ward, New Jersey; John H. Wienand, Jr.*, Alabama; Nathan M. Wolfe, South Carolina.
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota.
Chaplain: R. Drew Wolcott*, Mexico.
Historian: Harry H. Kretzler, M.D. *, Washington.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

62nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, August 19 to 21, 1980
Commander: Frank I. Hamilton, Indiana.
Vice Commanders: G.Y. Fails*, New Mexico; Keith A. Kreul, Wisconsin; Bob Legan, Arkansas; Max E. Robinson, North Carolina; Laurence R. Spaulding*, New Hampshire.
Adjutant: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota.
Chaplain: Rev. Karl E. Kniseley, California.
Historian: Phillip Haddad, Oklahoma.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

63rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, September 1 to 3, 1981
Commander: Michael J. Kogutek, New York.
Vice Commanders: Ralph M. Godwin*, Mississippi; Keith H. Gwilliam, Utah; Matthew W. Jamieson*, Michigan; Robert W. Lowry, Nebraska; Dr. Almo J. Sebastianelli, Pennsylvania.
Adjutant:Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota, succeeded by Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. George S. Macres*, Minnesota.
Historian: Neal S. Sundeen, Arizona.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

64th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, August 24-26, 1982
Commander: Jack W. Flynt, Texas.
Vice Commanders: Frank T. Markovich*, Missouri; Dan C. McDonough*, Alaska; Percy C. Miller, Tennessee; Melvin 'Doc' Simon, Vermont; David A. Wade*, Maryland.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. George R.M. Rumney, Virginia.
Historian: Bernard J. Chisholm*, Minnesota.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

65th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Washington, August 23 to 25, 1983
Commander: Al Keller, Jr., Illinois.
Vice Commanders: Robert C. Gabrielson, South Dakota; Margaret M. Malone, New Jersey; H. Melvin Napier, Indiana; Jack C. Plato*, Oregon; Lee O. Walker*, Oklahoma.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John D. Kempf*, Ohio.
Historian: James W. Conway, Massachusetts.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York.

66th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, September 3 to 5, 1984
Commander: Keith Kreul, Wisconsin.
Vice Commanders: J. Leslie Brown, Jr., Kentucky; Roberto Gonzalez, Puerto Rico; Charles R. Green*, Ohio; Robert W. Groccia, Massachusetts, John N. Lockhart*, Hawaii.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. James Clay McKee, Utah.
Historian: Herberta T. Stark*, New Hampshire.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York, succeeded by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, August 26-28, 1985
Commander: Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland.
Vice Commadners: Robert S. Turner, Georgia; Harold E. Collett*, Idaho; Ronald D. Birk, Kansas; Stewart R. Kunde*, Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*, Pennsylvania.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr., New York.
Historian: Roy R. Mahoney, Florida.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cincinnati, Ohio, September 2 to 4, 1986
Commander: Dale L. Renaud*, Iowa.
Vice Commanders: Bernard Black, South Carolina; Norman Conn*, California; Vito M. DeFilipp, Maine; Miles S. Epling, West Virginia, H.F. Gierke, North Dakota.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Dr. Gordon L. Patterson, Nebraska.
Historian: Ethel M. Matuschka, Wisconsin.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

69th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, August 25 to 27, 1987
Commander: James P. Dean, Mississippi.
Vice Commanders: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana; Doris R. Gross, Washington; Donald E. Neil, Delaware; Allen L. Titus, Indiana; Ervin F. Van Dyke, Wisconsin.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Arthur J. Jakobiak, New Mexico.
Historian: J. Ruffin Apperson, Virginia.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

70th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Kentucky, September 6 to 8, 1988
Commander: John P. 'Jake' Comer, Massachusetts.
Vice Commanders: Neale V. Cabral*, Connecticut; Joe Frank, Jr., Missouri; W.P. 'Bill' Peterson, Montana; Paul B. Phifer, Jr., Virginia; Leon Reed, Arkansas.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Jerry Salveson, Minnesota.
Historian: Edward F. Brennan*, Illinois
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

71st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Baltimore, Maryland, September 5 to 7, 1989
Commander: H.F. 'Sparky' Gierke, North Dakota.
Vice Commanders: Thomas L. Gabel, Ohio; Harvey Holcomb, Texas: Archie Pozzi, Jr., Nevada; Ray G. Smith, Sr., North Carolina: John P. Tipping, New York.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. F. Robert Davidson, Michigan.
Historian: Richard A. Stevens, Louisiana.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

72nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Indiana, August 28 to 30, 1990
Commander: Miles S. Epling, West Virginia.
Vice Commanders: Vincent E. Blank, Iowa; Joseph E. Caoette, New Hampshire; Andrew J. Cooper, Alabama; Gerald Goetzinger, South Dakota; Vinton R. Guy, Colorado.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Lynn S. Kearsley, Idaho.
Historian: C. Carl Pilgrim, South Carolina.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

73rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Phoenix, Arizona, September 3 to 5, 1991
Commander: Robert S. Turner, Georgia.
Vice Commanders: Lewis Adams, Nebraska; James T. Anderson, Wyoming; Fred M. Ingellis, Mississippi; Harry F. McDowell, Florida; George E. Sampson, New Jersey.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Michas M. Ohnstad, Minnesota.
Historian: Harold Matthew Branton, Texas.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

74th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, August 25 to 27, 1992
Commander: Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania.
Vice Commanders: James 'Jim' G. Brouillette, Vermont; Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan; Ronald C. Murphy, Arizona; Lawrence F. Roy, Oklahoma; Lee R. Stolfus, Kansas.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Donal M. 'Jack' Squires, West Virginia.
Historian: Bettie M. Canon, Montana.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr, Maryland.

75th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, September 7 to 9, 1993
Commander: Roger A. Munson, Ohio.
Vice Commanders: Joseph V. Adams, Pennsylvania; Paul Andrejewski, Minnesota; Robert E. David, South Carolina; John Wm. 'Bill' Murphy, Arkansas; Louis A. 'Tony' Santillanes, New Mexico.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. James R. Wagner, Mississippi.
Historian: Delfo Barabani, Massachussetts.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

76th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 6 to 8, 1994
Commander: Bruce Thiesen, California.
Vice Commanders: Juan H. Cintron, Puerto Rico; Douglas A. Mason*, Utah; John J. Mulkern, Massachussetts; K.W. Ohl, Indiana; Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Msgr. Raymond J. Kozlowski*, New York.
Historian: Marjorie T. Simpson, Georgia.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Indiana, September 4 to 6, 1995
Commander: William M. Detweiler, Louisiana.
Vice Commanders: Joseph T. Craig, Alaska; Silas M. Noel, Kentucky; Calvin E. Patton, Maryland; H. Gordon Burleigh, New York; Vernon K. Grosenick, Wisconsin.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Rev. Roy L. Pryor, Sr., South Carolina.
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey (died in office October 7)*, succeeded by Carl S. Wipperman, Washington.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, September 3 to 6, 1996
Commander: Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota.
Vice Commanders: Keith Baker, Iowa; William L. Ciciotte, Maine; Robert D. Scott, Oregon; C. Darrel Haskell, South Dakota; Ralph J. Reel, Tennesee.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds, Texas.
Historian: R. Paul Tenney, Vermont.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Florida, September 2 to 4, 1997
Commander: Joseph J. Frank, Misouri.
Vice Commanders: Wilson R. Timmons, Florida; Orland H. Taylor, Hawaii; Roger L. Wild, Nebraska; Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey; Robert L. Bowen, Virginia.
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan.
Chaplain: Charles H. Richmond, Oklahoma.
Historian: Barbara Stuvengen, Wisconsin.
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland.

PROCEEDINGS

of the

79TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

of

THE AMERICAN LEGION

Tuesday, September 2, 1997

...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 79th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted:

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The 79th National Convention will come to order. Ladies and Gentlemen, please rise as the Speedway Color Guard of The American Legion Post 500 from Speedway, Indiana, presents the Colors, and remain standing, for the singing of the National Anthem by Mary Kay Grantham. Color Guard, advance the Colors.

...Speedway Color Guard of American Legion Post 500 in Speedway, Indiana, presented the Colors, following which the Delegates sang the National Anthem.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I might add, that was my daughter that sang the National Anthem.

For the invocation, I call on our National Chaplain, Reverend Charles H. Richmond, of American Legion Post 111 in Edmond, Oklahoma.

Invocation
Dr. Charles H. Richmond (OK)
National Chaplain

At the beginning of this great Convention, it is only fitting and proper that we pause to affirm our faith in the Creator of this earth and universe and all that dwell therein. You created us with a living soul in the image of God, with a desire to be of service to You and our fellow man. We pray that we may feel Your presence and accept Your guidance.

Under the banner of Service to God and Country, it has been our privilege to serve our great nation in the time of war and peace. We have felt Your protection and guiding hand. Our comrades before us have formed a tradition, and the organization of The American Legion continues that service. We need to evaluate the past and plan the future. From our comradeship we gain strength, knowledge and inspiration.

May our example lead the citizens of our great country to greater patriotism and faith in Almighty God. May our thoughts and actions this day, and in the future, be such that we may truly pray, God bless America. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please remain uncovered for this special remembrance.

Just after the Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee, The American Legion lost a compassionate Past National Commander. L. Eldon James of Virginia was a World War II Navy veteran and a 50-year member of Hampton Roads Post 31 in Virginia.

He was National Commander in 1965-1966. I ask you to pause for a moment of silent prayer of thanks for the service of L. Eldon James on behalf of America's veterans.

...A moment of silence was observed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I now call on Chaplain Charles Richmond for the Post Everlasting Ceremony and lighting of the peace candle.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN RICHMOND: Please light the Peace Candle.

...At this time National Sergeant-at-Arms Robert Horenkamp of Missouri lighted the Peace Candle.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN RICHMOND: Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: At the 77th National Convention in Indianapolis, delegates passed Resolution 154. That resolution called for The American Legion to urge churches to ring bells at 9:04 a.m., on the 2nd of September in a solemn tribute to the end of World War II. This morning we pause to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the Great Wars as we commemorate the end of World War II. And we salute the sixteen million five hundred thirty-five thousand American men and women who sacrificed for freedom in that war.

...At this time the Delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Legionnaires, join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our great American Legion was founded, by reciting with me the preamble to The American Legion Constitution.

...At this time the delegates recited the preamble to The American Legion Constitution.

Opening Ceremony

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: In the next three days you will be listening to many distinguished Legionnaires who will address The American Legion Convention. This morning I want to introduce to you a young man who is one of the most important individuals to come to this Convention. Please welcome to Orlando, Florida, a brand new recruit and potential Legionnaire, Luke McConnell.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: Thank you for inviting me to join you this morning in Orlando. I'm honored to be your first guest. I've been very impressed with the pageantry of the opening moments. But I'm a little ashamed to admit that I don't really understand what The American Legion is all about.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Well, Luke, pull up a chair and let me help you understand. How old are you?

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: Eighteen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Fresh out of high school? Well, times and technology have changed since I was your age, people and values haven't, and neither has The American Legion. The ideals of The American Legion can be summed up in two words:

We care. We care for each other, Luke. We care for veterans and their families. We care for our communities and for our country.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: We care? Why? What makes The American Legion different than other social organizations?

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Well, The American Legion began when World War I veterans were getting ready to come home from the bloody battlefields of Europe. Those guys were committed to fulfilling promises they had made to their buddies in the thick of battle.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: I remember once a high school classmate did a report on the war, and he wrote about Americans fighting in the trenches, and he found out something about mustard gas. And, I guess they had to crawl over barbed wire to continue fighting.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That's right. And then in all that misery, they promised each other that if one of them died, the other would see to it that his buddy's wife and children would be taken care of. They promised to see the moms and the dads when they got home. And they promised to take care of others on their return.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: Well, that explains my grandfather talking about how many of his friends' fathers never returned from the war. And my dad once in a while talks about his buddies that didn't come back from Vietnam.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: 4.7 million Americans went off to fight in World War I, the war to end all wars. Another 204,000 came home wounded.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: The only war I've ever seen was the Gulf War. I guess they were pretty lucky with that one.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: In some respects we were, but today many Persian Gulf veterans have health problems, and no one seems to be able to find the causes. It's obviously a result of their service.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: Yeah, I have heard something about that. But I thought doctors were saying it's just because of stress.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Remember, it doesn't matter whether they served in World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, Lebanon or the Persian Gulf, General Sherman was right, "War is hell." There are always problems for some people when they return home.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: I have read something about Agent Orange. Some of the kids at my school have had health problems that their parents thought were caused by Agent Orange, but they couldn't prove it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That's been a constant problem for all veterans and their families. They must prove that their military service is the cause. That's mighty hard to do, but The American Legion helps them through the process. We are true to our comrades. So, you do understand a little of what The American Legion means when we say we care.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: Yeah, I guess I do. It's kind of like a community. Everyone comes together to help each other out.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That's right. The history of The American Legion is marked by large and small contributions to our hometowns and to our country.

In your military life you will experience new emotions. You will stand in formation and salute 'Old Glory' as it's raised in the morning and lowered each evening. You will rely on other members of your team to accomplish goals. And you will learn more about the contributions of veterans throughout history. Most of all, you will make friends you will trust with your life.

Back in 1922, long before I was even born, a song was written that captured the powerful memories for the veterans of World War I. It made them recall the lonely nights in the trenches. The battles when you and your friend faced death.

...At this time the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I don't want you to get the impression that The American Legion accomplishes all of these great things because of the organization. No, it's individuals, men and woman who care, who make The American Legion. It's individuals who make the programs work. It's individuals working as a team who lead to the success of The American Legion.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: You know, I think I'm getting a better handle on what you're all about.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I would like you to meet some of those people who have distinguished themselves as American Legion leaders this year. First, the men and women who successfully motivated Legionnaires in their state to meet membership goals. I would like all the Department Commanders who achieved 100 percent or higher to stand and be recognized.

Next, I would like to honor The American Legion Recruiter of the Year. Joe Chilelli signed up 1,008 new members. These new members will play a role in continuing the caring service of The American Legion in the early days of the 21st Century. Where are you, Joe?

The runner-up for this award also deserves to be recognized at this time. Give a round of applause to a man who added 526 new members, from Rhode Island, Maurice 'Moe' Petit.

There is also a special group of Legionnaires in this audience this morning. They are members of The American Legion Gold Brigade. Each of them signed up at least 50 new members, and their success illustrates the truth of the founding principles of The American Legion in the modern era.

Where are the Gold Brigaders?

Congratulations.

Luke, we have talked about the foundation of The American Legion in the days following the end of World War I. The military men and women of that time established an organization that spans generations.

RECRUIT MCCONNELL: So, I guess everyone here this morning shares a common bond. I see how it has grown from their military service, and it's clear to me that America is better because of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That's right. I believe you're seeing how these words of our preamble point directly to our commitment and our message of hope to America. We care about each other. I hope you never experience the hell of war, but I know you will experience the bond that comes from serving in uniform. And as a new military man, you are eligible for membership in The American Legion right now. What do you say? Will you join us.

...At this time the delegation was entertained by a medley of service songs.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Luke, as you begin your military service to America, your service will not be forgotten. There are more than 5,000 people in this room who represent thousands of other Legionnaires. They are true believers in The American Legion. They are the reason The American Legion is important today, and will be important tomorrow.

Would everyone please join me in singing God Bless the USA?

...At this time the delegation sang God Bless the USA.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: God bless you my friend as you serve our great country. We're proud to have you as a Legionnaire. By joining, you've shown that you too care. During your travels, ask other men and women in uniform to join our ranks. Your generation has an important role to play in The American Legion's future as we continue to serve God and country in the 21st century. Congratulations.

...At this time, the youth choir sang God Bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The leadership of our next speaker has helped to make Orlando a safe and beautiful and economically robust city.

She is a native of Orlando, serving in her second four-year term as mayor of this lovely city. *American City and County Magazine* named her as its Municipal Leader of the Year in 1992. This graduate of Rollins College and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government Executive Program, has backed up her billing with her performance. Please give a warm welcome to The Honorable Glenda Hood.

The Honorable Glenda E. Hood
Mayor of the City of Orlando

After sitting here and listening to those young people and feeling the emotion build inside of me and watching the expression on your faces, all I can say to each and every one of you is "thank you". Thank you for what you have given of yourselves. Thank you for what you have given to this country and to your communities on a daily basis. You, indeed, do care about each other, and especially about our young people, and that is so very important.

I want to give you all an official welcome from all the citizens of the City of Orlando. I know our Florida Delegation is over here somewhere, and I welcome all of you as well as, of course, my colleagues. We are so very pleased that you have selected us for your 79th Convention of The American Legion. And I think that not only will you have a very productive three days of your convention, but I hope you have some time, and probably some of you have already had an opportunity, to get out and enjoy many of the amenities that we have to offer.

We of course are the tourist destination of the world, but we are more than that. We are a thriving business community, but we are more than that. We are made up of neighborhoods of caring individuals. I hope as you experience our community, our city, you will realize that the people are really what make the difference, just as you do in your community. So please get to know our people and the contributions that they are making. They're your friends and are pleased that you are here. They thank you as well for everything that you do.

I have to share with you how The American Legion has touched my life over the years in so many ways and not just today as mayor of the city. I often called on your state headquarters here, in many different areas, to be a partner with me in the city. Also when I look back on my school years, I had opportunities to participate in different programs with The American Legion. I can remember that my first opportunity was in elementary school when I participated in an essay contest, and actually won that contest talking about citizenship. I went back over the weekend and reviewed that essay.

I find it interesting thinking about my elementary school years and what I learned from adults, seeing the role models that they were. Then I write an essay on citizenship. And today, as Mayor of the City of Orlando, I still feel exactly the same way. The value of giving back to my community. The responsibility and obligation that we all have in doing that, because we live in the greatest country in the world.

And we need to remember that, and we all need to continue to care about one another.

So thank you for touching me at a very young age. Thank you for continuing to have a meaningful influence on me as I take on the leadership responsibilities that I do as mayor of the City of Orlando. But most of all, thank you for who you are; what you represent; what you have given, and for caring about each other, and especially caring about our young people.

Welcome to Orlando.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Each year it takes plenty of hard work by countless volunteers to stage an American Legion National Convention.

Our next guest put in long hours helping pull all the volunteers together in preparation for today.

He has served The American Legion very well. Please welcome the immediate Past Florida Department Commander from American Legion Post No. 139 in Tampa, Florida, Ray Weaver.

Ray Weaver (FL)
1996-97 Department Commander of Florida

On behalf of the Legionnaires of the Department of Florida, it is my honor and my privilege to extend a wonderful sunshine welcome to you here in Orlando, Florida, for the 79th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. The Florida Convention Corporation, its chairman and numerous volunteers have worked hard to provide you with a successful convention, and a fantastic stay in Orlando, Florida. We hope you have been able to take advantage of the many activities here in the Orlando area, as the Florida Corporation and its Florida Legionnaires stand ready to assist you with any information or assistance you may desire concerning the availability of the attractions here. From the more than 119,000 Legionnaires in the Department of Florida, we welcome you to have a memorable and enjoyable time at this year's National Convention.

Commander Frank, I want to share a personal item with you this morning and to you Legionnaires. Yesterday afternoon I became a grandfather for the first time. I got to go back to the hospital, held my grandson, and asked if he wanted to become an SAL. He said, "Yes, sir, I do."

Have a pleasant and successful convention, and welcome to the great state of Florida.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: To host an American Legion National Convention is a great honor. It is also the focal point of years of hard work by dedicated volunteers in the host city and state. This morning it is indeed a pleasure to gather in Orlando, Florida. It is also a pleasure to present our next guest speaker who has worked many hours to see that this convention was a success. A Vietnam veteran of the United States Army, he has served The American Legion for 29 years. Welcome the Chairman of the Florida Convention Corporation and Alternate NECman, Robert 'Bob' Proctor.

Robert J. Proctor, President
The American Legion National Convention
Corporation of Florida, Inc.

On behalf of the Florida Convention Corporation, we are honored to be your host. If there's anything I, or a member of my staff can do to make your stay more comfortable, please feel free to call upon us. Also at this time I would like to bring you greetings from my National Vice Commander, Wilson Timmons, who at this time is ill and could not be at this

Convention. He passes his best to you people, and he's sorry he couldn't be here with you. Wilson is coming along very well.

Just 20 miles north of here is Post 53, Sanford, the home of The American Legion Baseball champions. Let's give them a nice round of applause.

I would ask all the delegation from Florida to please stand to be recognized, because without their help and dedication this convention would not be possible. I would also like to thank Jeff Olson, the National Convention Commission Chairman and his commission, for giving us the opportunity to serve you for this convention. And also a special thank you to National Convention Director Dick Holmes, who has kept me abreast over the past 18 months of the activities related to this convention.

Mr. Commander, on a personal note, it's been an honor for me to serve you, as our friendship goes back many years. I would like to wish you a very successful convention and you have been a shining star this year for this organization. At this time we have a little gift that we would like to present you that you may take home that you will always remember us. Enjoy your stay, and once again, thanks for being here.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: You can be proud of your city, your state, and the work you have done to host this 79th National Convention of The American Legion. This is a great convention center. The hospitality of everyone has made the days before the convention very enjoyable. Please tell all of the Florida Legion family volunteers thank you on behalf of the delegates and guests to this convention for a job well done.

By the way, congratulations to The American Legion Baseball team, Sanford Post 53, Florida. They won The American Legion World Series by defeating Medford, Oregon, eleven to eight in the final game. It looks like this is a winning year for Florida all the way around.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The next order of business is to recognize Salt Lake City for hosting the 78th National Convention of The American Legion. And naturally I hold a special place in my heart for Salt Lake City, the city where the delegates elected me to serve as National Commander.

To help with this order of business, I would like to call on immediate Past National Commander, Daniel Ludwig of Minnesota to make this presentation?

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation
Daniel Ludwig (MN)
Past National Commander

As the Commander of the 78th Annual National Convention in Salt Lake City, it is my distinct privilege and pleasure this morning to recognize the efforts, the tremendous efforts of that city and that department. From Mayor Deedee Corradini, to Senator Orrin Hatch, one of our great friends on the flag amendment, to the wonderful memorial service at the Mormon Tabernacle, with that tremendous choir providing that magnificent music and that inspiring message that touched each and every one of us by President Gordon Hinckley, to the warmth of the people of Utah, and certainly to you, Bill, President of the Utah National Convention Corporation and all the Legion family that worked so diligently with you to welcome us and to give us a great convention experience. We are most grateful.

And now it is my privilege to present this plaque to the City of Salt Lake City, and it reads:

In appreciation of the hospitality of the City of Salt Lake City in commemorating the 78th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, 1996.

It is attested to by Robert W. Spanogle, National Adjutant, William E. Christoffersen, President of The American Legion Convention Corporation of Utah, and by myself as National Commander.

Bill, I know you will present this to the City of Salt Lake with our best wishes and our appreciation for giving us a grand convention experience.

WILLIAM E. CHRISTOFFERSEN: On behalf of the Mayor and all of the citizens of the great city of Salt Lake City, we thank you and The American Legion for coming to our city with such a wonderful convention. But I would be remiss if I do not thank every Legionnaire and Auxiliary member for helping to make that convention the success that we feel that it was. The Mayor has assured me that this plaque will be displayed where it can be seen by everyone. We feel that the American Legion family is part of us in as much as you have visited our city twice. We appreciate that. You are always welcome. Come back whenever you would like and we'll do our darndest to make another great National Convention for you all.

And on behalf of the State of Utah, come and see us for the 2002 World-wide Winter Olympics. We are already for that also.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: For 79 years The American Legion has diligently continued to serve America, and during those 79 years, young American men and women in uniform continued to defend our freedom, whenever and wherever duty called.

Something else has remained constant across the generations, a commitment, a common bond, a dedication to each other.

...At this time the delegation viewed a video.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Luke, we have talked about the foundation of The American Legion and the days following the end of World War I. The military men and women of that time established an organization that has spanned generations.

This morning there is a man who's traveled from his home in Puerto Rico to be with us. He joined our organization in 1924. Over the years he has served in key positions of leadership in his home. I ask the delegates to this Convention and guests to the 79th National Convention, to please rise and honor 103 year old Vicente Fitzpatrick from Puerto Rico.

The Chair at this time recognizes Herman Harrington from New York, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credential and Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report. Chairman Harrington.

Report: Section on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section I (of Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs) Herman G. Harrington (NY), Chairman

Forty-five members and guests of the section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 31, 1997, in Room 340C, 3rd Level of the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida.

Herman G. Harrington of New York was elected Chairman, and Larry J. Besson of Illinois 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 (August 4, 1997); 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.

In Accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant on August 4, 1997, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 3,188 allocated as follows:

Alabama	31	Montana	18
Alaska	15	Nebraska	68
Arizona	44	Nevada	13
Arkansas	29	New Hampshire	31
California	153	New Jersey	87
Colorado	31	New Mexico	20
Connecticut	37	New York	208
Delaware	16	North Carolina	53
District of Columbia	10	North Dakota	32
Florida	126	Ohio	167
France	9	Oklahoma	37
Georgia	51	Oregon	34
Hawaii	10	Pennsylvania	264
Idaho	17	Philippines	9
Illinois	160	Puerto Rico	15
Indiana	142	Rhode Island	16
Iowa	83	South Carolina	30
Kansas	59	South Dakota	33
Kentucky	38	Tennessee	40
Louisiana	46	Texas	98
Maine	33	Utah	16
Maryland	88	Vermont	23
Massachusetts	75	Virginia	58
Mexico	8	Washington	45
Michigan	102	West Virginia	35
Minnesota	130	Wisconsin	84
Mississippi	26	Wyoming	14
Missouri	71		

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

...Motion seconded.

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? Ayes have it. Motion carried.

The Report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Section One is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I call on our National Adjutant, Robert W. Spanogle of the Department of Michigan, to issue the Call for the Convention.

Call for Convention
Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the Seventy-Ninth Annual National Convention of The American Legion, is hereby called to meet in Orlando, Florida, September 2nd through the 4th, 1997. The Convention business sessions will be held in the Orange County Convention Center Hall, E1, Second 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 bought before it. At twelve o'clock noon of the final session, or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, whichever first occurs on Thursday, September 4, 1997, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.

REPRESENTATION

Representation in the Convention shall be by department and in accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution. (Sec. 3, Art. V).

"...each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention August 4th, and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and to one alternate for each delegate." (Sec. 3, Art. V).

In addition to the above, the members of the National Executive Committee are delegates to the National Convention with vote, which shall be exercised with their respective departments, except the vote of the National Commander shall be exercised only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention. (Sec. 3, Art. VII)

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

Delegates to the National Convention shall be accredited in writing to the National Adjutant in the number and manner prescribed by Article V of the National Constitution. The rights of the departments to make and accredit substitutes for absentee delegates or alternate delegates shall be recognized by the National Adjutant provided that such substitutions shall be officially certified by the Department Commander, the Department

Adjutant at the time of certification required by the National Constitution, or at 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 who represent absent delegates is a matter for decision within the respective delegations.

The vote of any registered delegates absent or not represented by an alternate shall be cast with the majority of registered delegates present from his or her department.

DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS

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

CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Convention Committee	**No. of Members to which each Dept. is entitled:**
Americanism	One Delegate
Children & Youth	One Delegate
Constitutional Amendments	One Delegate
Credentials and Internal Affairs	
Credentials and Other Internal Matters, (Sections I & II)	One Delegate
Membership (Sec. III)	One Delegate
Economic	
Employment & Veteran Preference	One Delegate
Other Economic Matters	One Delegate
Finance	One Delegate
Foreign Relations	One Delegate
Legislation & Rules	One Delegate
National Security Committee; Joint Meeting (Includes Aerospace, Defense Civil Preparedness, Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs, Law and Order Convention Committee)	
Immediately following national security joint meeting:	
Aerospace	One Delegate
Defense Civil Preparedness	One Delegate
Merchant Marine	One Delegate
Military Affairs	One Delegate
Naval Affairs	One Delegate
Law and Order	One Delegate
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation	
Claims Rating	One Delegate
Hospital and Medical Services	One Delegate

Mr. Commander, that concludes the Call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I now declare the 79th National Convention of The American Legion, regularly convened.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Chair recognizes Charles Pesso of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules, for the purpose of making a report. Chairman Pesso.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Charles Pesso (NY), Chairman

The Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 31, 1997 in Room 231-B, 2nd Level of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida. Forty-nine (49) of the delegates assigned to this Convention Committee were in attendance, plus eighteen (18) guests. Following preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the permanent chairman and secretary were duly elected. Charles Pesso, a delegate from the Department of New York, was elected chairman. Claude Carpenter, a delegate from the Department of Arkansas, was elected secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to the business agenda by considering the rules of the convention. A motion was approved by the Committee to recommend 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. A motion was also approved to authorize the chairman and secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules.

The Committee then heard from William F. Tuerk, a member of the professional staff of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. His remarks discussed the Committee's agenda for the Second Session. The presentation was concluded with a lively "question and answer" period.

Since there were no resolutions referred to this Committee for consideration, the Legislation and Rules Committee wishes to offer the Convention delegates a brief report on current Congressional developments affecting issues of primary interest to The American Legion.

First and foremost, I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank the entire American Legion family for a job well-done in passage of the Flag Amendment in the House of Representatives. You helped muster 285 cosponsors and secure 310 votes in support of Old Glory. Now the campaign moves to the Senate where final passage will once again depend on a national grassroots effort.

Today, Congress reconvenes after a month-long recess to resume work on the Fiscal Year 1998 Federal budget. Prior to the August Recess, both the House and Senate passed their respective versions of the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. Now the two chambers must hammer out their differences and agree on a final package before the start of the new fiscal year on October 1. Both bills are very similar, concerning the VA budget. In fact, there is only a $30-million difference in the $40-billion package which will realize a very slight increase over last year's funding level.

On September 23, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly-elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. Their mission will be to discuss the legislative mandates that are passed by the Delegates at this National Convention. The highlight of this event will be the National Commander's testimony before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees.

MR. CHARLES PESSO, New York: National Commander Frank, as duly authorized Delegate to this convention from the Department of New York, 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 FRANK: Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded.

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The ayes have it. The Report of Legislation and Rules is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Often you hear people talk about how young people do not share the same values as those of us in The American Legion. I want you to know that's a myth. There's also another myth that I want to dispel. It's the mind-set that young veterans don't appreciate what Legionnaires do for them. You are about to see a music video accompanied by Gulf War veterans and paid for by Gulf War veterans. It is their thank you to all Americans for supporting them. My friends, after our next speaker, I invite you to watch *Long Live The U.S.A.*

Our next speaker heads the world's largest patriotic women's service organization. During her 30 years of service in The American Legion Auxiliary, she served in a leadership role on ten national committees, including Education, National Security, Children &Youth and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation. She's worked extensively at local, state and national levels. Please give a warm welcome, American Legion welcome, to the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Phyllis Bachman of LaFargeville, New York.

Mrs. Phyllis Bachman (NY)
National President, The American Legion Auxiliary

It's a real pleasure to address all the Legionnaires from the whole nation and especially my proud state of New York. What a pleasure and privilege it is for me to address this delegation this morning of the world's largest service organization, The American Legion.

This year has been the culmination of three decades of rewarding service to the American Legion Auxiliary. But this year represented one major difference to me: opportunity. As National President, I was able to impact the course of our programs as the American Legion Auxiliary approaches the 21st Century.

I embraced that opportunity and reached out to youth, teaching the important lessons of responsibility, accountability, the joys of patriotism and the rewards of volunteerism. Lessons critical to the security of our nation and the preservation of its ideals. Expansion and promotion of existing programs enabled American Legion Auxiliary members to impart these lessons to youths across the nation.

Young Americans in record numbers flocked to the American Legion Auxiliary's Americanism Youth Conference and Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to celebrate their heritage, exercise leadership skills, and discover countless opportunities awaiting them as they enter the mainstream of business and culture in the greatest nation on earth.

The Auxiliary's Junior membership was invited to take on some nontraditional activities during the year. Juniors eagerly accepted the legislative challenge, authoring essays, drafting letters to editors, and contacting Congressmen in support of the Flag Protection Amendment. They left their mark on the education program as well through participation in Teacher Recognition and Adopt-A-Classroom projects.

Attendance at the National Junior meeting here in Orlando reflected a 50 percent increase over the previous all-time high as our young members enjoyed their first National Junior Field Trip and starred in the Senior Auxiliary convention opening extravaganza, Ellis Island.

Concern for accountability prompted the inclusion of speakers on teen court and girl power at the Annual Awareness Assembly in Washington, DC. We sought to impart lessons to our youth without losing site of our primary commitment to our veterans and military personnel. Indeed, we were able to combine both efforts in our drive to attract more volunteers to our VA hospitals nationwide.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank The American Legion for the wisdom members demonstrated in the election of Joseph Frank as National Commander this year. In addition to being a most articulate speaker, he conveys a sincere belief in the issues he champions and serves as an inspiration to all individuals striving to conquer new frontiers. Commander Frank has been an enthusiastic supporter of the American Legion Auxiliary and has made every effort to address our needs and concerns, both at home and abroad. Together, he and his gracious wife, Barbara, have served as a model of patriotic Americans, honored to be of service to the organization and to the country. It has been a privilege to know and to serve with him this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my husband, Bob, who is with me this morning and my two daughters who are serving as pages at the National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary, Marcie Mills and Leslie Frickman.

Thank you so much for your warm welcome in allowing me to share with you some of the accomplishments of The American Legion Auxiliary during this administration.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We have a commitment to America's youth dating back to The American Legion's founding in 1919. The American Legion has a longstanding relationship with the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities. In keeping with those covenants The American Legion National Executive Committee passed Resolution Number 11 at its May meetings. The resolution urges our posts to encourage and to sponsor young people with disabilities in their communities who participate in the statewide Youth Leadership Program and Forum.

The Youth Leadership Forum is a four-day event that is patterned after American Legion Boys State and American Legion Girls State. After you take a look at this, how this program works in California, I'm sure you'll agree that this is a program worth supporting.

... A Video was shown at this time.

At this time, I'm delighted to introduce the former adjutant of the Department of Arkansas of The American Legion and the President's choice to follow Jesse Brown as Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

He's a veteran of 20 years of military service, including stints in the Marine Corps and the Army. He served two tours in Vietnam, and he earned numerous decorations, including the Purple Heart, Bronze Star and the Soldier's Medal.

Please welcome my friend, Secretary of Veteran's Affairs Designate, Hershel W. Gober.

Address: The Honorable Hershel W. Gober
Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Commander, you being from Missouri, I know you'll understand, if you'll indulge me for just a moment. We have an old saying back in Arkansas, we always dance with them what brung us. Where's the Arkansas delegation? You boys are going to have to work harder

on membership. I really mean it. Because those folks raised me when I was in The American Legion. They signed me up in 1966 when I was still in Vietnam. And then of course I came back and was the adjutant. And I owe a great debt of gratitude to those folks. Without their support I wouldn't be standing where I am. And I want everybody to know, publicly, that's how I feel about that.

You know, you're very honored that you're going to have a visit from the distinguished Speaker of the House today. I think his presence here reflects that paying the nation's debt to veterans has nothing to do with partisan issues, and everything to do with basic American values. And I am delighted that the Speaker will be here, and I look forward to working with him and all members of Congress to ascertain better ways to serve the veterans of this country.

I'm happy to get away from Washington, out here where the real folks are. You may not think that the VA is a business, but in many ways it is. Congress is my finance committee, and each and every one of you veterans are members of my Board of Directors. I have 26.5 million bosses, and I work for you. And I sincerely mean that. You wouldn't think that this huge organization is a little more than a pickup business.

Now you may not understand what that means—a pickup truck type business—but back in Arkansas there's a couple of friends of mine, Charlie and Sam, who decided they were going into the produce business and they bought them a pickup truck. And during the produce season they would come down to my farm, a little place down close to Possum Valley, Arkansas, and they'd buy my cantaloupes. They'd buy them for 50 cents apiece and then haul them to Little Rock 90 miles away. They were selling them for 50 cents apiece and they'd sell out very quickly.

The next day they'd be back and get another load. They did this for a couple weeks. And finally one day I asked them, I said, tell me how you're doing your business. They said, well, we're buying them for 50 cents from you and we're hauling them to Little Rock and we're selling them for 50 cents and we can't sell enough of them. We're selling them as fast as we can get them. And I said well, Sam, you know there's something a little bit wrong with your business here. You guys are not making any money. Charlie spoke up and said, yeah, but I've got this thing figured out. Next week we're going to get a bigger truck!

Well, the VA may not be able to get a bigger truck, though, so we have to come up with some of the better ways of doing business. One step in that direction, which the administration supports, is the subvention of Medicare. We're working right now on a memorandum of agreement with HCFA [Health Care Financing Administration] to work on pilot projects that we hope that Congress will pass that will let us take Medicare, treat Medicare veterans in our hospital and keep the money.

Now it makes no sense to me that we veterans can't make the decision for the VA to keep Medicare money. And I personally think that if anybody should have decisions to make, or the options, it should be veterans. So we're going to work on that. I hope the speaker will support that legislation.

You hear people referring to veterans' organizations, The American Legion, as interest groups and lobbyists. But when they say that about the Legion they need to remember one thing, the Legion not only stands up for veterans, it also stands up for America. The Legion may be the veterans' lobby, but it's America's lobby, too. Patriotism is alive and well in The American Legion and in America thanks to the Legion programs like the Oratorical competitions, Legion baseball, Legion support for Scouting, Legion Junior Shooting Program, sports, and the outstanding Boys State and Boys Nation.

In 1953, I went to Boys State in Arkansas. Until that time I knew nothing about government. That one-week experience got me interested in government. And I have seen

that happen so many times. And the Boys State and Boys Nation are two of the greatest programs that anybody ever thought of. I salute you for that. I'm proud to be a Legionnaire, and I'm proud of the partnership that we forged in recent years between The American Legion and the VA.

Four and-a-half years ago, Jesse Brown and I set out to bring the VA closer to the veteran service organizations and to improve services to veterans across the board. Jesse completed his tenure on July 1 and we owe him a sincere thanks for his leadership. During this period, what he set out to accomplish, he accomplished. But there are things that we still need to do.

I'm very proud of the fact, though, that in the last four and-a-half years, the veterans groups have a seat at the table, as your representatives in Washington will tell you. We have numerous meetings, not to say "this is what we've done," but "this is what we're thinking of doing, and we would like your input."

John Sommer will tell you that the meetings that we have are very substantial meetings, and it's not just to call you in and say this is what we're going to do. I think that we have to consult with our Board of Directors when we're going to make a change in the system. And it's been a very good relationship and one that I intend to take where it is now and improve it and make it better.

Today we have expanded benefits for veterans suffering from Agent Orange. And The American Legion, as you recall, led the fight to recognize Agent Orange. Radiation, mustard gas or former prisoners of war are served better. Today, the VA has programs, effective programs, in our hospitals for women veterans, a group that were overlooked for so long.

Today we have a strong outreach for veterans suffering from PTSD and homeless vets. I hate to call them homeless vets, because they have a home. They fought for it. It's called America. So they may be homeless in name, but we don't want them to be homeless. And I'm proud of the progress that we've made in that area.

Today, Persian Gulf veterans are receiving medical care on a priority basis and compensation on diagnosed and undiagnosed illnesses. Research is looking for the long time answers that they need. And I pledge to you that we will not let the Persian Gulf illness become another Agent Orange, we will stay on it.

I am so glad that my generation, the Vietnam veterans, made a lot of noise and didn't go away. Because of that we're treating veterans from World War II and Korea that suffer from PTSD because the Vietnam veterans were noisy, and would not take the standard answers. They stayed in there. And because of our experience with the Agent Orange, it will serve us well in the Persian Gulf illness.

We don't know what's wrong with them, but one thing about it, we're going to be sympathetic. And I am proud of the fact that we're able to compensate for undiagnosed illnesses for these men and women who served this country.

Today, our backlogs and waiting time for virtually all services have been reduced. But they're still too high, and we're going to move on that. We have eligibility reform, which The American Legion fought for very hard alongside the VA. And every day an increasing amount of our health care is provided in a more modern setting, bringing our patients more convenient and higher quality treatment.

We're going through lots of changes in our health care system. I know some of you are concerned about some of those changes, and you're concerned about the Congressionally mandated enrollment process for veteran's health care. I have concerns about it, too, but it's a law and we will implement it. My goal is to implement it in the fairest and most even-handed manner possible. The details of the enrollment process are still being

developed, but the test period will begin on October 1, and we'll have a full year to test the enrollment process and make changes. And then it takes full effect in October of next year.

Our close working relationship with the Legion will help us refine this process into a mechanism that helps us provide the best care to the most veterans. All of this is part of the picture today in serving veterans, but I'd like to talk very briefly about tomorrow.

Tomorrow, the VA is going to take our recent legacy of progress and build upon it. Our goals include improving access to VA and its services. In the coming month, for example, we intend to establish more facilities, community out-based clinics. And I'm very proud of the fact that we put in over a hundred in the last two years, and we're going to move to put in many, many more to take the health care closer to the veterans so they don't have to travel those long, long miles to get to the health care.

In the longer term, our goal is to assure prompt delivery of services and benefit and never compromise the quality. Through bench marking with the best firms, and consulting with top experts, we aim to make or exceed our veterans' expectations that come to us. We're going to speed up the compensation claimed in a very dramatic fashion.

My goal is that in four years the processing time for most types of claims will be cut in half or less. There's so many bright spots. Here in Florida, for example, through a partnership with the State Department of Veterans Affairs, veterans coming in and filing claims for the first time, their initial claim can receive an answer in 29 days. Now that's good service. Other places it's over a hundred days. In other places, it's very, very long. But I'm going to tackle this.

This first four and-a-half years we've concentrated pretty much on the health care. My goal is to get this processing time for claims down so that veterans get an answer in a reasonable time. And I don't see why we can't do it.

I know you've heard about the budget, the first balanced budget since 1969. It's fixed for Medicare for the next decade. You've heard about the tuition tax credit and the Medicare improvements that will take the program into the 21st Century, where my generation will be using it by then. The VA budget came out good. When we first heard the news, we were concerned about it. It would have reduced the VA discretionary funding by 273 million dollars, but they put the money back in and added a few more dollars. So we'll end up with the VA funding essentially that the President had recommended, and a little more.

To me this says that our leaders recognize that veterans are a national priority. We have been saying for years veterans don't mind giving their fair share. After all, veterans have given more than anybody. They don't like to be singled out. But if you're going to balance the budget, don't do it on the back of veterans. So it appears that the case was made by the Legion and the other veteran service organizations. The people in Washington listened to you.

The VA is also going to get to keep the receipts from the medical care cost recovery. This is the third-party payments that we receive from insurance companies when we bill them for treating veterans. Last year it was over 600 million dollars. We're projecting it will be over 600 million dollars in 1998. We have been collecting that money, and turning it into the Treasury and keeping only about 18 percent which was the administrative cost. Now we get to keep it all. And we're hoping that we'll be able to increase our collection.

We're going to treat almost an estimated 3.1 million veterans. That's an increase of 135,000 over this year. We're going to provide 890,000 episodes of inpatient care, and 33.2 million outpatient visits.

The fact is that there's still room for a few changes within the appropriation process, but I feel confident that we'll have resources to do our job. If we don't, we'll make the fact

known to the President and to Congress. That is, if we all work together. It has to be a team effort. We're in this thing together.

We're going to work smarter. And one way we're going to do it is with a project ongoing now, using language that veterans and their families can understand.

I was visiting at one of our facilities about two years ago, and walked into the room where the benefits counselor and a couple was sitting. And I asked the gentleman, "Can we help you?" He said, "Yes, I just want somebody to read this blank-blank letter to me and tell me what it says." So I said, "Well, okay. I was a Marine, I'm reasonably intelligent." I picked the letter up and I read it. When I got through reading it, there were two confused people in that room. So I want our people to write in clean, plain old English that anybody can understand. Tell veterans what they need to do to get their benefits. Tell them when and where they have an appointment in plain English. Be very simple. And don't go into title 38C.and for section so and so and such and such. Veterans don't care about that.

The other thing is to make the VA one. If a veteran thinks he has been mistreated at the hospital, he doesn't say the VHA mistreated treated him, but the VA. And when a claim hasn't been processed, it is the VA and not the VBA. So my feeling is we're all going to pull the VA together and it's going to be one VA and we're going to all work together on this.

And I'm going to have our VA facility start measuring performance in realistic terms. Forget all the stats. How long does a veteran wait to see a doctor when he or she goes to the VA clinic? How many days pass before a veteran gets an answer from a VA regional office on a benefits claim? How long does a veteran sit in the VA medical center—I love this one—waiting for a prescription to be filled? One of my favorites. That's something we're going to work on.

By the way, we have some places where there is no waiting time for the prescriptions. The doctor writes a prescription when he sees the veteran, the veteran goes downstairs and when he is ready to leave, picks it up. Why can't we do that across the system? We will.

I like to keep it very simple when I ask questions of our people. Because I get all kinds of reports and statistics and you get those, too, and I look at them. But I like to deal with things that you can feel. Things that are more tangible.

When I visit our VA facilities around the country I'm going to ask our VA employees, and by the way I'm going to start calling them our VA associates, to think about how our veterans and their families feel if they get don't get the service they need or when they have to wait too long. I'm going to ask them to see some new things, too. So you'll understand when I ask our VA employees, when you look at our own vet. This veteran comes in front of you, whether it's at the hospital or benefits office. When that veteran comes in front of you, I don't want you to see an elderly gentleman. I want you to look deep into his eyes, and I want you to see the fire that's there, that 19-year old who drove the landing craft at Omaha Beach, or that 18-year old Marine who charged the shore at Iwo Jima, or that veteran who fought his way out of the Chosin Reservoir in Korea. When that veteran rolls in front of you in that wheelchair, lost both legs, I want you to see that point man in Vietnam in the A Shau Valley.

I want our people to see that, to look beyond what they see there. And to look deep into the eyes and see what was in there, and still is there. Inside that body that is growing older, is still that young patriot who did what his country told him to do without question. I also want you to see when the woman veteran steps in front of them, I want them to see the young nurse who maybe was the last person to comfort our comrades when they left.

So those are the things I want our people to do. It's very simple. Ours is not a very exotic job, it's not complicated. We have one purpose. That's to serve veterans. And we're

going to serve veterans as long as I have anything to do with the Department of Veteran Affairs.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Hershel.

Often you hear people talking about how young people don't share the same values as those of us in The American Legion. I want you to know that's a myth. There's also another myth that I want to dispel, and that's the mind-set that young veterans don't appreciate what Legionnaires do for them.

You're about to see a music video that I cut off earlier. A National Commander can do that sort of thing. You noticed when I said stop, they stopped!

This is paid for by Gulf War veterans and it is their thank you to all Americans for supporting them. Please watch *Long Live The U.S.A.*

...The Delegates viewed a video at this time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That's what I call spirit. There is no doubt those young veterans share our values. And I'm sure you noticed that the American Flag was visible often. Legionnaires in Ulster County, New York, are using that video as a fund raiser for their post.

I'm delighted that our next speaker could join us. And in 1978 when he was first elected to the House of Representatives he was the only Georgia Republican holding federal office. In 1994, unified behind his leadership and the Contract with America, the Republicans gained a majority of the House. He holds a bachelor's degree from Tulane University, a Master's and Doctorate degrees from Emory University. He's the first Republican re-elected to preside over the House since 1928. Please give a warm American Legion welcome to this educator entrepreneur, author and Speaker of the House of United States Representatives, Mr. Newt Gingrich.

Address: The Honorable Newt Gingrich
Speaker, The United States House of Representatives, Georgia

I'm delighted to be here to have a chance to talk with you about where our country is going, both here at home, in its national security concerns, and in making sure that we honor those who have served their country and who are veterans.

As many of you know, my dad served for 27 years in the United States Army. And I know firsthand the importance of the government in keeping its word. And I know firsthand the importance of us making sure that in peace time we remember the sacrifices of those who risked their lives for their country in war time.

I particularly want to thank The American Legion for two projects that really have become sort of hallmarks of the Legion's commitment to American patriotism. The first is your Americanism program. And you are exactly right to suggest that being an American is unique, that it's something we should remind every generation of young people about, and that those who bled and died for freedom should be honored and remembered in part in our minds and in our hearts by learning what freedom is all about.

I've been proposing for the last several years that every state should consider assigning one day a year to teach about the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence, because all too many young Americans do not know what makes America different. That in America we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We're not endowed by lawyers, we're not endowed by politicians, we're not endowed by bureaucrats. This is a very important distinction. In Europe, power went from the God to the king and was loaned to citizens. But in America power goes from God to you and then you loan it to government. And that makes us a very different country than any other country in the world.

So let me say first of all your Americanism program, Boys State, Girls State, the effort you put in to get in the next generation, to study, talk about, learn about, what makes us unique is very, very important. And frankly, one of the reasons that I'm so passionately committed to cutting taxes is to get money back home to you so you have more take home pay. So you have more free time. So you can be more involved as a volunteer. Because I believe programs that are voluntary, where people get involved because that's where their hearts are, are the kind of programs that make America strong, and that make America involved. And that's what you do with Americanism and with Boys State and Girls State.

In addition, let me thank you for the Citizens Flag Alliance. You have been committed to the concept that our flag is unique, that we as a free people have the right to have a symbol we cherish, and that we are prepared to say to people, yes, your free speech is limited very narrowly. You can not desecrate the Flag of the United States because it binds us together.

Chairman Jerry Solomon, who has been the leading advocate of the Flag Amendment in the House and has worked so hard on this issue, asked me to thank you for all you've already done, but also to ask you to make a few more phone calls, we're apparently two senators short. We've got a terrific majority vote in the House. We're right at the edge. And we're going to do all we can, but we need your help back home getting us two more senate votes, and then we will have passed and sent to the states the amendments to protect the flag.

And in terms of Americanism, the great American veteran, the good friend of yours, Bob Dole, asked me to let you know he was working on the World War II Memorial, but he needs a little bit of additional advice and additional help in Washington. You know, since the Memorial bill was originally signed is a longer period than all of World War II. Now does that tell you a little bit about what's wrong with the federal government, that it is taking us longer to build the Memorial than it took us to win the war. And all I can promise you is we're going to go back this week—in fact, I will leave here to fly back to Washington to open the fall session of the Congress, and we're going to put some more pressure on this fall to get the Memorial done so the World War II generation can have the honor they deserve.

There's a lesson to be learned from World War II. And a lessen to be learned from Korea. And it's one which, frankly, I'm very worried about with this administration as it deals with military strength and national preparedness. When Americans are ready, when we're equipped, when we're trained, then we win decisively, as we did in Iraq. But when in peace time we let our military get weak, when we fail to buy the next generation of weapons, when we refuse to pay for an adequate level of training, then we run the risk of Pearl Harbor, or as those of you who are Korean veterans will remember, the risk of Task Force Smith, where decent, courageous, patriotic young Americans with inadequate equipment and inadequate training ran up against the North Korean Army and were killed without purpose because we hadn't done our job in peace time.

I'm here to report to you that we in the Republican majority in Congress are absolutely committed to sustaining our national defense. We believe that our young men and women, if they have the courage or the patriotism to serve their country, they should be prepared to go into battle with the best training and the best equipment and the best leadership in the world, and we owe them that.

Let me report to you that I'm very concerned about the proposed additional cuts in uniform troop strength. We cannot keep sending our young men and women in uniform around the world, extending them away from their families, for months and months at a time, wearing out the system, and expect to be trained and equipped and prepared for major conflict. And we can't shrink the military if we're going to use it everywhere. And this administration wants to have it both ways.

It reminds me of a teenager with a credit card. They want to charge without paying. That's not how the world works. It's not fair to military families and the military dependents to have too small a military and send it everywhere. And if this administration wants to be activists in giving its word around the world, then it needs to be activists here at home in arguing for and paying for a big enough military to maintain American leadership worldwide.

And a key part of that leadership, frankly, should be building a national missile defense. In the 21st Century, there are going to be rogue states that have missiles capable of reaching our allies and ultimately missiles capable of reaching us. We have the science, we have the engineering, and the capability to build an anti-ballistic missile system to protect our allies and to protect us, but the diplomats and the lawyers are blocking us from using the best science and the best technology. And I think our position should be simple. Our young men and women deserve the best technology that science can develop. Not the weakest technology that diplomats can negotiate. I think that has to be a clear dividing line.

One other thing about national defense is that if our young men and women are going to be put at risk, then the country and the uniform military deserve to know what the mission is, what the assignment is, and what victory is. The developments of the last few weeks in Bosnia are very worrying. Our troops were sent there for one mission. We now seem to be developing new missions. We're going from being the neutrals between all the sides to imposing on the Serbians, one faction over another. We seem to be going from being the neutrals that everybody cheered and applauded, to defending TV transmitters against one group on behalf of another group.

There is talk that we're going to go out as policemen to capture various people who have many supporters who don't want them captured. I think the President owes it to the country, and he owes it to our men and women in uniform to make a full, clear, public statement. What are our aims in Bosnia? Why is it worth risking the lives of young Americans, why is it worth spending hundreds of millions, indeed billions of dollars? What is at risk and what will we gain and how should we measure victory?

It is wrong for us to start down a road that starts as peacekeeping to peacemaking, then moves to picking one side over the other, then moves to policing. All of it done apparently because various State Department diplomats are willing to risk our uniformed military without the military having a clear, defined mission. It's easy for a diplomat in a nice room during the middle of the air conditioned negotiation, sitting over hot tea, to explain how tough America's going to be. They're not in the foxhole; they're not in the mine field, they're not in danger. But the uniformed military know that it's very dangerous to put our young men and women on the front line as policeman, where they are targets rather than implementers of military power.

So I ask the President, please come to the country. Tell us clearly and decisively, what is our mission? Why are we risking our young men and women? How will we know if we have victory? What will it cost, and how long may it take? Because it is wrong to put these young men and women at risk without clear public understanding of why it is worth risking their lives.

When your country needs you, everybody pays attention. Everybody's grateful. And then, when the war's over, when victory's won, people rapidly start to forget. Some of you had the experience that within a matter of weeks they don't care. That's the past. And that's wrong. We owe our veterans in peace time the same dedication that they gave their country in war time. This is not just simple gratitude, this is smart patriotism. You want the next generation to know that if they volunteer to serve their country, if they risk their lives, if they leave their homes and families, that they, too, will be remembered when they come back. So it is sound common sense. You take care of this generation's veterans in order to prove to future generations that this is a patriotic nation that honors those who save it from danger.

There are two or three key areas we need to revisit very firmly. Because it seems sometimes that it slips away from us if we don't pay attention. The first is veteran's preference. We have a program underway right now. We discovered that even in the Pentagon there are contractors who don't offer veteran's preference, who don't keep track of a veteran's preference. I spoke out on this recently and there was a letter, I think it was in the *New York Times*. Somebody wrote how can Gingrich be against quotas if he's for veteran's preference. I think that exactly misses the point. A veteran's preference is an earned right that was earned at the risk of life and limb by patriots serving their country, and has no relationship to a quota automatically granted by some kind of pattern.

No one who is not a veteran can complain about being discriminated against with a veteran's preference, because everyone has the opportunity to volunteer, to serve in the military if they think they want that preference. So let's be clear about what we're describing. And yet there are anti-military folks who will tell you why quotas make sense but veteran's preference doesn't. And the fact is, they simply are undermining psychologically our military. It says to every young person, when they see a veteran's preference, that this is a patriotic country that remembers and honors those who serve it. So maybe when you're young you should look with favor on those who serve America. And that's an important part of what binds us together, and that's exactly what I believe your Americanism program is all about. And so I think it's the right direction. So we're going to work hard to reestablish the importance of veteran's preference, and to remind contractors to the government that they have an obligation to participate in, and be involved in, veteran's preference.

Secondly, we're going to work to continue to upgrade and improve veteran's health care. You have two areas here that are important. One is finance, the other is technology. On finance, in the budget agreement that was just signed into law, we took steps to make it possible for the Veterans Administration to retain insurance when it's paid to them instead of it going to the Treasury Department. We believe the veterans should have the right to choose veterans health care as their option if that's what they prefer.

We will be working hard this fall to develop pilot projects in Medicare subvention, so that you will have the right to choose the Veterans' Hospital and the veterans' program, if that's what you want. We believe that is a step towards a sounder and healthier veteran's health program and we're going to move to give you the right to choose.

But there's another area that I think we have to look at. And that is this extraordinary revolution in technology. I interviewed last year an eye doctor who, sitting in his laboratory in UCLA, can perform eye surgery in Beijing, China, by satellite. And his technology is so remarkable that he actually does a better job on certain kinds of critical eye care than anybody locally in Beijing can do.

At Emory University now in Atlanta, they are reading various cardiovascular electronic tests from St. Petersburg, Russia, because they have better technology and better experts in a particular area of heart disease, and they literally are able to send them from St. Petersburg

to Emory by satellite, read them and pick up the telephone and talk with each other and offer advice.

A proposal which I hope to pursue this fall, and which I really want to ask The American Legion to join us in both passing, and also join us in making work as a system, is to create a commission on 21st Century veterans health care.

We believe we can make it possible for every veteran in the country and every veterans' facility to have access to the leading specialists. So if the right person you need to get advice from happens to be at Johns Hopkins or happens to be at Mayo Clinic, or it happens to be a Cleveland clinic, we can literally connect electronically the most distant veterans hospital, the most distant facility with the right expert, and create a national network of specialty care that will give veterans an ability to have the finest care in the world with the cutting edge technology. And frankly, the revolution in medical care, the rise of molecular medicine with the human genome project, the use of computers, the use of modern kinds of CAT scans, all of you have in your own lives probably experienced some of these things. But when you look at all the breakthroughs that are happening every year now, it is impossible for any one system to have an expert in everything. There's just too many changes going on. But it is possible electronically to connect the very best, wherever they are, with the veterans who needs their help.

And so I would like to ask with your help that we establish a commission with the finest scientists and the finest health managers in the country to work together and develop for the 21st Century a nationwide, and where necessary, a worldwide capability to tie the veteran and the specialist together to provide the best health care in the world to every single facility. I think it's doable. I think our veterans deserve it and I think we should insist that they have access to the best science and the best technology that's available.

When you get done here, and I realize you're here on serious business, and I know that very few of you are going to take advantage of Disney World or Universal Artists or MGM Studios, or any of those things that you won't let distract you. But if you happen to, let me just suggest for a second that as a tour guide, that at Epcot Center they have a remarkable new series of buildings, when you walk in, where they show you all the new innovations. One of the things that they have is a house in which everything in the house is available on the market today. But they've gone out and found all these different break-throughs, the most modern oven, the most modern cleaning device, the most modern television, the most modern sound. And it's sort of interesting to go look at and to see how many changes there are underway. But wherever you go, you will see a level of technology that will amaze you.

The reason I mention that is just to remind you here in 1997 what a remarkable country we have been, and what a remarkable country we can be. America is a great country. It's filled with good people, and they really achieve amazing things. You look around America today, and I've had the opportunity in the last few weeks to go out and see people all over the country. I wear a pin for Habitat for Humanity and Earning by Learning. Many of you know Habitat's a program where volunteers go out working with poor people to build a house, where the poor person first of all has to qualify by holding down a job, by being of good character. Then they have to work over a hundred hours to build somebody else's house. Then they have to work 300 hours on their own house. They take a 20-hour course in how to be a home owner. And then they buy the house. It's a no interest loan so the mortgage is lower than it might be. But they pay for that house. And they pay off that mortgage over time. And they have pride, and they earned it. They weren't given a house. They aren't living off somebody else. They have the dignity of being a free person.

And all over America you find people out working to help their fellow Americans. I was recently at a coal mine in Wyoming, which is enormous. It provides something, some

amazing percentage of our electricity from that one mine. And they're reclaiming it, so you literally can't tell where the mine was when you look at the reclaimed areas. You have antelope and deer and all sorts of animals wandering around on grass on an area that was a mine that now isn't. And this is an enormous mine. You look at these and they only have three people who run the steam shovel for one of the pits. And that steam shovel picks up 150 to 200 tons at a time. Enormously efficient. And that's why our electricity bills are lower.

You look around and realize, both in defense and in veterans health, that if we take advantage of every opportunity, if we take advantage of every new science, and every new technology, if we reach out to the future the way our forefathers have; go back in American history and look at our courage and our willingness to invent new things, Fulton and the steam engine, Edison and the electric light. Somebody once said that Edison took about 45,000 experiments to find the filament that actually worked the electric light. When they were at about 9,000, one of his assistants said, we've had 9,000 failures. Edison said, no, we've had 9,000 experiments that proved something didn't work. Now when they had 36,000 more, they invented the electric light.

Now the reason I'm taking this moment to take you on this little tour is if we just cheerfully assert the moral courage that is the nature of being American, we can provide the best defense in the world at a reasonable amount.

I'm for reforming the Pentagon, for shrinking the middle management, for shrinking the red tape. I'm a hawk, but I'm a cheap hawk. At the same time, I think we can apply the best of science and the best of technology and the best of management to insure that when our veterans leave the military, having had the best military science and technology in the world, they then have access to a veteran's health care system that is the best science and technology in the world.

So that our lifetime experience is of using all the break-throughs of the information age, organized within our culture of Americanism, organized within our constitutional framework of liberty, to make sure that we have defended better than anyone also, and that when we have provided that defense, we're taken care of better than any other veteran in the world. That's the model with which we should go into the 21st Century. That's the spirit that I hope we'll be able to work together on. You have a great and a proud tradition of voluntarily offering patriotism to the country, of continuing your service as a citizen beyond the military by being involved in The American Legion.

I am honored you allowed me to come and report to you today. And I look forward to working with you in developing for our children the best defense and the best veterans health care in the 21st Century.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: It is indeed an honor to present to the 79th National Convention of The American Legion, a man who has accomplished more in a few years than many of us accomplish in a lifetime. First, he is a Vietnam veteran of the United States Army. He and his brother, Tom, served with the 9th Infantry Division in Vietnam in 1968. Among his many awards are two Purple Hearts. Today he is a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs. Attesting to his abilities are the many positions he has held in the past 25 years. My first recollection of meeting this man was when he served as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Affairs Administration in 1981. He is the first Republican elected to the United States Senate from Nebraska since 1972. Please give a welcome to a member of American Legion Post 84 in Columbus, Nebraska, Senator Chuck Hagel.

Address: The Honorable Chuck Hagel
United States Senate, Nebraska

I want to begin by acknowledging what this organization has meant to so many of us; what you do; all the activities that you lead all over our country; the effect that you have.

I was grounded in understanding and valuing The American Legion as a young boy growing up in the sand hills of Nebraska. My brothers and I used to help my father every Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, put flowers on the graves of veterans. My father served with the 13th Army Air Force in the South Pacific during World War II. He was Commander of Post 79 in Ainsworth, Nebraska. My mother was the Auxiliary President. My grandfather served during World War I. And as Commander Frank mentioned, my brother, Tom, and I served together in Vietnam. Last week, Mr. Commander, I received in the mail my 30 year card of being a Life Member of The American Legion, so I appreciate that.

All the different things I have done in my life, like you, have somehow intersected with The American Legion. And the jobs that I have been privileged to hold in the VA, and working on Agent Orange; working with the USO; Vietnam Veterans Memorial, all interestingly enough have been part of what the Legion is about, and the leadership the Legion has provided to this country. And for that I'm personally grateful, and I know I speak on behalf of all of our nation's veterans.

I come to you this morning to speak about an issue that everyone in this room knows something about. It's an issue that you know something about because you have lived it. It's our nation's foreign affairs, foreign policy, national defense.

America finds itself in a very unique position today. It's unique in history. We stand alone today as the world's only superpower. We lead the world by all measurements: politically, militarily, economically, culturally, technologically. Never before in modern history, and rarely in the history of man, has one nation exerted such influence across the globe as the United States of America does today.

But what about tomorrow? We must recognize the reality of rising individual powers such as China, and regional powers such as Europe, South America and Asia. And we must help build a world where America's interests and values prosper, and prepare our nation for the challenges of a new world. Where the balance of power, both economic and military, will be more even and more proportional. This does not mean a diminished, weakened or less relevant America. It means that the reality of the next century will be a world of more diffused power.

Today we control our own destiny. With this comes tremendous opportunity, choices, responsibility and leadership. Will we continue on the high road that made our nation great? Will we continue to rise to meet our global challenges? Will we continue to stand for what is right? Will we continue to stand on principles and lead the world? Or will we allow ourselves to become self-absorbed and slide into mediocrity?

If we allow ourselves to become too comfortable with the status we have achieved in the world, and we fail to challenge ourselves to do better and be greater, there will be devastating consequences for America. Devastating consequences for America's future generations. I believe America will continue to provide strong, global, dynamic leadership, if for no other reason than it is in our own best interest to do so.

The world's future is unlimited because America's future is unlimited. Today we see emerging democracies, market economies, and the explosion of new freedoms all over the world for millions of people who have lived under the dark veil of tyranny. Look at the former Soviet Republics, Eastern Europe, Asia and South America. These new democracies and their market economies need security and stability in the world around them in order to

take root and flourish. By working with our allies to help ensure stability and security, we can help give these countries the opportunity for success. We cannot guarantee success. That's up to each country. But we can improve their chances by continuing to work for stability in all corners of the world.

America is the only nation today with the power to lead this global effort. Helping ensure stability and security throughout the world, is an investment in our future. Since ships sailed from Europe to the Orient, the primary objective of a nation's foreign policy has been to open new markets. Trade is the future for America and the world. We are about to enter a century where the nations of the world will be connected as never before. The developments of the 20th Century broke down barriers, crossed boundaries and opened doors for trade communications like never before in human history. America will compete in a global economy in the 21st Century. To continue to successfully lead the world, we will need more new markets for our products and our services. We want a world of free nations, open markets, and free and fair trade. The future success of America is linked to the success of young nations, and older nations who are gradually opening their borders to free trade.

Nothing will have more of a dramatic impact on America's future in the 21st Century than trade. It will be critical to our economic growth and our standard of living, but it also will be vital to the continued expansion of democracy around the globe. A free and open global trading system has proven its remarkable power in raising standards of living, building a more peaceful world, and increasing individual opportunities since World War II.

These developments have created unprecedented opportunities for the sale of U.S. products, as more prosperous people around the world desire higher quality American goods, services and agricultural products. This is why I support fast-track authority for the President. And I am very, very wary of quick-fix trade sanctions on more and more nations. We have an historic opportunity for global peace and prosperity such as the world has never seen, and with that the opportunity for less war, less conflict and less poverty, meaning less commitment of American blood and treasure to help sustain a free world. We want all nations to prosper. It is in America's best interest, but this will not happen on its own. It will require the continued steady, strong and engaged leadership of America.

Helping ensure security and stability requires stepping up to challenges in the world before a crisis occurs. For example, look at Bosnia. A few years ago Margaret Thatcher called for the nations of NATO to become directly engaged in the search for a peaceful solution to this conflict. Over the 4th of July, I visited Bosnia and saw the devastation of that country and its people. Margaret Thatcher was right. Had we and our allies stepped up to this sooner rather than later, before it escalated into mass genocide, not only could we have saved thousands of lives, but we would not have spent over seven billion dollars of America's treasury, and seen the introduction of thousands and thousands of American troops in order to impose peace. For as much as we want to say it's none of our business, we can't turn our backs on Bosnia, because Bosnia is Europe. Bosnia is beyond Europe. It's in a critical region of the world for America's interests.

Let's reflect for a moment on that region. As an example, the Caspian Sea is now known to have the second largest oil reserves in the world. Bosnia's neighbor to the south, Turkey, is the link between Europe and the Middle East, and currently a very shaky link. An escalation of hostilities in Bosnia and the surrounding area, could have a dangerous rippling effect throughout eastern and southern Europe, and the former Warsaw pact nations, Middle Asia and the Middle East.

Ladies and gentlemen, actions have consequences. Actions are interconnected. America's foreign policy, our national defense, our national interests, and economic interests

are all interconnected. The world is interconnected. That's one of the reasons why the expansion of NATO, in my opinion, is so important. Since its inception 50 years ago, NATO has worked to ensure peace in Europe. Over the past 10 years the face of Europe has changed dramatically. No longer does NATO stand as a wall of defense against Soviet tanks and troops rolling in through East Germany. However, NATO's mission—peace in Europe—has not changed, even though its strategies and tactics have changed to meet the current realities and challenges of Europe's new order, the nations of Eastern Europe need peace to continue to develop the democratic governments and marketing economies. The need, the security and the stability that only NATO can help provide to ensure an environment where they can grow into contributing members, to the prosperity of Europe and the world is obvious. Providing the umbrella of NATO to Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and hopefully other nations, gives some promise of security and stability. And all nations, all nations must pay their own way in NATO.

No matter where you look beyond Europe, there are regions of the world vital to America's interests. The rapidly expanding economies of Asia and South America, provide tremendous opportunities for new markets for American goods and services. Russia and its former republics are slowly developing new markets for goods and services.

There is unlimited potential for America in these regions of the world, which brings us to China. There is something about the word 'China' that evokes strong feelings among Americans. Americans respect the aging culture and the philosophy that underpins the Chinese civilization, and respond positively to the Chinese people themselves on a personal level. Yet many Americans also instinctively fear and distrust this distant, populous nation that is once again rising to a prominent role in the world. There is no relation more important and more contentious than the U.S. relationship with China. We must be very realistic and extremely clear-headed in our approach to China. There are those who call for a new cold war with China based on a policy of economic, political and military containment. But let me be direct. This would be a disaster for our nation, for our world, for our people.

First, such a policy would fail. Other nations would refuse to join the United States in such a containment policy. We would only isolate ourselves, not China. Furthermore, cutting off most favored trading nation status is tantamount to cutting off trade, and this would reimpose disastrous 1930 Smoot-Hawley tariffs of 50 to 70 percent. The policy is not correct.

History has shown that all our presidents since Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton have followed the same path. This is a policy that will give us the best chance of building a world that is more free and more aligned with America's interests and our values. This does not mean a lessening of our commitment to human rights and freedom, or our willingness to forcefully defend our interests wherever they are threatened. It's just the opposite. But the worse thing we can do is create a self-fulfilling prophecy on a hostile China. The one way to ensure development is not to isolate China and engage China. And always remember that we must continue to remain militarily and economically strong and consistent.

With all the world's possibilities, hopes and opportunities, this world still is very dangerous and very unpredictable. In many ways it is more dangerous than during the Cold War, when there were two polar powers dominating the world. Some of the nations formerly aligned with the Soviet Union are today free agents, capable of great mischief. These nations are only supportive of terrorists and terrorism, and eager to get their hands on nuclear weapons. Terrorism, ladies and gentlemen, may be the scourge of the 21st Century.

Last week's defection of another high ranking official in the North Korean government again calls our attention to one of the most brutal regimes in the world, with one of the

world's most desperate and poorest populations, with one of the world's largest standing armies. This is a very dangerous combination.

And while the threat of nuclear attack that gripped the heart of America during the long years of the Cold War has somewhat receded, it is not gone. We no longer call Russia an enemy, but we must always remember, that Russia is the only nation with the nuclear force comparable to our own with missiles capable of reaching mainland America. And I'm sure many of you saw the movie *Air Force One*. While the action in the movie is a bit farfetched, nevertheless, a very real premise: a weakened Russian leadership and strong nationalist forces in Russia, or one of the former Soviet republics. We must always keep a vigilant eye on the undercurrents in Russia, and stay militarily strong. I fear we would not be able to meet the challenges of this new world with the current state of our military forces.

In real dollars, the U.S. military, our national defense, has taken far deeper and more dramatic budget cuts than any area of our federal budget. Over the last 10 years our defense budget has been reduced in real dollars by 40 percent. If we had to field another force today similar to the one that won Desert Storm, I do not believe that we would be able to accomplish that. The personnel and the hardware, ladies and gentlemen, are not there.

While not always apparent on the surface, these cuts have had real and lasting consequences. We have dangerously deferred the acquisition of new weapons systems. We are asking our military personnel to do more with less. For example, since 1988 the number of Air Force deployments has increased four times, while its budget in real dollars has been cut by 40 percent. Since 1989, the Army's mission has increased 300 percent while funding has decreased by 38 percent, and its soldiers on active duty has declined by 35 percent. Last week it was reported that 107 Air Force pilots were up for promotion this year from captain to major. They asked not to be considered for advancement and are leaving the Air Force. High ranking Air Force officials said they have seen an alarming number of pilots leave the Air Force, and are concerned. General Eugene Habiger, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command, stated in the Omaha *World Herald* two weeks ago, "If we want to keep the best and the brightest, we are going to have to then make some changes." General Richard Hawley, Commander of the Air Force Combat Command stated, "Our Air Force is being tested in ways that are unprecedented. And many Airmen are weighing their commitment to the nation and to our Air Force against their obligation to their families."

I visited STRATCOM Headquarters in Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha a few weeks ago. I visited because I was concerned about a number of quality of life issues in our military. While I was impressed at how much the commanders of the 55th Wing at Offutt are doing with limited resources, they have a very big problem on their hands. These are problems not limited to the Air Force. They exist throughout every branch of our service. The fact is, the young men and women in our armed forces and their families are frequently living in substandard housing conditions and public housing, and living on food stamps. By the Department of Defense's own estimates, more than 23,000 men and women in uniform are eligible for food stamps. At the same time these men and women are being sent overseas more often and for longer periods of time. How can we expect to attract our best and brightest people to make a career out of this kind of life? We can't; they won't.

We have a need for a different military than we did in the days during the Cold War. Today's military must be more mobile and more deployable. Our military must have the American people's full support behind them and their missions. Foreign policy, national defense is not some kind of a Harvard textbook esoteric exercise. This is real. You know that. You have lived it. We must do a better job of investing in our military.

Our national defense does not just consist of weapons, budgets, and five-sided buildings. It consists of the men and women who are asked every day to do their job, to put

their life on the line, to protect America and our interests. The readiness of our military is directly proportional to the quality of life, experience, retention, commitment and excellence of our armed forces. When we see highly trained pilots, senior NCO's, Junior NCO's leaving the military, we have a big problem. This is the challenge that the Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the President, all of us must step up to. The long-term consequences of continuing to defer this problem will be devastating to our nation's security and to our position in the world.

And what about our national missile defense system? I heard Speaker Gingrich referring to this. You heard the Speaker say we don't have one. That's right. We do not have a national missile defense system, as incredible as that sounds. America does not have a missile defense system to protect its people against a ballistic missile attack. This must be a priority. I urge all of you to talk to your congressional delegations; talk to your representatives; talk to your senators. We must do something about this. We are leaving America open to nuclear blackmail. If we do not step up to this challenge now, we put our future generations at a terrible risk, and there will be a terrible consequence as a result of America's lack of leadership and inability to act. Unfortunately, there is not a sense of urgency about this very real threat. No sense of urgency at the White House; at the Pentagon, or unfortunately in the Congress. Nuclear terrorism will surely rear its ugly head in the first part of the 21st Century, and America will not be prepared to stop it.

All of these issues—national defense, foreign policy, trade, domestic policy—are interconnected. Foreign policy is as much about trade as anything. It's about our standard of living. It's about our future. It's about our children and our grandchildren's future. Successful trade requires less government, lower taxes and fewer regulations so that our businesses and our industries can compete globally.

National defense is the guarantor of our foreign policy. America and the world will not fulfil the promise of the 21st Century without a strong, professional, capable and modern military. We must stop the folly, the folly of continuing to cut our national security budget. America's interests around the world are protected and developed by our national defense capabilities and our foreign policy decisions. We can change the course of history and help make the world safer and more prosperous if our leadership is bold, imaginative and steady. And if we seize the moment with clear-headed vision.

Why am I speaking to you about these issues, and not veteran's issues and other issues? All are important. But my friends, this is critically important. This is the future of this nation. The American Legion has always been a vital part of helping develop the policies of our country. There are few organizations as deep and wide in America as The American Legion. With more than three million members, you live in America's neighborhoods. You represent all professions. You come from every cultural economic sector of American society. You are American.

There are also few organizations in America as respected as The American Legion. You must help play a key role in shaping this brave, new world. Because you can tell your friends, your family and your neighbors with real credibility why our nation's national defense and foreign policy are so critical to our future. You must continue to influence the Congress and the President. Your credibility comes from your status as veterans. It is your connecting thread, service to your country. Add together all of your other dynamics and you represent one of the most experienced, diverse and well-rounded organizations in America, because you've been there. America must continue to be able to count on your leadership on behalf of, yes, our nation's veterans, as well as our nation's future. A big responsibility, but you're up to it. You always have been.

The possibilities for America's future are unlimited. It will fall upon the United States to lead the world into the next century. How we face this challenge will determine much of the outcome of the first half of the 21st Century. I look forward to working with all of you to continue to protect veterans' benefits, to strengthen our military, and to anchor our American values and commitment to duty, honor, country.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I'm very proud now to introduce our next guest. As the Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution in the House of Representatives, he played a leading role in advancing the Flag Protection Amendment through that body in June. He is a former Florida state legislator, a native Floridian, a graduate of Haverford College and Yale Law School. Please give a warm welcome to Florida's 12th District Congressman, the Honorable Charles Canady.

Address: The Honorable Charles T. Canady
The United States House of Representatives, Florida

I want to welcome you to Florida. I especially want to welcome those who are from the 12th Congressional District here in Florida. I'm glad to be here with you.

I'm also glad to be on the program here today with Congressman Mike Bilirakis, who is the Congressman from an adjacent congressional district in Florida. There is no one who is a greater advocate for veterans in the Congress than Mike Bilirakis. I'm very proud to serve with Mike as a member of the Florida delegation.

I understand that the motto of The American Legion is 'Still Serving America.' What a fine example all of you set by your willingness to serve your country, not only through military service but also through community service and your work to promote family values. I'm honored to stand today with you as a strong supporter and to thank you for the excellent work you are doing for our country. The more than three million members of The American Legion and more than 15,000 local posts, are a powerful voice for a strong and secure America. As the Senator just said, we are in desperate need of voices for a strong and secure America. And your voice is unparalleled, and we need it at this time to maintain the strength and defense of our country.

But you are also a powerful force for good in communities all across America by your service to veterans and to the families of veterans, and by your efforts to strengthen the family unit and to provide opportunities and assistance to America's children and youth, and by your programs that support patriotism and loyalty and all these things. The American Legion represents the best of the American spirit. You carry on the tradition of sacrificial service to America, that is the foundation for The American Legion. All Americans owe the men and women of The American Legion a great debt of gratitude, not only for your service in defense of freedom during time of war, but also for your service and support of American values today.

I want to especially thank you for the critical role you have played in support of the Flag Protection Amendment to the United States Constitution. As Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, it has been my privilege to work closely with The American Legion to advance this important constitutional amendment which was introduced by Representatives Jerry Solomon of New York, and William Lupenski of Illinois.

Until less than a decade ago, most states and the federal government supported laws prohibiting the desecration of our Flag. However, in 1989 in a case called *Texas vs Johnson*, the Supreme Court of the United States in a five-to-four decision, invalidated the laws of 48

states and an act of Congress which protected the Flag. The court thus deprived the people of their right to protect the most profound and revered symbol of our national identity. In 1990, the Johnson case was followed by the decision in *United States vs Ikeman*, which held unconstitutional a federal statute passed by Congress in the wake of the Johnson decision. With all due respect to the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court was wrong. Our flag is worthy of protection, and the First Amendment does not protect the right of anyone to physically desecrate our Flag.

Now, the opponents of the Flag Protection Amendment claim that the amendment is an attack on free speech. They are wrong. The Flag Protection Amendment would overturn the cases I have mentioned, from the Supreme Court, by restoring the authority of Congress to prohibit physical desecration of the Flag. But nothing in the amendment or the legislation that will be adopted subsequently will prevent anyone expressing any idea or viewpoint he wishes to express. The Flag Protection Amendment simply grants Congress the power to restrict one type of conduct, that is conduct involving the physical desecration of the American Flag. Conduct which some have chosen as a crude, to put it charitably, a crude means of expression.

As Chief Justice Renquist stated in his dissent in the Johnson case, the physical desecration of the Flag is, and I quote, "...the equivalent of an inarticulate grunt or roar. That it seems fair to say is most likely to be indulged in, not to express any particular idea, but to antagonize others." By allowing Congress to protect the Flag from physical desecration, we would do nothing to impede the full and free expression of ideas by Americans. The First Amendment would remain as strong as ever.

Now as I look out over this auditorium today, I know that the vast majority of you have served this country in the armed forces, and many of you here served behind the scene as spouses, mothers and fathers of loved ones who were in the military. I'm sure there are many of you here today who could stand up on this podium and testify much more eloquently than I can about what the American Flag has meant to you. The truth is, from the founding of our nation, the Stars and Stripes have served to inspire all Americans. We all know the story of Francis Scott Key who saw Old Glory waving triumphantly over Ft. McHenry in Baltimore Harbor during the war of 1812, and was inspired to write our beloved National Anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. But Francis Scott Key certainly was not the only one who had been deeply moved by our Flag. During the Revolutionary War, the brilliant young commander who would later become the first President of these United States, knew that the American Flag would inspire his troops to fight more bravely.

In 1781, George Washington marched his troops and a large French force south from New York to Virginia. Once they got to Yorktown, the men dug trenches and prepared for battle, waiting for the signal to begin the bombardment. That signal was the raising of the American Flag. Private Joseph Martin, one of the men there, later remembered the moment. "I felt a secret pride swell in my heart," he said, "when I saw the Star Spangled Banner waving majestically." It appeared like an omen of success. As it turned out, Private Martin was right. Soon thereafter, General Cornwallis, under siege by land and by sea, surrendered and the British troops laid down their arms at Yorktown, effectively ending the Revolutionary War, and securing our independence.

Since the birth of this country, the Flag has continued to serve as a source of inspiration. As our fledgling nation faced one of its early and most devastating crises, Daniel Webster, the great senator and orator from Massachusetts, called for unity by invoking the American Flag. Based on his words, I believe he would have wholeheartedly supported our Flag Protection Amendment. Webster said this: "When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven,...Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold

the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced,...not a stripe erased or polluted, not a single star obscured, bearing for its motto, ... Liberty and Union, now and for ever, one and inseperable!"

Today Old Glory continues to serve as a bond of union for our nation. In addition, it holds symbolism for the fundamental principles on which America was founded. As Justice John Paul Stevens once said, "It is a symbol of our freedom of equal opportunity, of religious tolerance, and of good will for other peoples to share our aspirations." Woodrow Wilson said it this way: "The American Flag is a Flag not only of America, but of humanity. Wrapped up in the Stars and Stripes we have the values, the hopes, the history, the past, and the future of the United States."

Perhaps one of the most poignant images of the American Flag in our society is memorialized not far from our Nation's Capitol near Arlington Cemetery, and you know what I'm talking about. There fashioned out of bronze stands a somber reminder of the price paid by Americans soldiers in World War II. The Iwo Jima Memorial depicts five Marines and a Navy corpsman planting the U.S. Flag in the ground at the top of Mt. Suribachi. The world changed forever for the young men who lashed that flag to a 20-foot piece of pipe and raised it into the air on February 23rd, 1945. What the famous war photo could not explicitly show, however, were the 23,000 Marines who lost their lives at Iwo Jima. That battle, which became one of the fiercest in Marine history, cost more American lives per square foot, than any other offensive by U.S. forces in World War II. So when the Stars and Stripes waved in the battle haze over Iwo Jima, it was truly a testimony to the lives of the young men who gave everything they had, and for whom as Chester Nimitz rightly noted, uncommon valor was a common virtue.

Now even in peacetime the American Flag holds a special significance that inspires and moves us to our core. Bruce Baumgartner, winner of one silver and two gold medals in the Olympics knows that firsthand. This 286-pound wrestler was chosen to carry the American Flag in the opening ceremonies of the Olympics last year in Atlanta. He said, "I've known incredible Olympic emotion. Standing on gold medal platforms, seeing America's Flag unfolded over my head, and then hearing the Star-Spangled Banner. The goose bumps of recalling such moments. But carrying our Flag ranked as the highlight of my career."

Now some say that the first flag was actually God-given, that is the rainbow. That multi-colored banner hanging in the sky served as a promise from God to Noah. "A token of the covenant between me and the earth," God said, in Genesis 9:13.

Similarly the Flag of the United States serves as a covenant of sorts. Every time it waves, it reminds us of the fundamental principles for which it and America stand—liberty, freedom, justice and equality. And so we teach our children at a very young age to treat our flag with reverence. As the young voices around the flagpole have recited for years, the Stars and Stripes stand for America which is one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. As a member of Congress, I believe we must continue to work to uphold the values which we all hold dear, and the values for which you as veterans have fought so hard. In working to pass the Flag Protection Amendment, we affirm the fact that our national symbol is worthy of respect by all Americans. The Flag Protection Amendment recognizes that there are limits to conduct which may be done in the name of freedom of expression. And it recognizes that the American people want a line drawn at the physical desecration of our Flag. That Flag belongs to the American people. It is a symbol of our nation, and no one has a right to treat it with disrespect by desecrating it.

Sadly in these days, it seems that respect is all too often a forgotten, if not ridiculed, concept. In America too many have lost respect, not only for traditional values for our parents, our elders and our forefathers, but also for life itself. We see this played out in the

tragic stories on the evening news, in our classrooms where discipline is a scarce commodity, and in our families, many of which are broken apart by abuse and neglect. We are facing a profound crisis in our nation, and I believe we desperately need to reinstate a healthy respect for the traditional values on which America was founded. As we work to protect the Flag from desecration, we will take a small, but in formation, step toward restoring some respect and honor which we have lost along the way.

I would like to close with a story that highlights the special place that the American Flag holds in our hearts. For Boy Scout Troop 514 in Monument, Colorado, the Flag indeed has a special significance. That troop's commander, Air Force Major Bill Talbert, who was assigned to the Space Command in Colorado Springs, came up with an idea to instill pride and unity in his troop. His idea was to request to have an American Flag flown over the Capitol building in Washington, and then try to have it sent into outerspace on one of NASA's missions. The troop's 4' x 6' nylon flag was raised over the Capitol on January 25, 1985. A few months later the boys were thrilled to learn their flag was chosen to ride the Challenger Space Shuttle, along with other memorabilia, including a handful of silver medallions.

On that fateful day in 1986, Talbert and his son Tim, cheered at the lift-off of the space shuttle which carried their very own flag. As we all know, 73 seconds later their hopes were dashed, as the tragic reality of the shuttle explosion sank in, and the boys, along with the whole country mourned the great loss of the Challenger and its crew. As the Boy Scouts went on with their lives Major Talbert had a strange feeling that the flag had survived. But everyone he spoke to said the same thing, it probably didn't survive the explosion and fire. If it did, it will probably never be found. If it is found, you won't ever hear about it. If you do, you won't ever get it back.

But the flag did indeed survive, and was found and recovered from the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, along with other debris from the shuttle. While the silver medallions had melted into little silver ingots, the Flag remained folded and sealed in a plastic bag. It was, as Talbert described, unscorched, unstained, unmarked. He noted that the flag was probably blown free in the explosion, and there's an awful lot of people who think it was safeguarded by the providential hand that the framers of the Constitution kept referring to.

The journey of this Flag was not over, however. The next year Chief Justice Warren Berger designated it as the official Flag for the 200th Anniversary of the signing of the United States Constitution. Three members of the Boy Scout Troop carried the Flag in a parade in Philadelphia, marking the bicentennial, and then two days later the Flag was flown over the United States Capitol, again marking the end of a journey which began at the Capitol dome; went to the edge of space; to the ocean floor and back.

This story is a remarkable reminder to all of us of the lasting significance of the American Flag. As Captain Talbert said, the Boy Scout flag emerged from the explosion unscorched, unstained and unmarked. What a fitting symbol of the respect due our Flag.

Now the opponents of the Flag Protection Amendment attempt to denigrate the proposal as trivial or unimportant. Once again they are wrong. Protecting our flag is far from trivial. Clearly, the Stars and Stripes is more than just a piece of cloth. As Henry Ward Beecher said, "A thoughtful mind when it sees a nation's flag, sees not the flag only, but the nation itself." When we see the American Flag, we see America in all her glory. Raised at Iwo Jima; planted on the moon, and draped over the coffins of thousands of Americans who have sacrificed their lives for our great country. The Flag of the United States of America is a national asset and so it is fitting and necessary that we adopt the Flag Protection Amendment to protect and preserve this symbol of our great nation.

I want to thank each of you at The American Legion for the tremendous effort you have put forth on behalf of the Flag Protection Amendment. I believe that we would not have passed this amendment in the House with such a solid majority had it not been for the work of The American Legion and other outstanding grassroot organizations, educating the members of Congress on this issue and building support in the state legislatures around the country. The dedicated persistent support of The American Legion was absolutely critical to our success in the House of Representatives on the Flag Protection Amendment.

I want to thank Major General Patrick Brady, Chairman of the Citizens Flag Alliance, who testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, for his eloquent defense of the Flag Protection Amendment. I also want to thank Dan Wheeler, Executive Director of the Citizens Flag Alliance, for all his hard work and tireless dedication to this cause. I know that all of you have helped to spread the word on this important issue, and it has definitely had a positive and powerful impact on Capitol Hill.

Work remains to be done, however. We're facing an uphill battle in the Senate. As we prepare for the vote in the Senate later this month, I am, however, hopeful that we will gain the last few votes that we need to see this amendment passed. Let's keep working together, and perhaps I'll be standing with you here again soon with the text of our amendment on its way to a quick ratification by the states. That's what we all want; that's what we are all going to continue working for.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our next speaker represents Florida's Ninth District in the United States House of Representatives. He's a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and Vice Chairman of its Subcommittee on Health. He has helped secure more resources for Florida's veterans including 20 million dollars for a spinal cord injury unit in Tampa, and a larger allocation of the federal veterans-services budget. He stood with us, by co-sponsoring the Flag Protection Constitutional Amendment in the House. Please welcome my friend, United States Representative, Michael Bilirakis.

Address: The Honorable Michael Bilirakis
The United States House of Representatives, Florida

My colleague, Mr. Canady, who just spoke to you about the need to protect our Flag, and I'll tell you something, he speaks the same way on the Floor of the House on that particular issue. He comes from the heart.

My fellow members of the Legion. I would like to thank Commander Frank for his invitation to address The American Legion's 79th Annual National Convention.

Every year, as you can imagine, I and other members receive many invitations to speak at various events. However, as a veteran, as a former two-term American Legion Post Commander, I served as a Post Commander long before I ever dreamed of running for any political office, as a member of Post 173 led by Jerry Clark who's here in the audience, who served many times more than I as Post Commander, much more active than I, much more efficient than I; Katie Robinson immediate Past State Commander; Ray Weaver and current State Commander Bill Seeman, and my fellow Floridians over there, I can't really see you because of the lights, welcome, welcome all of you to my congressional district.

Commander Frank provided me with a long list of possible topics for this speech today. This list reflected the wide range of issues that are important to our nation's veterans, and I will try to address as many of them as possible in my allotted time.

I will tell you that I like to talk about the true meaning of heroes, of how we worship sports and entertainment personalities, but don't even take the time to shake the hand or to

say hello to a lonely military man or woman in uniform seen in an airport or seen in a bus station or train station, et cetera. About the only true hallmark of heroes is the military veteran and those in uniform.

But I know that you are interested in issues here today and so I would like to begin my remarks with an issue that has not received a great deal of attention. Mr. Canady alluded to it, but one that I believe should be a major concern to the nation's veterans, and that is the diminishing number of veterans serving in the United States Congress. It used to be, when you stopped to think about it, a military service was almost a prerequisite to running for public office. But with every election, the number of members of Congress who have military experience dwindles. At one point, two-thirds of the members of Congress were veterans. Today only about one-third have served in the military. I'll tell you why this matters. It means fewer and fewer members of Congress have firsthand knowledge of the sacrifices that military service entails.

This lack of military experience impacts the ability of veterans organizations like The American Legion to get their message heard on Capitol Hill. More and more often when the House of Representatives is debating legislation affecting veterans, one of my colleagues, invariably, will ask me the question: Why should veterans receive special treatment? My answer is always the same: Because they earned it. Because they earned it more than any other man or woman in America ever has.

Let me give you an example of how the change in representation has affected my own efforts on behalf of veterans. As many of you know, for well over 10 years, I've been trying to eliminate the offset between military retired pay and VA disability compensation.

Military retirees are the only group of federal retirees who are required to pay their disability compensation out of their retired pay. My legislation to eliminate this inequitable offset has received strong bipartisan support. For example, by the end of the 101st Congress, my bill, HR303, had 300 co-sponsors. There are only 435 members in the House of representatives. By the end of the next Congress, the 102nd Congress, just two years later, my bill had only 198 co-sponsors. Today, the legislation has 109 co-sponsors. Three hundred, better than three hundred to one hundred and nine.

After every election there are fewer co-sponsors returning to Congress due to retirement or election defeats. This means that in every Congress, I have to work harder and harder to educate my new colleagues on the inequity of requiring military retirees to fund their own disability compensation. Because they lack military experience, it's often hard for them to fully appreciate the rigors of military life and therefore they are not as quick to co-sponsor legislation that benefits veterans and military retirees.

There are approximately 26 million veterans in our nation, but only a small percentage of them actually belong to veterans service organizations like The American Legion. That's a pet peeve of mine that a small handful of 10 or 15 percent. I just don't know why we can't do something more about that. I can't imagine veterans, when their benefits get improved, must think it comes from heaven. I'm here to tell you it comes from The American Legion and the VFW and DAV, et cetera. These groups do a fantastic job representing the concerns of their members, especially before my Veterans Affairs Committee. However, it's important and it's something we have to remind Legionnaires and members of the veterans community all the time. The actions of other congressional committees such as the Budget and Appropriation Committees particularly, often have a tremendous impact on veterans programs.

Charlie Canady spoke to us about the Flag. The Judiciary Committee has a great role to play as far as that is concerned. We know we can lobby the Veterans Affairs Committee, but we also have to lobby these other committees, maybe even more specifically. That's why

it is so important for all veterans to express their opinions and their concerns, not only to the members of my committee, but to the members of all of the committees which affect veterans benefits and programs, as well as the House and Senate leadership.

I know that many people think that it's a waste of time to contact their Representatives. I suppose before I decided to run for an office, and this wasn't the first office that I ran for, other than The American Legion Commander, and Chamber of Commerce President, et cetera, but believe me, most members of Congress pay very close attention to what the folks back home are saying. Most Americans think that their voices are just a single voice; nobody is going to pay attention. I'm telling you that the more a member of Congress hears from his or her constituents, the more attention he or she will pay to an issue. It's amazing how much we really pay attention. The fact that each of you have taken the time to attend this convention says a great deal about your willingness to be involved in work on behalf of your fellow veterans, and I sure as heck salute you and commend you.

When you return home, I hope you will share my message, all of our messages with the veterans and your local Post and communities. Veterans must be politically active to ensure that every member of Congress understands that you have in fact earned your benefits, not just because you have reached a certain age; not because you have a certain disability, but because you answered the call of duty and put on our country's uniform. I can't say anything more important to you than that.

My efforts to eliminate the offset between retired pay and VA disability compensation will only be successful if I have the assistance of veterans from across the country. And in this regard I hope you will contact your own Representative to express your support for my legislation, HR303 and HR65.

Earlier this year, and I don't know whether Newt referred to it here in his comments to you, I arranged a meeting with Speaker Gingrich and representatives from the various veterans and military retiree organizations that support my legislation on the offset. And during this meeting, the Speaker pledged to work with us on this important issue and said he would speak to Representative Floyd Spence, the Chairman of the full National Security Committee, about hearings about my legislation. I'm hopeful that these hearings will take place later this year or certainly early next year.

There are other legislative initiatives that also need your support. HR240, the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act would expand veterans preference rights in federal employment.

HR240 would expand access to open jobs, provide veterans with some additional rights during agency downsizing; establish new procedures for veterans to appeal decisions, and designate the circumvention of veterans preferences as a prohibited personnel practice. The House of Representatives approved the bill by voice vote on April 9, 1997. The bill has been forwarded to the Senate for further consideration, and is currently under the jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. To date, to date no other action has been taken by the Senate. Ridiculous. What are we doing? Sitting on our hands?

As you may recall, the House approved similar legislation during the last Congress. However, the Senate took no action on this legislation before the Congress adjourned, and the bill effectively died. Are we going to let it happen again? In order to avoid the same thing, I encourage everyone here today to contact their Senators, particularly those who are members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, to urge the timely consideration of HR240.

Another issue, one that The American Legion is extremely active on, and I commend you for it, is Flag desecration. Ronald Reagan once said, "I don't know all the other national anthems of the world, but I do know this, the only anthem of those I do know that ends with

a question is ours. Does that banner still wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave?" He went on to say, "Yes, it does. And we're going to see that it continues to wave over that kind of country."

I recall these words from one of our country's finest statesman because he believed as we do, that Old Glory stands for the United States of America, and to desecrate it, means that America should not exist. In our history, more than one million men and women have died fighting for this nation. If these now silent defenders of America's future have taught us anything, it is that because of the men and women who were willing to put their lives on the line in the defense of our nation, the Flag remains a symbol worth defending.

And I took the liberty to invite my first cousin, Bill Millus, who's sitting up here, to join me here today all the way from Tarpon Springs, Florida, because he was my guy in uniform in World War II. When he came home on furlough, I used to travel around with him and when we visited friends, family and that sort of thing, everybody asked him whether the Army was robbing the cradle. In those days, Bill always looked a lot younger than he really was.

Bill, along with so many of all of us here, fought to retain that symbol. Desecration of our Flag diminishes freedom and democracy. It also dishonors all of those who stood so bravely and sacrificed so much to protect what our Flag stands for. Not that long ago, we celebrated national Flag Day, a day when we paused to reflect on the meaning of this symbol of national unity. Several days earlier the House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved HJ Res. 54, the amendment to the Constitution, that I proudly co-sponsored, to prohibit the physical desecration of the American Flag. HJ Res. 54 is currently awaiting action by the Senate Committee and the Judiciary. There you go again, by the Senate Committee and the Judiciary.

The time has come for the people to decide the issue of Flag protection. Let the people decide. But the only way the people are going to have an opportunity to do it is if we move it out of the Congress and it is signed, of course, by the President. We must allow the citizens of our country to register their concern, and to vote on the Flag Protection Amendment. Let democracy operate. With the strong encouragement from the American public, I hope that the Senate will approve HJ Res. 54 in the near future.

Thus far I have focused my remarks on a few of the legislative initiatives that are currently pending in Congress, but I know that these are not your only concerns. You are also interested in the VA health care system. This was first developed to provide needed care to veterans injured or ill as a result of service during wartime. At the close of World War I and World War II, the federal government undertook efforts to increase the number of VA medical facilities to meet the expected demand for veterans returning with injuries or illness sustained during hostilities.

The 104th Congress sought significant changes to the structure of the VA medical system. After years of debate, veterans eligibility rules were changed, and the Legion played a large part in this, so that veterans could be served more effectively. Under the old eligibility system, veterans often had to be admitted to the hospital in order to receive medical care, whether they needed to go to the hospital or not. The new eligibility rules will allow veterans to receive care in the most effective manner. It will also help the VA to better manage its resources and take care of more veterans.

The VA health care system was also reorganized into more decentralized regional structures called Veterans Integrated Service Networks. Possibly Hershel Gober went into these subjects with you. Numerous construction projects to improve and increase ambulatory care services were proposed, authorized and funded. Last year in this Congress, and again in the previous Congress, the VA was required to develop a new system to allocate VA

medical care resources. The Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation, or VERA, is intended to support resource allocation from underutilized inpatient services to under served locales. VERA also takes into account what we fondly here in Florida call 'snow birds.' They temporarily move to warmer locales during the winter, and this is particularly important in states such as Florida.

These steps to improve and modernize the VA health care system were long over due. During the remainder of this Congress, my Veterans Affairs Committee will be conducting oversite on these changes to ensure that the quality of care provided to veterans is not compromised to the underutilized states, and that the underutilized area of veterans is not hurt by the relocation, because funds have been reallocated Of course, there are some that are very unhappy about that, but we have got to be sure that the veterans aren't treated badly in the process.

During this 105th Congress, we have also taken steps to augment the resources available to the VA health care system. The Balanced Budget Act which was recently signed into law, includes a legislative initiative to encourage VA medical centers to more aggressively pursue reimbursements from private insurance companies for the treatment of nonservice connected conditions. Previously, when the VA collected these funds, they were turned over to the United States Treasury. Under the Balanced Budget Act, the VA is allowed to retain the funds collected from third parties, and use these additional resources for VA medical care spending. This is an important revenue enhancement that the VSO's have advocated for several years, and I am pleased that we are finally able to make this change. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 604 million dollars will be available to the VA medical care account as a result of the collection effort.

Over the years, many veterans advocates, including The American Legion, have suggested that the VA should also be reimbursed for the nonservice-connected care it provides to the veterans who are covered by the Medicare program. In fact, my Veterans Affairs Committee first approved legislation to authorize a Medicare subvention demonstration project in the 102nd Congress. Unfortunately, the committees with jurisdiction over the Medicare program did not approve the legislation and it was never enacted into law. As a conferee in the Balanced Budget Act, I argued in favor of including a veterans' Medicare subvention demonstration project in the final bill. Regrettably, we were unable to include such a specific provision in the act that was signed into law. However, we did include a requirement that the Secretaries of HHS and VA submit to Congress a detailed implementation plan for a Medicare subvention demonstration project for veterans. So it's progressing.

The Balanced Budget Act, as you know, does authorize the Medicare subvention demonstration to military retirees, and I'm hopeful that a successful DoD Medicare subvention demonstration will help pave the way for veterans subvention projects. As you can see, a lot of changes are taking place in the VA health care system. More changes will be needed to ensure that the VA will be able to meet the future needs of our nation's veterans.

Finally, I would like to say very briefly a few words about our Persian Gulf veterans. The American Legion should be commended for its efforts on behalf of the men and women who served in the Persian Gulf. Many of us are concerned about the illnesses that are affecting our veterans and active duty personnel. Despite the broad range of research projects into Persian Gulf War illnesses, researchers have been unable to identify, to establish causation, if you will, a single illness syndrome or cause of the health problems experienced by many Persian Gulf veterans. Basically it is the same history, if you will, that we had with Agent Orange. This is a continuing source of frustration for our veterans and their families.

But I would like to think that we learned much during the Agent Orange debates, and hopefully we will apply what we learned to the Persian Gulf situation.

Many veterans who have expressed concern that the government is not doing everything it can to find a solution to their illnesses, and this is further complicated by the revelation, that U.S. service-members may have been exposed to chemical and biological agents while in the Gulf Region. In this current Congress, the Veterans Affairs Committee has held several hearings on the concerns of Persian Gulf veterans, and I expect that additional hearings will be conducted by my committee before the end of the Congress. Obviously, it's incumbent upon us all to do everything we can to find a solution to the health problems now being experienced by some Persian Gulf veterans, active duty personnel and their families. However, in the meantime we must make certain that our veterans are receiving the highest quality of care.

Again I thank Commander Frank for the opportunity to address all of you here today. I really consider this a heck of an honor, and I want you to know that. But there are many challenges facing you, facing us, our nation's veterans, that we could overcome by working together. The trouble is we were not united enough.

A very brief story. In my first term in the Congress, The American Legion would come up and present its legislative initiatives. The VFW and the other veteran organizations would come up, but all separately. I remember making the comment once about how we could really dig into the meat of these things a lot better if they all would come up and sit at a table and basically present the views of veterans. For the most part, they are similar. There are some differences, of course. I was told by a man who is now retired, John Paul Hammish, who was a ranking Republican at the time in veterans affairs, who said, "Mike, are you kidding? Until recently The American Legion and the VFW refused to sit at the same table together." And everywhere I go I hear that type of fracturing taking place. So we have got to work together. We have got to be united, and involved in the political process. If we do all that, these challenges can be overcome.

I thank God for the privilege and great honor of standing shoulder to shoulder with all of you. Thank you and God bless you all.

Presentation: Certificate of Appreciation
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: It's been a pleasure to have served this past year with a man—the National Chaplain—who lives a life for God and country. Reverend Charles Richmond, of Edmund, Oklahoma, is a United States Army veteran of World War II in Korea. He was the youngest man to ever enter the United States Army's chaplain service. For 37 years he has been a member of The American Legion Post 111 in Edmund.

It is with great pleasure that I present to the Reverend Richmond a certificate of appreciation for his caring and devoted service to The American Legion. The certificate of appreciation presented to the Reverend Charles Richmond appointed and served as chaplain of The American Legion, 1996-1997, given in recognition of the faithful and honorable service to The American Legion.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN RICHMOND: It is indeed an honor, and I consider a great privilege for this award, and to serve. I want to express appreciation for the support that I have received this year, from all The American Legion, and particularly, I would want to specifically recognize my people from the state of Oklahoma, who have supported me and helped me in so many ways. Joe Frank especially has been so supportive in the efforts for

God and country. But I cannot leave without one other statement. I want to pay homage and tribute to the many chaplains of The American Legion. We have 55 state department chaplains, 735 district chaplains, and 14,908 post chaplains, and add to that the chaplains of the Sons of The American Legion and the chaplains of the Auxiliary. These are people who lead in reverent respect and service to the God of The American Legion, God and country. That's a lot of prayers and a lot of service.

Report: National Commander's Report to the Convention
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

National Adjutant Bob Spanogle introduces me as a man who always wears a smile. Is he right? Always has a kind word. You may want to ask my wife about that. I'm happy most of the time. My family has a lot to do with that. So does my adjustment to being in this wheelchair, the red one. Some people think that I coordinate the wheelchair with the cap but that's not exactly true; it just happened that way. My adjustment to this chair is about making the best of things, of life. Seeing the glass as half full. Let me clarify at this point that happiness does not mean having your head in the clouds, and it doesn't mean hiding your head in the sand. Happy people are not oblivious to life's issues and problems. They just face those issues and problems with an optimistic, can-do spirit. That is what I like to think I'm about.

That is also what The American Legion has always been about: Making the best of things, taking those things that are broken in America and fixing them, taking the things that are good about America and making them better. Helping this nation realize its magnificent potential. Which brings me to the primary reason I'm happy: My life is about tomorrow. Not about yesterday. Tomorrow. I can get through every day in this chair, but I can't get through every day dwelling on the events that put me in it.

My life is about building a better tomorrow for my family and for the countless Americans who benefit from The American Legion's service to God and country. My parents taught me traditional American values: Freedom—Equality—Justice. They taught me to honor our flag, to respect others, to remember how fortunate I was to be an American. Through such teachings, they were building a better tomorrow for me. As I reflect on my parents' wisdom, I realize that I was destined to serve my country in its time of need—and to continue that service through The American Legion.

I joined in 1968, soon after returning from Vietnam and marrying Barbara. Marrying Barbara is the best decision I've ever made, but joining The American Legion is the second-best. As your National Commander, I've logged more than 125,000 air miles, traveled to 47 states, the District of Columbia and six foreign countries. It's been a great ride—one that has given me a much clearer perspective on who and what The American Legion is all about.

I've learned that The American Legion is not me, all decked out in my bright red Commander's cap. The American Legion is not a sprawling limestone building in Indianapolis. It's not a slogan or a concept—not really—nor *The American Legion Magazine*, nor *The Dispatch*. The American Legion is you. You are The American Legion.

The American Legion is the nearly 3 million of you who do the right thing simply because it's the right thing to do. Nearly 3 million good, solid Americans who ask nothing in return but the satisfaction of knowing that what they did was right. In how many other areas of modern life can that be said with conviction? America is facing a disheartening trend. Once, we were a nation of joiners. Today, people are "opting out" of the organized activities that once were the hallmark of our society.

Despite the fanfare surrounding the President's recent Summit on Volunteerism, volunteerism in America has been slipping. According to a recent NBC report, 5 million Americans have dropped out of the volunteer pipeline since 1989. As Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating said at the time of the Philadelphia Summit, "It's sad that we have to have this conference at all." As Legionnaires, we have never needed a conference to remind us to volunteer, have we? We are defined by our volunteerism. It's the nature of what we do, and who we are. We don't need to hear it preached to us by the kinds of pop-culture celebrities that came to Philadelphia. We hear it from our hearts.

You know how much is said about how America has lost our heroes. Songs have even been written about it. They ask, "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio...?" Well, I'm talking to thousands of heroes, right here in this room. Thousands of heroes representing millions who cannot be with us today. Millions of heroes who embody the exquisite blueprint for America's future called the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution.

You assist veterans, serve young people, stand for law and order, support a strong common defense, respect our nation's Constitution, and advocate laws that reflect traditional American values. You breathe into life those ideals by serving your respective communities. As one key example, you support a constitutional amendment to return to the American people the right to protect the Flag from potential physical desecration. This hasn't been easy, because of how the process works. Someone once said that the architect who designed Washington knew what he was doing when he laid out the city as a place that goes around in circles. That's what we've been up against since we embarked on this noble campaign back in 1989.

Still, thanks to your influence, the House passed a Flag-protection Constitutional Amendment in June. We still have our work cut out for us, as you heard from many of the representatives speaking this morning. We must contact our U.S. Senators and make our collective voice heard on this issue. It's not over. But we are secure in knowing that we have 80 percent of the American people on our side. You can live up to your "hero" billing, keep the faith for tomorrow by keeping the pressure on your U.S. Senator. It's inexcusable to sit on the fence—to let some high-and-mighty special-interest groups tell us why the Constitution doesn't really mean what it says in Article 5, where it specifically gives the American people the right to amend it. As Legionnaires, we are the last people who need to be told what the U.S. Constitution is about. We know what it means.

We have lived the Constitution. And we have died for it. You are heroes for not allowing our great nation to take the easy way out of this issue, for reminding our legislators that a society that stands for nothing will fall for anything. The men and women of The American Legion and The American Legion family will convince the Senate that the Flag must be protected by the law of the land. And when Congress sends the Flag-protection Amendment to the states, it'll be passed faster than any amendment in history.

You are heroes, also, for your devotion to "mutual helpfulness." Too many of our members lost just about everything they had in springtime floods and you came to their rescue through your generous support for the National Emergency Fund.

So far this year, the NEF has awarded 1.4 million dollars in cash grants to natural disaster victims. I thank you for that. More than a million dollars of that sum went to help victims of the unprecedented Red River flooding in Minnesota and North Dakota.

While Congress and the President bickered over a disaster-relief bill, The American Legion was putting cash grants at the hands of people like Selmer Martinson of Grand Forks, North Dakota, whose home was gutted by the raging waters.

In a letter to National Headquarters, Mr. Martinson wrote:

> My wife Bernice and I do not have words to thank The American Legion enough for your mighty fine act of love and kindness—with the check in the amount of $1,500... We took a pretty heavy hit; however we will survive this, thanks to organizations like our American Legion.

Mr. Martinson's letter is representative of the "thanks" we received from many of your comrades. Later, when the NEF fund itself was in need of rescue, you answered my call for donations. At the July membership workshop, the Department of Nebraska made a two-thousand dollar contribution to the NEF. The Department of Washington State chipped in ten-thousand dollars. And the Department of Minnesota—itself the recipient of so many grants—presented a check for one-hundred-thousand dollars to the NEF.

To help all members of our family in time of natural disaster, we need to donate more, my friends, to the National Emergency Fund. Visit the NEF Booth—and make a contribution. It could be the best donation you've ever made.

Of course, our organization is perhaps best known for serving those outside our Legion Family. You are a hero for helping to expand our Americanism programs: Scouting, Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports, the National High School Oratorical Contest, Boys State and Boys Nation. The young people in these programs learn that we're the good guys. They look up to us. But these kids learn something else as well. They learn that good wholesome values are more important than being "cool." That even in the '90s, values still matter.

And by the way, don't ever let anyone tell you today's younger generation just doesn't share our outlook on life. There are plenty of young people who embrace traditional American values. Among them were the hundreds of thousands of men and women who fought in the Persian Gulf War. So when thousands of these wartime veterans got sick, The American Legion listened to them. Now, thanks to our advocacy, the Pentagon listened to them. The Department of Veterans Affairs listened to them. Congress listened to them. And the White House listened to them. In the last year, our Persian Gulf Initiative made great strides on behalf of sick Gulf War veterans. By working with our leaders in Washington, we've opened more doors to long-term health-care for sick Gulf War veterans.

Investigations that The American Legion called for have led to reforms:

First, our government knows now what we knew all along. There's no way stress could account for all the problems we're seeing in this once healthy population;

Second, veterans who get sick 10 years after combat will be eligible for health-care in Federal treatment facilities. Before we bulldogged this issue, the Department of Veterans Affairs turned away veterans who got sick more than two years after the war.

Eventually the Federal government will follow-up with those Gulf War veterans who suffer from undiagnosed illnesses. We want to make sure they're being properly treated. Bottom line: those who sacrificed for freedom in the Persian Gulf have a friend in you and me—the men and the women of The American Legion. We must build a better tomorrow for these Gulf War veterans and for veterans of future conflicts whose scars won't heal when the shooting stops. The American Legion will not stand for another Agent Orange debacle.

The Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system is a national asset. As long as there's an American Legion, this national asset will remain intact. You can help protect it. Urge your congressional representatives to support The American Legion's vision for reform in veterans health-care—the GI Bill of Health. The GI Bill of Health is a workable plan to make the VA health-care system accessible to more veterans—and their families. This plan will not only expand health-care alternatives for veterans, it will pump third-party funding into the system to keep it going. We're going to see this GI Bill of Health become reality. The plan will come before Congress soon. Make sure your elected representatives hear from

you. I, for example, write letters to my elected representatives in Missouri, even though I've also seen them in Washington from time to time. Sticking together in this way, we can build a better tomorrow for our nation's veterans' health care.

Which brings me to the subject of membership. When I think about membership, I can't help but think about the selfless motto that carried us through our wartime experiences. These experiences—unique in some way for each of us—nonetheless, form a shared background: *We shall not fail those with whom we serve.*

We all subscribed to this once. Whether or not we actually spoke the words, it was a way of life for us. We were responsible for our comrades-in-battle, and when we returned from battle, we knew we remained responsible for ensuring that our brothers- and sisters-in-combat were taken care of in civilian life. What's more, we know the significance of passing the torch to the next generation. We know that recruiting disciples is part of "not failing" our comrades. We need an ample regiment of Legionnaires to follow in our footsteps, reinforcements who guarantee that if we finish our hitches, there will be others to pick up the gauntlet.

So, we don't know precisely what threats veterans may face in years to come, but the handwriting on the wall is clear to those of us who've been at this for a while. Many of our eligible brothers and sisters who haven't even gotten involved don't yet appreciate the gravity of the situation. Just as today's military runs the risk of becoming a "hollow force," we cannot allow ourselves to become a "hollow organization," with our resources spread too thin to be a factor in the struggle for veterans' rights.

We shall not fail those with whom we serve.

Strong programs and solid initiatives on veterans' behalf will bring in more new members to our ranks. Please keep these young veterans involved in post activities. Your post can benefit from their vitality and enthusiasm. And the only way to groom the heroes of tomorrow's American Legion is to use their talents today.

While we're talking about membership, let me also point out something many of us don't stop to think about when we get down on ourselves about not hitting our membership goals. As we meet today, overall Legion membership remains above what it was throughout the '60s, '70s and most of the '80s. The American Legion, in 1980, had 2,600,000 members. Today, we remain above 2.8-million, which of course is an increase from 1980—a modest one—but an increase nevertheless. And it's all the more impressive in light of what's been happening at other fraternal groups and organizations.

Referring to America as a whole, Ronald Reagan once said: "Double—even triple our problems—and we'd still be better-off than any other nation on Earth." And, incidentally, if you don't want to take Reagan's word for it, I invite you to pick up a copy of this month's special issue of *The American Legion Magazine* and read it from cover to cover. The issue is called "Good News, America," and that's exactly what it contains, inspiring stories about why the glass is at least half full—maybe even 90 percent full—after all. And when it comes to membership, maybe the glass is 100 percent full. Let's think about this for a moment.

We want to sign up veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Panama, Grenada, and the Persian Gulf, we want them all. All of today's active-duty servicemembers are eligible for membership in The American Legion because the wartime period of eligibility is, of course, still open. What an incredible opportunity if we can get as many younger veterans as we want. All we have to do, as Joe Cilleli would say, is ask them to join. So when it comes to membership, we have a vista of potential Legionnaires which stretches as far as we can see. The membership glass is 100 percent full.

The same applies to The American Legion as a whole. Yes, we have some problems and issues to face, but the heart of our great organization is as healthy as it has ever been. With

a network of more than 14,000 Posts and nearly three-million committed patriots, we rank among the most active grass-roots forces working for a better America. That explains the attentive reception I get whenever I have the honor of carrying The American Legion's message to our leaders in Washington.

On July 3rd, I made my fourth White House visit. I met with the President and told him The American Legion supports enlarging NATO. You may have seen the East Room meeting on C-SPAN.

I've also carried many of your concerns to Capitol Hill. And although Congress doesn't have time to listen to one of three-hundred-million Americans, Congress makes time for three-million out of three-hundred-million. So when I rolled up my sleeves into Capitol Hill, members of Congress knew you were behind me, in spirit and there is strength in numbers. When The American Legion speaks, believe me, people listen. When we say build the World War II Memorial, the nay-sayers don't get to first base. When we say balance the budget, but not on the backs of the service to veterans, our leaders take note. When we say our national defense is dangerously close to being compromised, leading defense-industry publications print it—chapter and verse. When we tell officials in Vietnam that we mean business on the accounting of our POWs and MIAs, they show a willingness to cooperate.

We are, after all, the people who took an oath, donned a uniform and fought for our country. Then, when we returned, we traded in our helmets for an American Legion cap. Ever since, we've been "Still Serving America."

And now I come to the end of my year serving you. I look forward to taking off this red cap and putting on a blue cap. And after I do that, I'm going to get back to work in Missouri Post 777. But before I think about that, let me say a few words about this very special moment. About the man Post 777 is named after.

If only I could share this moment with a great man—a real American hero in his own right: Joseph L. Frank. He was one of those World War II patriots, who sacrificed to save the world. I wish my father could see me now. I know he'd be proud of how I overcame personal crisis, got my life together and rose through the ranks of The American Legion—serving as Post, District and Department Commander in Missouri.

My father inspired me to serve other veterans as a Legionnaire. Today, I know he's looking down from heaven, sharing in my honor at being your National Commander. When I take time-out to count my blessings, I realize how fortunate I am. I'm wealthy in the parents that I've had. I'm wealthy in the special woman with whom I share my life and the family we have. I'm wealthy in all of the good friends I made while "Still Serving America" in The American Legion.

Whenever you read a depressing story in the paper, remember one thing: things would be a whole lot worse, if a group of World War I veterans had not gathered in Paris in 1919 and formed The American Legion. Without The American Legion, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the GI Bill of Rights would be dreams. Without The American Legion, generations of young people would have done without money for college. Without The American Legion, millions of veterans would have been denied compensation for service-connected injuries. As your National Commander, I've seen firsthand how you and nearly three-million other men and women continue to make a difference.

I will replace the red cap probably with a blue cap, and again roll up my sleeves and I will join you. And I'll continue to be a happy man. Because my life is about tomorrow. Together, we will build a better tomorrow for America, one post community at a time.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: And at this time, I'll introduce my family who's with me, my sister, Debby; our daughter, Mary Kay, who sang the National Anthem; her

husband, Doug Grantham; our two grandchildren, Ashley and Haley; my mother, Delores Frank; and, yes, my wife Barbara. Now you know why I'm happy.

At this time the chair will recognize George Boucek of Illinois, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Finance
George W. Boucek (IL), Chairman

Forty-seven (47) members met at the Peabody Orlando, Plaza B, Convention Level, at 9:00 a.m., August 31, 1997, Orlando, Florida. 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. George W. Boucek, Illinois, was elected Chairman, and Anthony J. Minei, New York, was elected Secretary by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced National Treasurer Webber LaGrange, Indiana, who updated the committee on the new prescription drug program. This program has saved Legionnaires and SAL members over $6 million while providing $100,000 to our Legion programs. The annuity program is now moving forward. Legionnaires have invested $4 million in annuities, which has brought in another $20,000 into youth programs. Treasurer LaGrange also updated the committee on the Life Insurance program, Paid-Up-For-Life, and the Child Welfare Foundation.

The National Treasurer Webber LaGrange recommended that the National dues remain at $9.00, or no change.

A motion was made by Anthony Riley, Indiana, that the 1998 per-capita dues remain at $9.00. Madeline Schatz, Alaska, seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Steve Salerno, Publisher of *The American Legion Magazine*. Mr. Salerno reported that the Magazine is projecting a $2 million surplus this year, a sum that would better their approved budget by $1.2 million. This is due to a combination of factors, including the resurgence of advertising income, a sum which is projected to be $9.2 million this year, moderate paper prices and the current stability of postal costs.

Chairman Boucek reported that the 1996 George S. Olive & Company's certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate plus published in the Convention program, shows our total assets were at $90.6 million and our year-end surplus at $4,692,913.

William Reynolds, West Virginia, moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Douglas Ammon, Pennsylvania, seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

MR. GEORGE BOUCEK, Illinois: Mr. Comrade Commander, as a delegate to this convention I now make a motion that this report be approved—accepted and approved.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: There's been a motion made to second; all in favor so signify by the usual sign. Opposed?

Aye's have it. The report of the finance is adopted.

The Chair recognizes Joseph Caouette of New Hampshire, Chairman of the National Committee on Americanism for the purpose of a report. Mr. Chairman.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, Jr., Chairman

Forty-nine (49) members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 31, 1997 in Room 230D, 2nd level of the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the Committee.

The Committee organized by electing Joseph Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; Paul Phifer (VA),Vice Chairman; and David Rehbein (IA) as the Secretary.

Before I move ahead on the agenda, I want to express my appreciation and that of the National Americanism Commission to the Buick Motor Division of the General Motors Corporation for its continuing support of The American Legion Baseball Program. During the past year, Buick has provided over one-and-a-half million dollars of assistance to this outstanding Americanism Program.

The Committee discussed twenty-six (26) resolutions which were assigned to the Committee. The resolutions which were considered continue to reflect the desire by many Departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that complement the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made and seconded 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. Motion carried.

Twenty-six (26) resolutions were considered with two (2) being approved; one (1) approved as amended; eight (8) received and recorded; and fifteen (15) referred to the standing Americanism Commission.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 135: Recognition and Appreciation to "The Arlington Ladies"
Origin: FL
Submitted by: Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of wartime veterans who hold their military service in the very highest of honor; and

WHEREAS, Caring for our fellow veterans is paramount to the purpose of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Many of our fellow veterans are ill or disabled due to their military service; and

WHEREAS, There is an organization known as "The Arlington Ladies" who ensure that there is someone present for the burial of every veteran in Arlington National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans may no longer have family members that would be present at their final interment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion recognize and express our appreciation to the organization known as "The Arlington Ladies" for their commitment to ensure that no veteran is buried without someone, other than the Official Color Guard, being present to express a country's appreciation for their military service.

Resolution No. 214: Oppose Policy of Prohibiting the Placement of American Flags on Individual Veterans' Graves in National Cemeteries
Origin: Americanism
Submitted by: Americanism

WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln, on July 17, 1862, signed legislation which authorized the creation of 14 national cemeteries. These cemeteries were the beginning of what is now known as the National Cemetery System (NCS); and

WHEREAS, From 1862 to 1973, these cemeteries were operated by the Department of the Army. Today, the NCS of the Department of Veterans Affairs oversees 114 national cemeteries in the United States and Puerto Rico. Sixteen others are administered by the Army or the Department of Interior. Arlington National Cemetery is operated by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, Recently, it has come to the attention of The American Legion that some national cemeteries prohibit the placement of American flags on individual veterans' graves as a result of local cemetery policy; and

WHEREAS, These same cemeteries permit fresh cut flowers to be placed on graves at any time and artificial flowers may be placed on graves during the winter months; and

WHEREAS, Individual cemetery policy indicates that floral items will be removed from graves as soon as they become faded and unsightly; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to the policies on floral items, the same national cemeteries do not permit small American flags on veterans' graves other than for Memorial Day; and

WHEREAS, It is a distinct injustice to allow the placement of floral items on individual veterans' graves and to not permit the placement of small American flags in a similar manner; and

WHEREAS, If the directors of national cemeteries can establish policies to regulate the placement of floral items on veterans' graves, the American flag should be treated with greater respect; and

WHEREAS, Being fully aware of proper flag etiquette, The American Legion believes that national cemeteries can make an exception to the strict observance of flag display in the execution of normal business for the proper respect of the dead; and

WHEREAS, National Cemeteries are symbolically "American Cathedrals" where the living respect the memories and service of the veterans and family members interred therein; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the placement of small American flags on individual veterans' graves in national cemeteries shall not be prohibited nor discouraged.

Resolution No. 140: Oppose the Installation of the IWW Mural
Origin: WA
Submitted by: Americanism
As Amended

WHEREAS, The International Workers of the World (IWW), also known as Wobblies, used violence as a tool to further their cause and agenda; and

WHEREAS, The Centralia chapter of the IWW did plan to ambush members of Grant Hodge Post #17, The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, On November 11, 1919, during the Armistice Day parade, in Centralia, Washington; members of the local IWW chapter did open fire on and kill (4) Legionnaires, including the Post Commander, and wound (3) other Legionnaires; and

WHEREAS, A group of labor officials, college professors, and current members of the IWW are planning to install a wall mural in downtown Centralia, Washington to tell labor's side of the story and honor the 1919 IWW assassins; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion condemns and opposes the installation of the IWW mural in Centralia, Washington.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 15 (MA) 1997 NC: **Oppose Foreign Manufacturer Of American Flags**
Resolution No. 62 (MT) 1997 NC: **End All Benefits For Illegal Aliens**
Resolution No. 139 (NV) 1997 NC: **Memorial Day**
Resolution No. 157 (KS) 1997 NC: **U. S. Constitution And The First Amendment**
Resolution No. 158 (KS) 1997 NC: **Veterans Day**
Resolution No. 159 (KS) 1997 NC: **Removal of References To God**
Resolution No. 161 (KS) 1997 NC: **The National Anthem**
Resolution No. 199 (NY) 1997 NC:**The English Language Be Declared The Official Language**

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 28 (CO) 1997 NC: **Support Expedition Of Naturalization Of Hmong Special Guerrilla Forces**
Resolution No. 57 (CA) 1997 NC: **Protecting The Flag Of The United States**
Resolution No. 58 (CA) 1997 NC: **American Legion Baseball Hall Of Fame**
Resolution No. 70 (WI) 1997 NC: **Memorial Day Poem**
Resolution No. 71 (AR) 1997 NC: **Extension Of Insurance Coverage For Boys State/Boys Nation**
Resolution No. 90 (IL) 1997 NC: **Flag Code**
Resolution No. 91 (IL) 1997 NC: **American Legion Boys State**
Resolution No. 92 (IL) 1997 NC: **Flag Etiquette**
Resolution No. 123 (TX) 1997 NC: **The American Legion Baseball Hall Of Fame**
Resolution No. 130 (TX) 1997 NC: **The English Language Be Declared The Official United States Language**
Resolution No. 134 (IA) 1997 NC: **The American Legion Baseball Hall Of Fame**
Resolution No. 145 (OH) 1997 NC: **National Educator Of The Year**
Resolution No. 166 (NH) 1997 NC: **The American Legion Baseball Hall Of Fame**
Resolution No. 198 (SD) 1997 NC: **The American Legion Baseball Hall Of Fame**
Resolution No. 208 (NY) 1997 NC: **Flag Day**

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Is there a second? All in favor so signify by the usual sign of aye. All opposed. The aye's have it. The report of the Americanism Commission is adopted.

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: With the adoption of the Americanism Commission report it is appropriate to announce that the winners of two Americanism

awards, the Frank Belgrano, Jr. award is given annually to the Department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12-month period, beginning August 1st, to the Boy Scouts of America program. And this year's winner is the Department of Maryland.

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Award is given to the department within the United States documenting the greatest activity in using the American Legion School Medal program. The winning department shows what can be accomplished by an active, involved organization. And the winner is the Department of District of Columbia.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: At this time we recognize the one department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. The winning department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of total resources—manpower, as well as financial—devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion program year.

The William Randolph Hearst Americanism trophy is an impressive award named in honor of one of American journalism's most prominent and influential figures. With us today to announce the winning of the 1997 William Randolph Hearst Americanism trophy is Robert Carlquist, Vice-President Administration of the *Houston Chronicle*.

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
Robert E. Carlquist, Vice President Administration
Houston Chronicle

"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, let freedom ring." To the dedicated service of The American Legion, the sweet sound of liberty rings loud and true throughout this great land and throughout the world. Freedom rings throughout America because of your dedication and sacrifices to preserve the ideals of Americanism. On behalf of the Hearst Corporation and all of its employees, I'm delighted to be here today, to recognize one of the best among you with a presentation of the William Randolph Hearst Americanism trophy.

The Hearst Corporation salutes you, and all those who have given their lives in defense of America and the liberty we hold so dear. We are proud of The American Legion and its continuous service aimed at preserving our blessings of democracy and inalienable gifts of freedom that we all enjoy. You've served courageously to insure that we live as a free people in a free land.

You know, it was no accident that the founders of this great land declared in the very first amendment to our Constitution our right of free speech and the right of the freedom of the press. The Hearst Corporation owes its existence to your defense of those freedoms. And especially the defense of the freedom of the press. Through the *Houston Chronicle* where I work, as well as Hearst's 18 other newspapers, 16 magazines, 14 broadcast stations, its syndicated features operations, its expanding cable network programming, which includes the History Channel, and now its Internet services, we touch the lives of millions of people every day in this great land.

We tell the magnificent story of America and its role as leader of the free world. Since 1887 the Hearst Corporation, inspired by our founder, William Randolph Hearst, has chronicled the sacrifices each of you has made so that generations to come can know and enjoy the gifts of freedom and the principles of Americanism. America's national symbol,

the bald eagle, soaring freely in quiet strength, serves as a constant reminder of the ideals of our forefathers and the fierce loyalty to those ideals which they inspire yet today. The Hearst Corporation does well in telling of these ideals as The American Legion does. The Hearst emblem is also the eagle. It represents all that is rare and unique and American. And that is our freedom.

Today we honor a department among you who has worked hard to make certain that the sound of liberty rings loud and the flag of freedom proudly waves. We honor the department. We honor the department that is the best in promoting the ideals of Americanism. This magnificent award is named in honor of our founder, William Randolph Hearst, at the Hearst Corporation, and I'm delighted to present this year's William Randolph Hearst Americanism trophy to the Department of New York.

Please join me in congratulating Department Commander, Robert Neville, Chairman of the Delegation, Ron Bertram, and Department Americanism Chairman, Richard Kiser.

CHAIRMAN KISER: As Department Americanism Chairman, I humbly accept this prestigious award on behalf of the Department of New York. But most importantly we accept this award on behalf of all the Legionnaires who under the umbrella of Americanism made this program a huge success. And you truly are the backbone of this tremendous organization. On behalf of the Department of New York, we thank you.

At this time, I would like to introduce to you the Chairman of our Delegation and Past Department Commander and Americanism Chairman who I work for, Ron Bertram.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN BERTRAM: Those of you who have been involved in the Americanism program in any way realize that this award is the highest that we could have possibly received. We want to thank those who are responsible for doing us this honor.

Presentation: Representatives of The American Legion Youth Programs

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Congratulations to all of you. For me the next part of today's business section is always a highlight. It's time to meet the outstanding young men and women who have distinguished themselves through involvement in American Legion youth programs. In the next few minutes you will be meeting five individuals who have earned a special degree of recognition, and who represent thousands of other fine young men and women, and Americans. It is an honor to represent to the delegates of our 79th National Convention the youth champions for the year.

The 1997 Boys Nation President is known for eloquent and persuasive oratory. But this resident of Orangeburg, South Carolina, has set his sights higher than political office can take him, he's going to answer God's call to the ministry. He's a senior at Orangeburg Wilkinson High School where he serves as the Corps Commander of his Air Force Junior ROTC unit. Please welcome Sterling Dowling.

1997 Boys Nation President
Sterling Dowling, Orangeburg, South Carolina

If an angel is someone who cares for you, when you ask for one you receive two. If an angel is one to lead and guide, never from their duty to hide. If an angel is someone who reaches out, building confidence by easing doubt. If an angel is one who lights the path, quick to smile, but slow to wrath. If an angel is but invisible to the eyes, then you all are angels, but in disguise.

Since the middle of June beginning with my Boys State experience, as I was proudly sponsored by Post 4 in Orangeburg, South Carolina, through today, I have been truly in the

company of angels. And so I wondered last night before I wrote that poem, just how do you thank angels. And I came to the conclusion that I cannot do it with words. But I must do it with action. And so what I must do in my school, in my home, and in my community is not only provide a voice, but an open hand and a willing heart. That is the only way that I can pay you back for what you have done for me, and through me. So I thank you, may God bless you, and may God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The 1997 Precision Champion in the Junior Three-Position Air Rifle Tournament hails from Salem, Oregon. She's a product of the Colonel Allison's Junior Rifle Club which also gave us last year's Precision champion. They're doing something right out there right in Salem. This young lady earned a Gold medal and a $750 scholarship from the Sons of The American Legion in Colorado Springs. Please welcome Sarah Jacobsen.

1997 Gold Medalist, Precision Category
Junior Shooting Sports Program
Sarah Jacobsen, Salem, Oregon

SARAH JACOBSEN: I'm so proud to have the opportunity to represent the Junior Shooting Sports Program. Part of my success in this competition came from the support that I received from The American Legion staff at this competition. Also, from Capital Post 9 back home in Oregon and my parents, Mike and Kathleen Jacobsen. Thank you so very much for supporting me and the Junior Shooting Sports Program.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our National High School Oratorical Contest winner is from Dracut, Massachusetts. He attends high school at Bishop Gurt High School in New Hampshire. Titled "A More Perfect Union" he impressed the judges in Indianapolis in April, and he earned an $18,000 scholarship for his efforts. Welcome Alexander Henlin.

1997 1st Place Winner National Oratorical Contest
Alexander G. Henlin, Dracut, Massachusetts

"The Articles of Confederation were dead." It was with those words that I opened my ten minute oratory on the United States Constitution and how our nation over time has developed and changed to become the democracy and the republican experience that we know today. It was truly an honor to be able to represent the Legion in my high school and everyone in my state in the way that I have and in the way that you have privileged me to be able to.

Coming here before you today, I can only express to you with the smallest measure of my gratitude how honored and proud I am that you have afforded me the opportunity to be able to both learn about this country, its history, its government, and the principles upon which it was founded. As we go through time, the Constitution does not change except when we the People want it to. And by carefully considering how our country is going in its path through life, we can indeed make the best possible choices for its direction.

I briefly just want to thank the entire Department of New Hampshire. The James E. Coffee Post No. 3 in Nashua, Mr. Harry Poper, the District 2 Adjutant and everyone else who has been of great support to me throughout the entire contest.

And Mr. Commander, Mr. Chairman Caouette, thank you very much for this opportunity to come here and address you here today.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a graduate of St. Amant High School. He calls Gonzales, Louisiana, his home. Now he calls Louisiana State University his home away from home. Among many people this young man makes the men and women of American Legion Post 81 mighty proud. Christian, I'm going to get it right. Please welcome Christian Bourgeois.

1996 Baseball Player of the Year
Christian Bourgeois, Gonzales, Louisiana

The American Legion has been an important part of my life. I played American Legion Baseball for three years and have had many wonderful and exciting experiences. But what I remember the most are the people I met and the friends I've made along the way. Whenever I think of The American Legion, I think of the hospitality that my family and I have received.

A few weeks ago I was honored with an invitation to Cooperstown, New York, where I was able to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame and attend the baseball induction. While there, I was also able to spend time with Commander Frank, Mr. Bob Boxdorfer and Mr. Jim Quinlan. I would like to thank them for taking care of me and my family while we were there.

Now I would like to thank The American Legion for inviting me here. The past few days have been very enjoyable. I'm truly honored to be here with you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The 1997 Eagle Scout of the Year saved the City of Balaton, Minnesota, some money. And he did a good deed. For his Eagle Scout project he organized 14 volunteers to restore a wayside rest area in a local park. The city gave him $700 to get the job done. The American Legion gave him $8,000 for college in recognition of his community service.

Please welcome a freshman at the University of Minnesota Institute of Technology, David Joosten.

1997 Boy Scout of the Year
David C. Joosten, Balaton, Minnesota

I'm pleased to address you this afternoon as a representative of the Boy Scouts of America Troop 277 of Balaton, Francis Greenaway Legion Post No. 237 and as an Eagle Scout of the Year. As with The American Legion, much of the Scouting Program is devoted to volunteerism, patriotism, and furthering one's knowledge to benefit others. I have great respect for the Legionnaires and the ideals they stand for. A great thanks goes out to all of you, Commander Joe Frank, and your organization for sponsoring the Boy Scout program. My life has been enhanced tremendously in my experiences in Boy Scouts.

I would also like to thank Mike Buss for his great hospitality during my stay here in Orlando. Additional thanks go to Francis Greenway Post No. 237 of Balaton, Boy Scout Troop 277 and the members of the Minnesota Delegation of The American Legion for sponsoring me.

There are many people I could thank during my time up here, but none so important as my parents. My father, John Joosten, is an American Legion member and served in the Vietnam War. He also served as a Scout master for the Boy Scouts of America for over 12 years. My mother, Bonnie Houston, has been involved in the Scouting Program for the same

amount of years serving as committee chairman. Their involvement in my life has helped me reach my goals. Thanks to them I am standing before you today as the Eagle Scout of the Year. So I'd like to thank my parents and thank the Legion for all that has been done to help me succeed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I would like to wish all of you the best of luck, and congratulations to each and every one of you.

As an addendum to my report to you as the National Commander, this past year my wife, Barbara, I mentioned, traveled about 90 percent of the time with me. That was a great help to me in my travels. I couldn't have done it without her. And also with me travelled Bob Boxdorfer, my aide traveled right at 100 percent of the time with me. Thanks to Rita for loaning me Bob for a year.

The American Legion, as you know, and the Buick Motor Division of the General Motors Corporation have teamed up to provide support for American Legion baseball teams at the post level. Their support has provided opportunities for young athletes to compete in a wholesome environment while developing within themselves the qualities of citizenship, sportsmanship, loyalty and of course, team spirit. I'm pleased to introduce Ken Wechselberger, Assistant General Sales Manager for the Buick Motor Division for the purpose of a presentation.

Special Presentation: Ken Wechselberger, Asst. General Sales Manager Buick Motor Division

The Buick family is very proud to be affiliated with an organization that has done so much for America. Last week I was able to be a spectator at The American Legion Baseball World Series, and I came back very impressed with the dedication and commitment of both the players and the Posts that support the over 4300 baseball teams. You were very well represented by all the teams that made the finals in Rapid City, South Dakota. The Medford, Oregon team that came in as runner-up was a great team, but I assume that there's just a few homers here that are very proud of the Sanford, Florida team that were the winners of this year's World Series. They did a great job.

I would like to introduce just very briefly one other member of the Buick family that came with me today. His name is Bill Miscalles, the LeSabre Assistant Branch Manager.

We were very happy to get involved with your fundraising for the Emergency Fund, and with Bill's assistance we were able to provide the LeSabre that you have out here. And I hope all of you sign up for that, and contribute to the Emergency Fund.

Three years ago Buick Motor Division and The American Legion formed a partnership, and this partnership is really very simple. Each time a member of The American Legion or the American Legion Auxiliary purchases a new Buick during a special promotion time, that member would receive $500. In addition, Buick Motor Division would also donate $100 to the local American Legion Post to support The American Legion Baseball team. This partnership has been a huge success, and it's my pleasure to present this check to Commander Frank. This represents Buick's commitment to American Legion Baseball in the amount of 3.8 million dollars. In addition, we have another check, and this goes to The American Legion Baseball Scholarship Trust, and that's an additional $400,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: You know Ken, you can come to our Convention any time you wish. Just keep those checks coming. Thank you very much. Seems to be a win/win situation here.

Message to the Convention
George Bentley, The Society of American Legion Founders

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: As we gather in Orlando, the Society of the Founders of The American Legion has just two men living who were present at the first National Convention. I would like to read a brief message from George Bentley, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Society of American Legion Founders, who is unable to be with us today.

"Again I am pleased to send greetings to the National Convention of The American Legion. My friend and only other founder, John Gable, and I wish we could be there in Orlando to see all the great work you do on behalf of our nation's veterans and this wonderful country of ours.

"I understand there was an exceptional mass of the Colors. My, that must have been a beautiful sight. I also will miss attending the National Historian's Luncheon. I wish I could visit my historian friends there.

"Our great organization, The American Legion, always looked out for veterans and those who need assistance. The National Emergency Fund has helped out so many Legionnaires who have been stricken due to the flooding or other natural disasters. But now I understand that the money in the fund is not great. So if you can, please help to make it strong once again.

"Last year I thought our membership figures were not very strong. The same seems to be true for today. So please, if you can be an influence, try to help in gaining at least one new member, or if possible, strengthen a Post by attending its monthly meetings.

"Both John and I hope that you have a great National Convention in Orlando. God bless you, The American Legion, and the American Flag."

Isn't that great?

I got to tell you about George just for a second. I remember visiting Minnesota the year I was National Vice Commander in 1988. George Bentley was in front of us in a car, sitting in a convertible. And he was in his late 80's then. He was sitting on the back of the high part of the back seat of the car, waving at everybody. And there was myself and Past National Commander Dan Foley and Dan Ludwig and Chuck Ferguson. We kept telling him to sit down. We thought he was going to fall down, but he was having a ball waving in an American Legion parade. May God bless him, George Bentley is a great person and that's a wonderful letter that he sent us.

Presentation: International Amity Award
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

It is an honor for me to present The American Legion International Amity Award. It is presented 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.

The man we honor today with this award has set an example for others in his native Mexico. During World War II he was a member of Squadron 201 of the Mexican Air Force that volunteered to fight with the United States military forces in the Philippines. Today he is deeply involved with American Legion Post 2 in Mexico. Among the many Post activities, he helps with our Veterans Day, Four Chaplains Worship Service, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day Parade. However, his most noteworthy contribution

to international good will came in 1996 when he spoke with young people of the Post. His talk was about international friendship and cooperation. He told of how he loves The American Legion and why he loves the American Legion. And he spurred the young people to do their best throughout their lives. It is with great pleasure that I present The American Legion Amity Award to Carlos Garduno of Mexico

MR. GARDUNO: It's impressive to be with you here, and especially for this particular and very great honor that I'm receiving, The International Amity Award. As the word means 'friendship,' it's necessary for all of us to understand that what has given this great country and all the countries of the world the unity to preserve and maintain the freedom that we are enjoying, which is due precisely to the team work that was developed throughout all of the veterans war; in times of war and in times of peace to preserve it. Patriotism is very important for our youth because they have to understand also that without being patriotic they cannot defend their countries.

Unfortunately, when the country has to go to war like it was in Second World War, because that's the one I went to, you see your friends die, and you think you might be next. This sacrifice of the hundreds of thousands of lives of men and women that died for the freedom that we have today should never be forgotten. They are the symbol of what patriotism means. It is not that they died for a fight to survive, nor for the impetus of winning. It was only a civic duty, their civic duty which is to inform that you are doing your commitment to your country.

And the participation of all these people in the wars makes us have a sense and a feeling that nobody else can have. No one who has not been in a war knows the horrors of war, or the suffering of the families that lose their dear ones, the sweethearts, the sisters and brothers, not to mention the ones that suffer physical or mental injury that makes them be maimed for the rest of their lives. But all those sacrifices are precisely the reason why we are here together, to remember always that sacrifice of those that never came back.

But talking about unity in peace time, last March I met your National Commander, Joseph J. Frank. When I saw him in the wheelchair, I didn't know that he was incapacitated to walk, but that didn't surprise me really, because we know how many suffered from the same problems. But he came to Mexico to see how we were doing, how his units from the Department of Mexico, in Guadalajara, Acapulco and in Mexico City and in San Miguel and some other places where there are Posts of The American Legion. And he visited all these places.

I had the opportunity to accompany him to an interview with the Secretary of the Navy and with other fellows representing veterans. I think Joseph found a good strong feeling of cooperation among the military in Mexico. And of course of his compatriots in all these Posts that are residents of our country.

I first came back from the war in November 1945, my group returning to Mexico with great honors. The group was disbanded because it was not necessary to have a combat unit when there was no war, it's very expensive. So the government decided to give us a choice: either you retire, if you are a lieutenant or sergeant or whatever, on 100 percent pension as of this moment, or continue your military career. Of course, a professional military like myself continued with others, but about 85 percent of the group went out to find better ways of living with the airlines or with whatever company they could get contracted with.

So our unit disappeared. And about a year later, after we came back, our commanding officer of the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force was named Chief of Staff of the Mexican Air Force. That gave us a sense of unity again since our commander was now Chief of the Air Force. Every time that he could, he called us for reunions and things like that.

One time he called because it was in May, Memorial Day, and The American Legion had invited our Squadron 201. So he reunited us again going to the Veterans Remembrance Day, or Memorial Day, with The American Legion. We say, what's that? We didn't really understand what veterans meant.We were veterans but we never understood that until we made contact with our friends of The American Legion. We found out that they had been the first veterans group to participate with the residents of Mexico to form The American Legion in 1920. And this was 1946. Who are they? Once we knew them and we understood their feelings and compared them with us, then we learned about veterans of war.

We created our own association of Veterans of Mexico Squadron 201. We went by the same principles of The American Legion: providing help; mainly to unite and maintain the memories of the dead, and create a unity among the living survivors and their families.

That's what they have done very well. They keep a school in Mexico City that now has over 1200 kids. And they do other things for the needy children of Mexico. They recovered the some of flags that the United States captured during the intervention of 1847, and things like that, that one understands why they do all this, because we want unity; we want veterans to be together.

Mexico and the United States have never been so close as they were in 1942 in the Second World War, when the United States declared war after Pearl Harbor and we declare war six months later after that. We were no neutral country, we were a contributing country and we had to offer what we had. We had created the Good Neighbor Policy because we knew that sooner or later the whole continent of America would be involved and we had to be prepared. That was the vision of a great man, and he convinced through his military committees that he sent all over Latin America that we should be ready to cooperate with the Lend-Lease Program. Any country could buy armaments and training, above all training, to be prepared. Many countries had different doctrines of their armies, like Argentina and Chili that were pro-German, and in Mexico, the majority of the people were also for Germany, because of the antagonism against the United States because of the invasion of 1847. So it was a very tough problem for a President of the United States to say, hey, fellows, come on, come along with us. But we did. We got together, and we did a good job. As small as the representation was in the war, it was very significant because we were not a big power, we could not compete with the strong powers of the world; we were a country that was not rich in industry. We just had minerals and petroleum which was a very important thing for the war. But we did what we could, and we were satisfied to have cooperated and to have worked along with the United States Army Air Force, alongside with all the armed forces, ground troops and whatever.

I have here today a representative of the 82nd Airborne who is a Mexican-American, Julio Pouldrus. He is a coordinator for our association and he belongs to the American GI Forum, a group of Mexican-Americans. I feel very proud of him and all of his friends, because they show what the Mexican-Americans did in the Second World War. There are 38 Congressional Medals of Honor given to them, so that's something, and I would like for you to give him an applause.

I also have a friend here who I have known for the last five years. He's been working very hard in creating a book about the history of the Squadron 201, Mr. Bill Tudor.

Thank you all and National Commander Joseph J. Frank for inviting me to this 79th Convention and for being selected to receive the Amity Award. I know that many of you have something to do with it, and I thank all of you that had to do something to have me selected. It's a great honor that I will carry on for the rest of my life right in my heart. I'll never forget it.

And I promise you that I will continue with my efforts so that I can maintain the unity among veterans, to understand what their rights are, what needs to be protected, such as hospitalization, pensions and things like that which are very important for all veterans. And sometimes they are forgotten or diminished of their value. But this great organization and other military organizations of veterans, should be together to be stronger and I hope that we can accomplish that. I consider the International Amity Award valuable for this purpose.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our next guest was born in what is now Pakistan. Attending British public schools until his family emigrated to Canada in 1960. When he was 29 years old, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and served with NATO forces in West Germany during his military career. After retiring from the military, he worked with the Registry of Motor Vehicles for the Province of Nova Scotia. He joined the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada while still on active duty. In retirement he has served as Dominion Vice President representing Nova Scotia.

Please give a warm welcome to the Dominion President of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, Akmal Khan.

Address: A. W. (Akmal) Khan, Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

It gives me great pleasure to bring you greetings from Canada's oldest veterans association, the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. As well, I bring you greetings from the people of your neighbor to the north, Canada. Many of you have visited our fair land, and experienced the vast sweep as it stretches, as does your country, from sea to shining sea. We welcome you to Canada, and hope that you will visit our units, or posts as you call them when you are there.

Sunday morning I had the pleasure and privilege of inducting new members of The American Legion into the United States Unit of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. Some of you are members of that unit. I told the membership that ANAVICUS is a unique organization, and that we have been the solid bond over the years. I pointed out that this is fitting, since we share the longest, undefended border in the world. As well, we share the common concern of the well-being of the veteran and the preservation of his or her benefits and entitlements.

In Canada we find these constantly under attack by a government more interested in finances than in personal care. I believe you may have a similar concern. As a result, we must continuously be vigilant, for the trust placed in us is sacred and we cannot let our comrades down.

I thank you, Comrade Joseph, for this opportunity to bring greetings, and I would ask you to accept this gift as a token of the esteem in which you are held by the members of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Okay, thank your for this duck. And I have something for you a nice American Legion pen.

Address: Joseph Kobolak, Dominion President
The Royal Canadian Legion

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Due to the pressing business in Canada, our next guest could not be with us today. Instead, the Dominion President of The Royal

Canadian Legion, Joseph Kobolak, has sent a written message that he would like read to the delegates of the 79th National Convention:

> Friends and comrades of The American Legion, I bring you greetings from your 533,000 comrades in The Royal Canadian Legion and their best wishes for a successful rewarding convention in beautiful Orlando, Florida. The pressures of command have, regretfully, kept me from being with you personally at this time, but I am pleased to have been given this opportunity to address you in absentia.
>
> The bonds of friendship forged between our nations' servicemen and women, in war and peace during this century, are strengthened by the relationship we maintain between our great organizations. We share common goals and interests, paramount amongst them the welfare of those who have served our nations in uniform. The posts along the border states maintain strong contact with our nearby branches, and many of your posts provide facilities for our American-based posts to congregate and conduct business. We are proud to be able to do the same for your post in St. John's, Newfoundland, a city I am sure many of your veterans visited for an extended period during their service.
>
> With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing liaison and cooperation in matters of mutual importance. As we approach the next millennium, it is my personal wish that the links forged thus far in our relationship will continue to grow ever stronger. Please accept my best wishes for your continued success in the service of your veterans and your communities.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our next guest is a retired military man that served in the armed forces of Great Britain. During his career he saw many corners of the globe including Korea, Egypt, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Nigeria, Germany, Hong Kong and Borneo. For more than 20 years he has been actively involved in shaping the Royal British Legion for the 21st century. He has been instrumental in updating and restructuring the British Legion. Please welcome to the 79th National Convention, a proud veteran, the National Chairman of The Royal British Legion, Graham Downing.

Address: Graham Downing, Chairman
The Royal British Legion

It is wonderful to be here and to be given the opportunity to address you at your 79th Annual Convention. I only intend to take a few minutes of your time. I'm asking for these few minutes to talk about the two minute silence.

Last year all over the United Kingdom people stopped for two minutes on the 11th of November. According to our subsequent research, 67 percent of the adults observed the two minute silence. A staggering 97 percent of the people thought that everyone should be given the opportunity to observe the two-minute silence on the 11th of November. Of course, in many countries, including the United States, the 11th of November has always been a special day for remembrance. But it's sad to say that in the United Kingdom the focus came on the nearest Sunday to the 11th of November.

The Royal British Legion will always support the traditional remembrance Sunday services and the customary two-minute silence on remembrance Sunday. But as the national custodian of remembrance, we always believe that whenever November the 11th falls on days other than Sundays, on working days, it is entirely appropriate that remembrance should be brought into the everyday life of the nation.

I'm telling you this because I'm seeking international support for a two-minute silence across the whole world on the 11th of November, 1999. We have just over two years for a

campaign for an international silence in the closing months of the millennium, to gain momentum. For not only is 1999 the last year in the millennium, which opened back home in England with the Battle of Hastings in 1066, but it is also the last year of the century which saw the first two World Wars. What better way of making an end of the century and the end of the millennium, and what better way of hoping to ensure that those two wars are never allowed to be repeated, than by uniting all nations for two minutes of silence.

Remembrance transcends all boundaries. The Legion is seeking a small, yet significant individual and collective act, a rare moment when each nation can stand together and where nations can be united and reflect upon the price of freedom. I firmly believe that it is by remembering the horrors of global war that we help to ensure that history does not repeat itself. Because remembrances ironically are looking forward as well as looking back, by remembering the past. And by remembering that past we hold out a hope for the future.

The Royal British Legion appreciates that it cannot expect a complete observance of the two-minute silence in the United Kingdom on the 11th of November this year, anymore than it can expect a world-wide observance of a two-minute silence in 1999. Individuals themselves must decide. We believe that if people are given the opportunity and wish to stop and remember, they should be given the freedom and opportunity to do so.

The Legion has already gained the support of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and is awaiting response from other countries. Therefore, I ask you, The American Legion, to join and support this campaign. As the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1999 circles the world, such an act of remembrance would remind all politicians and the public at large of all the free nations of the priceless debt that each nation owes to its ex-service community.

Mr. National Commander, as a token of our friendship between our two great organizations, I believe, I no doubt may be corrected when I get back home, but I'm the first National Chairman to visit your Convention for at least 10, maybe more years. And I would like to make this on behalf of The Royal British Legion to The American Legion. I have another small presentation. Mr. National Commander. I would like to give you my own personal one, a small replica of the same coat of arms.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I have something for you here. A small token of our appreciation for your visit to us here.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We are honored to have with us the Vice Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China. He is a retired Army officer, having served in a variety of roles during his career. Since his retirement from active military service he has served in three different capacities on the Veterans Affairs Commission. Give an American Legion welcome to retired Lieutenant General Chao, Yu.

I have a special presentation for you. You all know what *Gom Bei* means? The General might explain that to you later. I now present to you the International Amity Award in grateful recognition to outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for the contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between The American Legion and our wartime allies, the Republic of China.

Address: Lt. General Chao Yu, Vice Chairman
Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China

It is a great honor for me to have this opportunity to address this group of prominent allied American veterans here in Orlando, and it is certainly a pleasure to meet with many of our friends, who have persistently supported the Republic of China for many years.

For the past two decades, the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China has been invited to attend your National Convention, and the delegations of The American Legion have been invited to visit Taipei in order to gain a further understanding of our respective veterans assistance programs. Consequently, we are able to learn from each other, and gain some new concepts and means and way to better serve our veterans. I am firmly convinced that these continued exchanges of visits have not only strengthened the ties between our two organizations, but also helped building up the sound relationships among the people of our two countries.

The United States is the leading promoter of democracy in the world, and American veterans, who have devoted themselves to the defense of democracy and freedom, have built up a brilliant historical record. This glorious tradition is the primary factor in the advancement of prosperity and progress in the United States. Therefore, people around the world respect your accomplishments.

Today is a meaningful day. The 2nd of September is the anniversary of the ending of World War II. Nearly fifty-two years ago the Second World War ended on *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. This history reminds us that great achievements have been accomplished and through the cooperation of America, Republic of China and other allied nations.

The veterans of the Republic of China and The American Legion share common ideals and objectives. In the past we fought together against totalitarian violence and aggression. At the present we are making every effort to defend democracy and freedom on many fronts. In the future, we shall continue to cooperate with each other, based upon our ideals and interests.

Over the years, a deep and profound friendship has been established between The American Legion and my organization. As we approach the 21st century, the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan look forward to continually enhancing our mutually beneficial relationships with the United States, and promoting prosperity and stability in the Far East. I am confident that my Commission and The American Legion will join forces to create an ever-brighter tomorrow based on the firm foundation of our past friendship.

In December last year, we were most delighted to receive National Commander Frank and his party to visit my organization, and I myself felt especially honored to know that the National Commander had served in the combat engineering unit, too, just like me. Meeting old friends always brings interesting memories one after another.

In closing, I wish you a most successful Convention and give every one of you my best regards for good health, happiness and success.

...The following was presented through an interpreter:

Hello from Taiwan, the Republic of China, and as National Commander Frank just mentioned, there is something that we have to explain to you, that is *Gom Bei.* Those of you who have visited Republic of China or Taiwan, must have learned of this, which is a term you use in proposing a toast to your friends. Well, you have to turn your cup upside down or bottoms up or down the hatch. In Taiwan you enjoy that like here in the United States. Many people will have to be carried out when you do too many of those.

But we are not doing any *Gom Bey* here, we are presenting a very high honor medal to the National Commander because of his outstanding achievements and contributions to the veterans. And the first medal is from the Republic of China signed by the President of the State, Dr. Lee Teng-hui, and I will take the honor to read the words of the certificate accompanying the award of the Cloud and Banner Medal, No. 15740.

Mr. Joseph J. Frank, National Commander The American Legion, has distinquished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations between the

peoples of the United of America and the Republic of China, and to the enhancement of ties and cooperation between the veterans of our two countries.

In appreciation of his meritorious service, National Commander Frank is presented the Order of Cloud and Banner with Cravat by the Government of the Republic of China in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulation, signed by Dr. Lee Teng-hui the President. Lien Chan, the Premier, General Chiang Chung-Ling, the Minister of National Defense.

The plaque is from the Veterans Affairs Commission and the inscription goes:

To National Commander Joseph Frank, National Commander of The American Legion in appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of friendship and cooperation between The American Legion, and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, by General Jen Du Ling, Chairman, Veterans Affairs Commission, the Republic of China, on the date of September 2nd, 1997.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, General and Colonel Sung. I have a small token of appreciation to give to you. We look forward to continued relations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our next guest this afternoon represents the Korean Veterans Association. He graduated from the Korean Naval Academy in 1959. During his military career he served as a regimental, brigade and division commander before assuming the role of Commander of the Republic of Korea Marines. Today he is the Vice President and Secretary General of the Korean Veterans Association. Please welcome to Orlando, retired Lieutenant General Choi Kap-Jin.

Address: Lt. General Choi Kap-Jin, Vice President
The Korean Veterans Association

On behalf of five million members of the Korean Veterans Association, I would like to express my deepest gratitude, to all of you Legionnaires, for inviting my association to this 79th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. It is a singular honor for me representing General Chang Tae-Wan, President of the Korean Veterans Association, to be able to address this distinguished audience.

First, I congratulate all of you Legionnaires on your successful and flawless preparation for this convention in this beautiful city. We, in the Korean Veterans Association are always grateful for your organization's unsparing support for the security of Korea.

The end of the Cold War has greatly changed the security environment of the world. The world is now pursuing reconciliation, peace, and welfare of mankind. But in spite of this trend, the Korean Peninsula is still in the age of the Cold War. As you are well aware, North Korea infiltrated 26 armed commandos by submarine last September, killing many civilians, as well as military personnel, in grave violation of the Armistice Agreement. Two months before that, 14 North Korean soldiers intruded across the border, resulting in a 25 minute exchange of fire between South and North Korean forces along the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone. The possibility of another war is always of great concern to us.

Although North Korea is currently facing serious food shortages and economic failure, they now spend more than 20 percent of the gross national product in order to maintain the fifth largest armed force in the world. As the result of such an excessive use of national resources for military purposes, North Korea's economy has now reached a stage where it has to solicit international food aid for its people. South Korea has sent approximately 260

million dollars worth of food to North Korea since 1995. Under these circumstances, North Korean authorities should be urged to give up its anachronistic policy of hostility toward the South, to reduce its military forces, and to join the peace dialogue for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

South Korea has made it clear that if North Korea abandons its ambition to communize South Korea, the Republic of Korea will be ready to help North actively out of the present difficulties. Due to the belligerent attitude and provocation by North Korea, a firm security cooperation between the United States and Korea has been necessary to maintain peace and safety on the Korean Peninsula for 44 years. Please kindly be aware of this situation, and give us your unswerving support in our efforts to maintain peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In closing, I thank you again for inviting me to your great Convention, and I hope your Convention will be successful and a productive one.

On behalf of the five million members of the Korean Veterans Association, I take this opportunity to present the Plaque of Appreciation to National Commander Frank who has made his best effort to promote friendly relations between the two organizations for past years.

...The following was presented through an interpreter:

> Mr. Joseph J. Frank, National Commander of The American Legion, in grateful recognition of your dedicated contribution to the support of the national security of the Republic of Korea, and to the promotion of friendly relations between the two organizations, September 2, 1997, signed by Tae-Wan Chang, Major General, Korean Army Retired, President Korean Veterans Association.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, General, and I have a special gift for you and your wife.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: It is my pleasure to introduce Eugene Mattioni, representing the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, for the purpose of a presentation.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
Dante Mattioni, Esquire, Chairman
The Chapel of Four Chaplains

If we can take a moment to remember that in February 3rd, 1943 the troop-ship *USAT Dorchester* was torpedoed. The Four Chaplains on the deck of the sinking vessel with their life jackets on, take their life jackets off and give them to a sailor or to another who didn't have one. We remember the Four Chaplains by recognizing today the people who are chaplains and belong in the company of the Four Chaplains.

It is my privilege on behalf of the Chapel of Four Chaplains, to present to Joseph J. Frank the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion in recognition of his service to all people, regardless of race or faith. The award symbolizes for all Americans and for all time, the unity of this nation founded upon the fatherhood of one God.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: As you know, American Legion Posts throughout the nation celebrate this special day commemorating the Chapel of Four Chaplains, and I'm very pleased to accept this on behalf of our three million membership.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Delegates, please join me in a salute to the Flag of our Country of the United States of America.

...The delegates rose and saluted the Colors. This Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

...At 3:00 p.m., the Convention recessed to convene the following day, Wednesday, September 3, 1997, at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, September 3, 1997

...At 8:30 a.m., the delegates listened to the Prelude.

...At 9:00 a.m., the delegates assembled for the second day of the 79th Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATIONAL COMMANDER JOSEPH J. FRANK: Before we begin our program, please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole, a great organist.

Convention will come to order, and the delegates will stand at right-hand salute to the Flag of the United States.

...The delegates stood and saluted the Colors.

For the invocation, here is National Chaplain, Dr. Charles H. Richmond of Oklahoma.

Invocation
Dr. Charles H. Richmond (OK)
National Chaplain

Almighty God, to You our Creator, the Supreme Judge and God of all nature, we pray as we pledge allegiance to our God and the Flag of our country. May it not be a mere salute to custom or tradition, but a sincere desire to know and follow Thy will. We need not ask for Thy presence, because You are always near. Instead we pray that we might have receptive hearts and minds, in tune with Your will, so that we may listen to Your voice.

We give thanks to men and women who are committed to service of God and Country. Our leaders are willing, able and committed to the causes and objectives for which we stand. May those who speak today give us wisdom and knowledge. May we who listen have alert and attentive ears and retaining minds for the advancement of our many programs.

Give us the continued strength, integrity, courage and wisdom not only to direct our organization, but also to guide the Legion and to lead the American people in patriotism and right living. Give us the wisdom and conscience to know what is right, and the strength to do what is right, that we may truly say God Bless America. Amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

...The Delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please be seated. The convention is now in session, and I will call on our National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, for an announcement.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: This important announcement is for the Department Adjutants who are serving as delegation secretaries, regarding the housing contracts for 1998 for the 80th National Convention of The American Legion. We'd like all of the delegation secretaries, or Department Adjutants, to meet in the Orange County Convention Center today, at the close of the general sessions, to discuss hotel contracts for the departments.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our first guest this morning is no stranger to an American Legion National Convention, or many other Legion events. And, when it comes

to values and protecting the American Flag from acts of physical desecration, he is a committed citizen. He earned the Medal of Honor for his series of missions in Vietnam. He is also the recipient of our nation's second highest award, the Distinguished Service Cross. Today, he is still serving our great country as the Chairman of the Board of the Citizens Flag Alliance.

Please welcome a member of Post 800 in Idyllwild, California, Retired Major General Patrick Brady.

Special Report: Flag Amendment Campaign
Major General Patrick H. Brady, USA (Ret.), Chairman of the Board
The Citizens Flag Alliance

As I always say when someone says something nice about me, I wish that my wife could be here to hear all those nice things. But more important than that, I wish my wife's mother could be here to hear all those nice things.

The nobility of the world go by many titles, and we've heard them, kings and queens, dukes and princesses. In these last few days a princess has been in our prayers, potentates and czars and czarinas. But the nobility of America have but one name, and that is veterans—those among us who have been to the doorstep of death and beyond for our freedoms.

If you think about it, if you take away any president, any politician, any judge, any journalist, you still have an America. But if you take away our veterans, then there is no America. So it's always a great honor for me to be with you, to be one of you, to know that you do so much for our country, especially for the young people in America. And, of course, service to our youth is the highest form of patriotism.

In the military, the highest praise we had was defined by the simple phrase—I would want this person with me in combat. For us, that was the bottom line. And then I look at the Legion family and those I've worked with on the Flag, men like Bill Detweiler, Dan Ludwig, Joe Frank—you should have heard Joe sing last night—Jack Jordan, John Dietz; people who have worked with us on the Flag. These are men I would want with me in combat.

I'm not a fan of women in combat, but Phyllis Bachman, Syble Deshotel, are some very tough ladies. And when I look at those who carry the Flag today, Bob Spanogle, Dan Wheeler, Marty Justis and 'Corporal' Joy Kirchgatter, these are people I would want with me in combat. The hope for our Flag is in your hands, in the hands of the Legion, and it's in very good hands.

There is a great tradition in this country. In the spring and early summer, when God renews the life of His creatures and His creation, we remember our patriots, those who gave life to this nation, who protected and nourished it over the centuries. We have a period of patriotism and it begins with Memorial Day when we freshen with the flowers of spring, the graves of "those who tasted death in their youth that liberty might grow old". And, especially, so that our youth might experience freedom. And then there is Flag Day when we honor the symbol of our sovereignty, of our soul, the value of this country. On Independence Day, we celebrate the greatest event in the political development of mankind.

In between, of course, we remember the pivotal event of this century—D-Day and World War II and the great veterans from that war who are my heroes and really built this country. They tore down a wall of tyranny that surrounded the world. This period of remembrance is a great tradition. Traditions are vital in a democracy. And someone said of tradition, and this is, I think, a great quote:

> "A democratic people profess to object to a man being disqualified from anything by the accident of birth. Tradition objects to a man being disqualified by the accident of death. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking around. Tradition is the democracy of the dead and it keeps their timeless wisdom in our councils."

But, for those 36 days early in the year, we remember and we thank the great blood donors to our freedom They visit our councils. We're again inspired by the beauty of their sacrifice. Their blood nourished the spring and summer of this country and I think it's appropriate that we remember them in the spring and the summer of the year.

A majority in this country think patriotism is in decline. A majority also think that morality is declining. I really don't think you can separate the two. I believe sincerely that there has been a significant decline of patriotism in my lifetime and I believe that it's very, very serious business. It's rooted in individual morality and our nation's survival depends upon it. But what is it? What is a patriot?

A patriot is one who loves, supports and serves his country. But those two words, love and country, I think, are 'loaded.' Country, of course, includes the land, the people, the government. Surely the land is important. It would be difficult to love a desolate, diseased and dreary land. No one loves a ghetto. But it is the neighbors in those neighborhoods that are vital. It's easy to love our friends and our family, but the neighbors are the key to a patriotic love.

As important as anything, it is the system of government and the leaders therein. All three of these loves are important and if we look at just that thing, love, that we all kind of hate to talk about, patriotic love goes beyond the emotional kind. A people must love their country enough to be willing to put that love into action. Love in action is the real definition of sacrifice. It's the most perfect form of love. It could cost you your life. The bottom line is that we must be a lovable people if we're to be worthy of the kind of sacrifice which will ensure our future. Are we? Many of us would die for the country we served. I'm not sure we would die for the country we are becoming.

But, if you evaluate those things, I think you will agree with me that patriotism is in decline. Once it was a term of endearment and now it is often ridiculed. Do we love our country, the land and the neighborhoods? We have turned plenty of land into a land of plenty. But look at the way some of it is trashed and look at the neighborhoods that some live in. How about our neighbors? For to believe the media, we sue them, we rob them, we rape them, and we murder them at a rate beyond anything in history or in the civilized world. And we hate them simply because they're different than we are.

And what about the system of government and the leaders of the government? Many of us believe that there's a minority in the courts that are rewriting the Constitution with a complete disdain for the morality of the majority. Leaders and many politicians are disrespected. We've seen some great politicians here but it's become a kind of a naughty word in our language. Why do we disrespect them? Very often it's because of their morality. They deceive us. They're not always honest with us. The personal lives of some are a source of shame for those of us who are still capable of shame. Not only are many of them not role models, they refuse to acknowledge that they should be. They don't set an example to inspire the young people and we don't get the best and brightest into politics.

What do we do about it? We don't vote. Only 25% of the people who are eligible to vote elect our current President. Are are young people losing respect? You wouldn't believe that to see the young people we've had here. The crime rate of our youth is high yet they are

willing to serve their country in uniform. It's getting more and more difficult to find qualified youth and the military has had to reduce their standards. God help us if we ever face a serious challenge.

In the middle of the cycle of patriotism that I first talked about, we honor the Flag. It was one week after Flag Day, on the first day of summer in 1989, that the Supreme Court, by one vote, took away from the people the right to protect their Flag. This is a right we have held sacred since the birth of the nation. And I don't need to tell this group what the Flag means. No one has done more for Old Glory. No one has done more to make it the single most revered symbol of liberty on this planet. No other flag has a Federal code, no other flag is honored with a special day, no other flag is the subject of a National Anthem, no other flag has a Pledge of Allegiance. It has been treated as no other flag in our history because it means more than any other flag in our history.

But the greatest works for the Stars and Stripes is the fact that respect for the Flag has promoted and insured throughout our history, the values that make America the most respected nation on this earth. For that reason the most visible sign, indeed a primary cause, I believe, of our declining patriotism is the legalized desecration of our Flag. But we tend to forget that the principal importance of the flag is its practicality. It's pragmatic. But often when we see the Flag, we see a family portrait. We remember so much sacrifice, so many great people. Our reaction is emotional, too.

Before the Constitution there was the Flag. It was the glue between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It was that great trinity, the Declaration of Independence, the Flag, and the Constitution that gave more hope to mankind for liberty than anything else in our history. And it unified 13 very different colonies. Our Founding Fathers saw the flag, in a practical sense, as our trademark, the sign of our existence as a nation and the embodiment of our sovereignty. It marked our place among the nations of the world. Originally it had no patriotic meaning. There was nothing yet to love but there was much to protect. It was needed for the safety of our seamen and our citizens. A seaman, for example, captured at sea under our Flag became a POW. Without the Flag he may have been hanged.

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who framed the First Amendment, who adopted the Flag, were adamant in their insistence on protecting the Flag. The Founding Fathers insisted that the Flag be protected. They saw no connection between flag protection and the suppression of speech. The author of our protection of speech saw no connection. Now, who do you think would know better about the relationship between speech and flag protection: Thomas Jefferson and James Madison or the ACLU and the newspaper editors of America who oppose us on this? Let us look at some of the practical and emotional meaning of our Flag in the Civil War.

John Adams warned us to "remember democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There was never a democracy that did not commit suicide." It should be clear that patriotism in a democracy is a very serious business. It is not a sentiment expressed by frenzied flag waving fanatics. Our survival as a nation depends on it. And that is why burning the symbol of patriotism is serious business.

Justice Harlan said, "Love both of the common country and the state will diminish in proportion as respect for the flag is weakened. Therefore a state will be wanting in care for the well-being of its people if it ignores the fact that they regard the Flag as a symbol of their country's power and prestige, and will be impatient if any disrespect is shown toward it." *Eighty percent of the people are impatient.*

As you know, thanks to the Legion more than any one else, the Amendment which would return to the people the right to protect their Flag, passed overwhelmingly in the

House. We heard the Speaker of the House mention that yesterday. We now move to the Senate. We're within a couple of votes of victory.

As a result of the victory in the House there's been a barrage from a minority who, through a sympathetic media, have begun to hype the horrors that will result if it is returned to the people the right to protect their Flag. Now those are horrors that no one in this country experienced in the 200 years that we had the right to protect our Flag.

There are great and gifted Americans on both sides of this issue. And learned opinions on speech and conduct and the Constitution, but there is only one fact—Thomas Jefferson said that it is the opinion of the people that should rule, not the courts, and the overwhelming majority of the American people want returned to them the right to protect their Flag. That simple fact thumps every opinion to the contrary.

Thomas Jefferson also said that, "I readily suppose my opinion is wrong when it's opposed by the majority." And "it is my principle that the will of the majority should always prevail." But our opposition doesn't agree with Jefferson.

As you watch this debate, watch the media coverage given to the minority. Eight out of ten Americans want to protect their flag, yet you'll read nine out of ten editorials who oppose the people on that right. We have a minority in this country, in the courtrooms, the classrooms, the cloakrooms and the news rooms, a minority of people who were raised on different playing fields than the rest of us, many of whom have never been on a battlefield. They are exercising a tyranny over a majority that is too often apathetic and indifferent.

The Founding Fathers saw a danger in a tyranny of the minority and that's why they've put the Amendment clause in the Constitution. It prevents one judge or the ACLU from overruling the will of millions of Americans. The Constitution covers both tyrannies of the majority, as well as the minority, but in a democracy it is the majority that should rule. This issue is about the right of the majority to dissent a terrible ruling by the Supreme Court.

I spent much of my life, as did many of you, in confrontations with a minority who thought they knew better than the majority as to what was best for the rest of us. Eventually they forced their will on the majority. In Berlin, Germany, as a young soldier in the Army, my first experience as a soldier, I was horrified to see a minority there build a wall around the majority and then policed up the casualties that they shot off that wall.

In Korea, where a minority has enslaved the majority, they've actually forced them to treat the leadership there as deities, as gods. And in Vietnam a minority killed millions after we failed to protect them.

The great Lebanese philosopher/poet, a great favorite of mine, Kahlil Gibran, who wrote, "*The Prophet*", said "The wisdom of the many is our shield against tyranny." We need to return the rule to the majority and the Flag Protection Amendment will be a great move in this direction.

I'm often asked what really motivates me in this issue and we all need a cause. Old Generals need to be loved as well as to have a cause. It's the children. They are the real victims of flag burning. It teaches our children disrespect for the values embodied and disrespect for those such as you who have done so much for those values. Disrespect is the genesis of hatred, it provokes a dissolution of our unity, a unity which has only one symbol and that is the Flag.

We went to testify before the House last April and took with us Mary Beth Seeley's fifth-grade class as well as nine Medal of Honor recipients. This is the bottom line.

...A video-clip was shown at this time.

You had to see those kids to really appreciate them. They were a piece of work, every one of them. But, I want you to notice how those children had no difficulty standing up for what's right. We can learn so much from them. Flag burning is a tragic example of a failure

by the leadership in America, a leadership that is failing those young people. We've abandoned the greatest training aid we have to teach our children respect and to teach our children patriotism. For our children's sake, it's important that our laws should reflect our values, the very idea of Law is values-based.

Some in this country glory in our tolerance for evil. And because of our reverence for freedom, we are a tolerant nation. But where in the Constitution does it say that we must tolerate acts which the majority of Americans see as evil or find to be profoundly offensive? Where in the Constitution does it say that toleration for evil is necessary for our freedom? Toleration for evil will fill our society with evil.

I've expressed deep concerns today about patriotism, but I'm really very optimistic. When I meet the young people from Boys Nation, the Legion orators, the great athletes that you produce, and Mary Beth Seely's kids in this class, you know, I know we're going to get through it. There's no doubt in my mind.

The best solution I heard came from a preacher the other day. He spoke of love, and I find that I'm saying a lot about that too. But, he said "If love is to survive it must be expressed." Now, he was talking about love of God but I think it applies in our lives and in the life of our country. And we get uptight, I know I get nervous when this subject comes up. But it's very, very important. If it is to survive in our personal lives, in our personal relationships with our family and our wives, it must be expressed.

The same is true of our country. Patriotism is a living thing in each one of us. It's like our conscience, but it must be nourished to survive, it must be expressed. And how do we do that? We do patriotic things, we vote, we are good citizens, we stay out of trouble, we serve our country and we serve other people. This gathering and what you do is a perfect example of the things that are guaranteed to keep this country strong.

Also honor patriots, not just veterans but the other great heroes in America, such as the police, firemen, teachers, parents. Especially mothers who hold the key to our future through their children and volunteers. And the honor that comes to these folks is not the key. The key is that the young people see that these things, service and citizenship, are noble endeavors.

Please write and call your Senators and the President. I know he would not like to have as his legacy the fact that he did not support the right of the people to protect their Flag. Grassroots support has got us to this point, and we can only win with grassroots support.

There's a story I always tell about a horse-pulling contest that we had out in the West. In one contest, the winning horse pulled about 9,000 pounds. The runner-up horse pulled something less than 9,000 pounds. Since we like to bet in the West, we bet what they could pull if the two of them pulled together. We figured about double. Guess what? When the two horses pulled together they pulled 27,000 pounds.

There's no way that anyone can stop us in this effort if the Legion and the rest of the Citizens Flag Alliance pulls together. So do patriotic things, and above all fly the Flag, the symbol of all that's good in America. Show your Colors, not just in the patriotic cycle at the beginning of our year, but all through the year. Fly the Flag proudly.

It's not enough just to do patriotic things, I think we must also condemn those things that are not patriotic. Crime, not voting, and those things that glamorize unpatriotic things. Flag burning glamorizes things that are nonpatriotic. Flag burning is not only conduct, it is cowardly conduct. The Flag cannot defend itself. It is cowards and terrorists who take their venom out on people and objects who are helpless. If we express our patriotism, it will grow and if we condemn those things that are unpatriotic they will go away.

So it's ironic, I think, that the patriots we remember during this great cycle in our country, those that have done the most for our freedoms, for freedom of speech, in fact, for freedoms all over the world, see no threat to any freedom in Flag protection. We would not

be in this if we thought there was a threat to any freedom. In fact, they see a threat in the desecration of the Flag. In the final analysis, it is about free speech, the most precious speech of all, that is the right of the people to speak, to be heard and to be heeded. And most of all, it is about the prime ingredient in our survival as a nation and that, quite simply, is patriotism.

In closing, we get to hear from a great American patriot. Many of you know him as Bo Duke on *The Dukes of Hazzard*. I guarantee that my 17-year old daughter knows about him. He is dedicated to family values, a true, good, clean, family entertainment. That's something you don't very often find in an entertainer.

He sang a song about his grandfather last night that was just marvelous. His grandfather was a veteran of World War I. Now John's going to sing for us a new song, *I Love Old Glory*. It was written by another great patriot, Senator Orrin Hatch. And Senator Hatch, of course, is going to carry the flag for us as we go into the Senate. So let's hear it for this great American patriot, a great talent, John Schneider.

Address: Mr. John Schneider

MR. JOHN SCHNEIDER: I'd like to thank Senator Hatch for penning these words you're about to hear. They came from his heart, from his soul. And I feel very honored to have the pleasure of being able to sing them for you here this morning, and I hope that you'll hear something in here that you can take home with you and to your communities, and proudly so.

This song is called *I Love Old Glory*. The words are pretty simple in the chorus; if you are so inclined, please feel free to join in and sing as you learn it.

...At this time, Mr. Schneider sang *I Love Old Glory*.

MR. JOHN SCHNEIDER: As the general has said, my grandfather fought in World War I and I have on my wall in my office the roster that has John Schneider's name on it. That was my grandpa. I have in my house the Flag that was given to my grandmother that was on my grandfather's casket when he was laid to rest.

And my grandfather taught me that the Flag was something to be honored. The Flag was something that was never to touch ground. It was to be lit by a light if it were to be displayed in the evening; if not, it was to be taken down and put away with reverence and with respect. And so, I grew up knowing that this Flag was much more than a piece of cloth. It was much more than a symbol. It is, in fact, a eulogy to folks like my grandfather, to every man or woman who gave their life for this country. It is a footnote to every man or woman who has given a limb, or an ability, for the right of free speech, for the right to live in this country. And it is a hope for every young man, and every young woman who grows up in this country, this free country. It is something that they can look up to and look forward to and strive for to keep this country free.

If my grandfather were here today, I don't believe that he could fathom the question of whether or not it is right, or whether or not we as Americans have the right to burn this Flag. I cannot imagine what would be brought up in the heart and soul of my grandfather at the very asking of that question. So, as for me and my house and my family, we will do everything that we can to see that this symbol, that this Flag is respected and honored.

In our history, not all that long ago as far as history is concerned, a very important question was posed. And this question is sung in the form of a song in front of every sporting event that we have these days. I'd like you to think about this song just for a moment. Go back awhile in history and think about this question. "Oh, say can you see by the dawn's

early light, what so proudly we hailed, just yesterday, at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight—"

I've never spoken it before, I've only sung it.

"—o'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there. Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?"

This is a question. It is not just a song. The question is does this banner still wave over this country, over the land of the free and the home of the brave? Does this Flag still mean anything to anyone? I know that it does to you in this room. I know that it does to my family. You have the power within you to make the answer to that question—our National Anthem—the answer needs to be, the answer must be, yes. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the act of burning the Flag of the United States of America is an act of treason. There is no way around it.

Thank you for honoring me by allowing me to sing such a wonderful song. And I thank God for a country where there is such a platform to say such a thing and not be shot for it.

So God bless you. May you have wonderful success in your efforts to clean up this wonderful, beautiful country that is still worth fighting for, that is still worth dying for. May you have tremendous success in every one of your areas, particularly with reversing this decision. Give people the right to defend their Flag once again. If we don't have that right we have no rights. God bless you.

...Mr. Schneider presents Commander Frank with a plaque

National Commander Frank, this is a plaque that has on it the words to *I Love Old Glory* by Orrin Hatch. I present this to you as, once again, a way of saying thank you for having me here. This is a tremendous honor. Thank you for what you have done, not only recently, but what you did in Vietnam and what you have continued to do ever since. You're a wonderful gentlemen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: What did you think of John Schneider's performance? Wasn't it great?

John will be going to the Exhibit Hall shortly where he will be at the CFA booth. You can have a cassette of this song that he just sang, and a song he wrote, *What Would Grandpa Say?*, for a $5.00 donation to the Citizens Flag Alliance. If you want to donate more, that's okay with me. John will also be happy to autograph posters and he will be in the Exhibit Hall next door for more than an hour.

Over and over, we have heard that passage of the Flag Protection Amendment is not going to be easy. We all understand that, but we are not deterred. Many great Americans have been involved in this campaign from the local levels to the halls of Congress. One of them, Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah, wanted to be with us today but his schedule would not allow him to make this trip. But he found the time late yesterday afternoon to record a message to this Convention. A great American and a great leader in our campaign of Old Glory, Senator Orrin Hatch.

...At this time, the video was shown to the Delegation.

Address via Videotape: Senator Orrin Hatch, Utah

SENATOR ORRIN HATCH: As always, it is an honor and a pleasure to be able to speak to a gathering of The American Legion and to extend greetings and best wishes to the

delegates, distinguished guests and friends attending the 79th National Convention of The American Legion.

I wish I could be there with you in Orlando. I know you have an informative and exciting agenda. And, of course, I will miss seeing all of my friends in The American Legion. I'd like to say a special hello to all the members of the Utah delegation. We're all proud of all the good things you all do for our state. And I regret, very much, not being able to see the premier performance of the song, *I Love Old Glory*. This is the perfect audience for this song because of the lifelong service all of you have given to our country. That's what helped inspire it. We share many things in common, not the least is our love for the American Flag. I want to thank John Schneider for singing this tribute.

Throughout my years in the Senate, I've been fortunate to be able to work with The American Legion on a broad range of issues, and particularly on issues pertaining to the welfare of the brave men and women who've engaged in what, I believe, to be the noblest form of public service—wearing the uniform and defending this great nation and the freedoms we all cherish.

One issue, which is particularly close to my heart, and which was the inspiration of my song, is the protection of our unique national symbol, the American Flag, against acts of physical desecration. As Justin Senom said in his defense of the Flag burning case, "A country's flag is a symbol of more than nationhood and national unity. It also symbolizes the ideas that characterize the society that has chosen that emblem, as well as the special history that has animated the growth and power of those ideas."

For over 200 years, this proud banner has symbolized hope, opportunity, justice, and most of all, freedom—not just to the people of this nation, but the people all over the world. I believe that the American Flag is equally worthy of protection as the ideals for which it stands. Throughout our history, through the generations, brave Americans have fought, and in many cases, given their lives fighting under this Flag and for the ideals it represents. By protecting that Flag against acts of physical desecration, we honor their memory and their sacrifice.

This year, one of those brave Americans who fought and sacrificed under that Flag—the distinguished Senator from Georgia, Max Cleland, has agreed to join with me to sponsor, in the Senate, the Flag Protection Amendment. We have our work cut out for us. Despite poll after poll, showing that nearly 80 percent of all Americans support a constitutional amendment to prohibit Flag desecration, despite 49 states having passed memorializing resolutions calling on Congress to pass a Flag desecration amendment, and despite the passage of an amendment by an overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives earlier this year, the goal of obtaining the necessary two-thirds vote in the Senate to amend our Constitution is not an easy task, nor should it be. But the goal we seek is well worth the effort, and I believe deep in my heart that we will ultimately prevail.

That is why I will continue to lead the campaign in the U. S. Senate with the help of Senator Cleland and others, from both parties, on behalf of all citizens who share the values of the men and women like those in The American Legion. In this great effort, your role is critical. I want to thank The American Legion for helping lead the grassroots effort to pass a constitutional amendment to prohibit our Flag against physical desecration. And I want to encourage every delegate of this Convention and every member of The American Legion to continue your efforts, on behalf of the Flag Protection Amendment, to insure that the voice of the American people is heard, loud and clear, in Washington, until Congress heeds the will of the American people and includes protection of our national symbol in the Constitution. Together, we're going to succeed.

Again, my thanks to The American Legion for allowing me to participate in this wonderful event. To the Legion, and to each of you, I wish you good luck, and God bless all of you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I am pleased that the Democratic co-sponsor, Max Cleland, a great friend of mine, from Georgia, also wanted to take time to encourage each of you to continue our campaign. Here is his video tape.

...At this time, a video was shown to the Delegation.

Address via Videotape: Senator Max Cleland, Georgia

As a fellow member of The American Legion, I am pleased to be part of the great group of America's finest. It's indeed a great honor to be a part of the 79th National Convention of The American Legion.

Let me first congratulate Commander Joe Frank for this past year of distinguished service to The American Legion. The American Legion stands for all that is truly great in America, and your service is very much appreciated. As you all know, I am a strong supporter of a constitutional amendment to prohibit the physical desecration of the United States Flag. I campaigned for it, and now I have a chance to work with Senator Orrin Hatch to make the amendment a reality.

The Flag is not a mere symbol. It is not just a symbol of America. It is America. It is what we stand for. It is what we believe in. It is sacred. I do not have to tell you what the Flag means. Just ask the soldier who proudly marches behind the Flag what it means to salute the Flag of the United States. Ask the newly sworn citizen what it means to claim the Flag of the United States for his or her own. Ask the grieving mother or widow of a slain soldier who receives the Flag that drapes the soldier's casket.

Being from the South, and being a history major in college, it was only natural that I would become a student of the Civil War. For those who do not believe in the Flag, I would point to the literally hundreds of citations awarded during the Civil War for acts of valor associated with the Flag. Soldiers were routinely awarded the Medal of Honor, America's highest military award for defending the United States Flag and carrying it forward into battle. Many of these awards were awarded posthumously. These brave men knew the meaning of the Flag.

The Flag unites Americans as no symbol can. Only God and the United States Constitution, itself, stands above the Flag. Everywhere, history has been made in this country and by this country, the Flag has been present. It was the United States Flag that inspired our National Anthem. It was an American Flag that was raised when Jesse Owens stunned Nazi Germany. It was the United States Flag that was hoisted in Iwo Jima. It was the United States Flag that was planted on the Moon. Those who would desecrate the Flag would desecrate America. We cannot stand by for that. Therefore, we should stand for a constitutional amendment.

I urge all members of The American Legion to work in support of this cause. Contact your members of Congress and tell them how you feel. Be a force in your community for this noble cause. Thank you for this opportunity to greet you. God bless you. God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you Max.

Thank you for those donations but we're not through. I have, in my hand, a personal check for $1,000 from a Past National Commander who wishes to remain anonymous. Let me read the little note that he sent with the check.

"I am proud to contribute the enclosed check to assist in passage of the necessary legislation to enable the American people to ratify the amendment to prohibit the desecration of our Flag for which I shed my blood in World War II.

I would hope and pray that all Past National Commanders will equal or surpass this contribution. Sincerely, Anonymous." Very nice.

My friends, we are proud of the co-sponsors in the Senate, and I know that every Legionnaire will, indeed, help to make the Flag Protection Amendment become a reality.

At this time I call upon Carl Levi of Tennessee, a member of the National Finance Commission; City Treasurer of Chattanooga; Chairman of the Internal Audit Committee and a member of the Board of Directors of the Citizens Flag Alliance, along with George Buskirk, Jr. of Indiana, Executive Vice President of Union Federal Savings Bank; Indianapolis Bar Association; Assistant Adjutant General of Indiana, and the Treasurer of the Citizens Flag Alliance.

General Brady, will you please come forward for the presentation? And the Department of Indiana—please step forward.

The presenter is Department Commander Dick Quattrin. The delegation: Gib Sheeks, National Executive Committeeman; Norm Schlemmer, Treasurer of the Endowment Fund of The American Legion; Allen Titus, Chairman the National Security Commission; and K. W. Ohl, Past National Vice Commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER QUATTRIN, Indiana: Commander Frank. On behalf of the Department of Indiana, the home of our National Headquarters and our great universities of Indiana, Purdue and the 'Fighting Irish' of Notre Dame, we recently donated $20,000 to our National Emergency Fund, and now we would like to present to you this check for $20,000 to aid our Citizens Flag Alliance.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: When it comes to $20,000, don't be shy, just come forward.

Thank you very much.

At this time, if there's anyone out there that would like to come up and make a presentation, please feel free to come up or, later on, get with your delegations and count those dollars, and I would be happy to showcase you right here.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER MATHISON, Wisconsin: Mr. Commander, General Brady. The Department of Wisconsin, in a recent Department Convention, have a small donation of twenty-five hundred dollars.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Don't be shy. Thank you very much. You Delegation Chairmen, get busy out there. I'm also talking to you too, Missouri.

General Brady, I commend you for the update on the Citizens Flag Alliance, and I know you and many others like Senator Hatch and Senator Cleland are working long hours in pursuit of the objectives. With long hours and your dedication such as that, and the growing support in leaders like John Schnieder, the Citizens Flag Alliance will prevail.

General, this room is filled with leaders of The American Legion. On each chair are two special postcards. Delegates and guests, I want each of you to complete a card to each of your Senators. Let them know how important the protection of our Flag is to each of you and, of course, their constituents. Simply put the last name of your Senator on the front; write a short note on the back, and be sure to include your name and mailing address in the space that's provided.

As you leave the hall today, all you need to do is drop the card in the special boxes at the door. We will take care of the postage. And, in just a few days, your messages will be in the offices of the men and women who hold the fate of this issue in their hands.

I know I can count on each of you in this room, on this, a very important matter. I urge all of you to have your friends and neighbors rally to this cause in the coming months.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: At this time, I would like to take the opportunity to have my delegation from Missouri stand because those people are the people that put me here. I didn't recognize you yesterday. Stand up.

Thank you, Missouri.

And, you know, Joy, I heard the General talk about you. Joy, why don't you come out here? I have something in mind. They don't know about it up here, but I'm the Commander, this is my last full day as a National Commander. Come here, Joy. Come on up.

This is Joy Kirchgatter. I want you, General Brady, to come on up here.

You know, Joy worked very hard and the General always says, he refers to her as a Corporal. I think we ought to do something about that.

She came to me once and she said, "You know, the General just won't promote me." And General, I understand she's been working very hard, just like The American Legion members, and Joy, I'm going to commission you to a Sergeant. Is there any objection?

...Chorus of No.

Sergeant Joy. All right. God bless you.

I hope the General doesn't demote her, because I know the next National Commander, I think.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Our next speaker represents Georgia's Second District in the United States House of Representatives. One of the House Democrats' fiscal conservatives, he opposes balancing the budget on the backs of our nation's veterans, our men and women who serve in the armed forces.

As a 'Blue Dog' member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, he's championed eligibility reform in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system.

He co-sponsored a constitutional amendment to return to "We the People" the right to protect the American Flag from intentional, physical desecration.

Please give a warm welcome, to an Army veteran, a graduate of Morehouse College and Emory University Law School, U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop, Jr.

Address: The Honorable Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., Georgia
House Veterans Affairs Committee
The United States House of Representatives

I am, indeed, honored to be here this morning. I'm honored for the special invitation to come and be with friends of America. People who have paid the price—to be with an organization that speaks up and lives out the fight for America's veterans.

I'm happy to be here with some of my cohorts from the State of Georgia: Bob Turner, Past National Commander; Cuz Harrell, Past National Executive Committeeman from Bainbridge, Georgia; Bob Campbell, Deputy Commander, Department of Georgia; and Captain Willie Pitts, Past Department Commander, State of Georgia and the most highly decorated Vietnam veteran in Georgia; Bob Spanogle, National Adjutant, and all of the distinguished members of The American Legion.

Let me thank you for the warm hospitality, and let me thank you for the chills and the chill bumps and goose bumps that I got when I heard all of the patriotic messages last night. It does my heart good to be able to come and to renew my spirit with patriotic Americans like yourselves.

As a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee for the past four years, and starting this year as a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence that oversees the CIA, military intelligence and other intelligence operations, I have enthusiastically served as an advocate for veterans, the families of veterans, and for the defense and the security of our country.

I commend you for the powerful force that The American Legion raises on critical issues our country faces. We have been in the trenches together, over the past several years, fighting for a number of critical things: To maintain strong military readiness, which is indeed in danger; for a constitutional amendment to uphold the honor and respect for the U.S. Flag; for a full accounting of our MIA's dating all the way back to World War II; to determine the cause of the Persian Gulf illness, and in the meantime provide full medical services for veterans and their families who suffer from this and other illnesses linked to that military service, including symptoms relating to Agent Orange, exposure to ionizing radiation and biological and chemical agents reminiscent of Khamisiyah; for health care systems that assure quality of care for all veterans, and fulfills the precepts that are outlined in the GI Bill of Health that you are fighting so hard to make reality; for a fair and expeditious review of VA benefit claims; correcting the severe delays that often, too often, exist in the current process; for a balanced budget, a balanced federal budget that does not put a disproportionate share of the burden on the backs of America's veterans; the policies and programs to keep the country strong and secure and an inspiring, strong, reliable and forceful leader in the world.

When the United States was founded more than two centuries ago, it was the most ambitious experiment in representative democratic government ever undertaken. It was an experiment in religious tolerance; economic opportunity based on merit rather than condition of birth; a political system in which everyone would have a fair chance to participate in uniting a diverse population around a shared belief, and individual responsibility, and freedom and equality of opportunity.

These principles could not fully be achieved overnight. As every student of history knows, it has been a 200-year struggle, but history also tells us the country has never stopped making progress. Although it has been a painful experience, at times, the promise so eloquently expressed by the country's founders has gained steady ground with each succeeding generation.

Today, as we approach the 21st century, the country has never been more secure, either militarily or economically; has never exercised greater influence around the world, and has never been more committed to making sure the principles on which our nation was founded, apply to all.

But the country still has its share of problems. Fortunately, Americans still have plenty of grit and fight when it comes to dealing with our problems. This is why we are beginning to gain ground on another problem. We overhauled the welfare system; the crime rate is declining; we have enacted a balanced budget and a tax relief plan. These are changes that the people have demanded, and they got them.

My point is this: our experiment in democracy did not end with the Revolutionary War or with the ratification of the Constitution. These monumental events were just the beginning.

History shows us that it takes courage, vision, commitment and sacrifice to keep our form of representative democracy alive and working the way it is supposed to work. The qualities the country's founders needed to create a nation are still needed to keep her going. This is why I believe people who give up on this country are so misguided. Instead of repudiating their country, they should get down in the trenches and fight for the changes that they believe in.

America needs fighters, not quitters. This is why the country depends on patriotic and service-oriented organizations like The American Legion. Veterans can always be counted upon in peacetime and in war to help lead the charge for changes they believe will make the country better and stronger. As long as the people of our country remain committed and involved, there is no doubt that the great American experiment will continue moving forward.

When Commander Frank called on me to address this session, he asked if I would review current Congressional issues of special concern to veterans. No issue is of greater concern than the state of our military readiness. It is in serious trouble. We are trying to do too much with too little. As a result, many of our military operations are stressed to the breaking point.

Over the past six years, combat units have been reduced by 40 percent. This is a tremendous upheaval. Between 1991 and 2001, the U.S. Army will have been reduced from 18 divisions to eight or nine; the Navy, from 546 ships, to just over three hundred and the Air Force, from 36 fighter wings to seventeen or eighteen.

Procurement funding for modernizing military weaponry equipment has fallen by some 70 percent just since 1985. At the same time, U.S. military operations around the world have proliferated. More than 50 foreign military operations have been undertaken during the 1990s in the Balkans; the Caribbean; South America; Africa; the Pacific; the Middle East. The Marine Corps deployed troops on an average of once every 15 weeks during the Cold War. Today, Marines are involved in new deployment on an average of once every five weeks. Overall, service member deployments are more than 300 percent above the Cold War rate.

A responsible level of military downsizing is justified and necessary in the post-Cold War period. There is bipartisan agreement about this. We cannot sustain an all-out wartime level of military spending indefinitely without risking severe economic repercussions.

But, according to several studies and my own observations from visits to our military installations here and around the world, deficiencies in readiness and morale are getting worse. And a number of experts are questioning whether we now have a defense infrastructure that can adequately meet our country's strategic goal of simultaneously waging two conflicts on the scale of Operation Desert Storm.

I am hopeful that things may be looking up for defense, however. This year, Congress has passed a 248.3 billion dollar defense appropriations act, increasing last year's number by 5.9 billion, an increase that addresses quality of life needs for personnel, and begins to upgrade and replace aging weaponry and equipment.

Americans need to know about these deficiencies. As public awareness grows, so does the pressure on Congress to establish and maintain our realistic and responsible military budget. Thanks to voices like yours, this is beginning to happen.

Things are also looking up for essential veterans programs. Just a little more than a year ago, a majority of the House of Representatives actually voted out a budget plan that would have frozen funding for veterans health care for seven years at the fiscal 1995 level. This would have been devastating for the kind of health care that veterans had been promised and which veterans have earned. It would have been a big step toward dismantling the VA

system. A cutback of this magnitude would have closed up to 41 VA hospitals and eliminated 53,000 doctors and other VA health personnel; denied care that, otherwise, would have been provided to more than four million veterans.

Those of us on the Veterans Committee fought hard against these cuts, and when veterans themselves rose up in protest, Congress eventually did an about-face. A compromise budget was eventually enacted which kept VA funding up with inflation. A series of measures have now emerged to expand and improve VA health care and to speed up consideration of VA benefit claims.

The budget plan we passed, this year, calls for an increase in VA funding of nearly 12 percent over the next five years, compared to the previous five years, including more funds for health care services; more to modernize health care facilities; more for medical research; more for new VA nursing homes; more for claims processing.

Since late last year, Congress has also enacted an eligibility reform bill to open VA health care facilities to many, many more veterans, including opening up more space by allowing more patients to be treated on an outpatient basis. The American Legion fought for this legislation and had a lot to do with getting it passed. You deserve to be congratulated.

Congress is considering a Medicare subvention plan to provide a critically needed new source of funding for VA health care facilities—a measure to allow the VA to keep the money collected from Medicare when treating Medicare-eligible veterans. This has been favorably reported at the committee level but has not yet won approval by the full Congress. A study of the idea has been approved but that is all. Provisions have been enacted to allow the VA to retain money collected from third parties but we have more work to do on the Medicare proposal.

Congress has increased funding to speed up the processing of VA claims. It takes almost two years for the Board of Veterans Appeals to adjudicate a claim. This is not right. I work with veterans every day who are struggling to get claims resolved and I know about the hardships that they experience. With sufficient resources, this is an acute problem that can soon be corrected.

The House has enacted a bill to remedy another unfair part of the claims process. The system currently allows appeals only at the regional level and not at the national level. Under this bill, which I have co-sponsored, final decisions made in Washington can also be appealed when there is evidence of an error. This is now in the Senate.

The House has enacted another bill that I co-sponsored, to impose tough penalties on anyone convicted of desecrating a national cemetery.

We have had a series of incidents of severe vandalism at national cemeteries and we are not going to tolerate it. This also is now in the Senate.

The House has enacted the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act to strengthen the ability of veterans to seek redress of violations of federal employment preference laws, and this too must yet be dealt with by the Senate.

Congress has mandated that the POW/MIA flag be displayed at VA medical centers, post offices and select federal buildings.

I commend The American Legion for your efforts in bringing to light and keeping in the conscience of this nation, the fact that we have so many POW/MIAs that are yet unaccounted for. And you are leading the nation in helping us to always remember.

And I appreciate and salute you for the resolution that you passed requiring that each of your activities begin, and never takes place without having the Empty Chair to remember the ones who are not with us.

The House has passed the Constitutional Amendment to Protect the U.S. Flag against acts of desecration and we have sent it to the Senate. We should protect the Flag, not those

who burn it. To most Americans, the Flag has a special meaning that words cannot adequately define. It represents individual dignity and freedom. It represents the men and the women who have served and who have died to make and to keep America free.

I understand the arguments of our freedom of expression, but still Old Glory has a very special place. I can remember very vividly, as a boy, as I was a young Boy Scout and as I grew to become an Eagle Scout, that each summer as I attended our Boy Scout summer camp, I can remember each day began with Reveille where we raised the Flag, and each day ended with Retreat, where we lowered the Flag. Each scout and each unit, during the camp week, had an opportunity to have the honor of posting the Colors and lowering the Colors. And each of us was taught, as the first opportunity availed itself, that we were to revere the Flag, that it was never, ever to touch the ground. That reverence to the Flag that I learned as an 11-year old boy, has never left me, and I'm proud to be a sponsor, and I will continue to co-sponsor that amendment until it becomes law.

You are also out front on the efforts to account for our MIAs. This was a priority issue in my recent visit to North Korea as a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. It is a sacred issue. Nothing should ever stand in the way of a full accounting for all of our servicemen and women who remain Missing in Action, including those still missing in Vietnam and in all other theaters of war. Like you, I have been pushing for a full accounting, for many years, and I will continue to do so. The fact that the North Korean leaders have opened the door to our delegation, is evidence that they are eager to establish more normal relations with the U.S. This is a positive step. But to achieve normalization, North Korea must do a number of things, including carrying out its commitment to do everything possible to locate and identify remains of all U.S. military personnel from the Korean Conflict.

I am happy to report to you that, while there, I was able to secure a promise of increased cooperation from North Korea in the efforts for joint recovery processes that are ongoing as we speak. As you know, the remains of four of our service members were returned just a few weeks ago and another operation is underway, as we speak, with a third operation to come in a month or so. Hopefully, these efforts will be fruitful but most importantly, we must be consistent and never yielding in our efforts to return with dignity, our warriors who shed their blood and who perished on foreign soil.

The delegation also discussed another crucial issue such as North Korea's exportation of advanced weaponry to Iran and to other rogue nations, and the provocative actions that have been committed in the Demilitarized Zone.

While their perspective was a little different from ours and they believed that because their people are hungry, that they have a right to sell whatever technology or whatever resources they have, to get money for that. We pressed the point that our security is threatened and the security of freedom and to the Middle East is threatened when these kinds of weapons are introduced in that very, very unstable region. Hopefully, they listened and, when the four-party talks reconvene, we will be able to achieve some meaningful resolution of these issues.

We have come a long way in dealing with the issues of special concern to veterans. It was less than 10 years ago that Congress created the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Cabinet level. Now, veterans can go through the front door of the White House, not the back door. I can't say enough about former Secretary of Veterans Affairs and my good friend, Jesse Brown, nor his successor Hershel Gober. Together, with the two of them, The American Legion and with the other organizations, we have fought to lift up the needs of America's veterans.

We have fought efforts to tax veterans compensation and pension benefits, pointing out that compensation and pensions are not a windfall for the veterans. Our veterans have already paid in full with their service and their suffering. We won that battle.

We fought efforts to make low-income veterans pay more for their medication. We won that, too.

We fought a measure to establish means testing for VA compensation, an idea which I regard as downright outrageous. I'll give you an example. This would take disability compensation away from veterans who lost their limbs or eyesight in battle just because they overcame that physical impairment to earn success at a certain level of income and that's why the government is going to take this away from them. As Jesse was so fond of saying, "Then I say, give these veterans back their eyes and their limbs."

Again, we won.

Although veterans have paid their fair share and more as Congress cut spending over the past few years to reduce the budget deficits, we have essentially prevailed in the battle over the budget during the past two years. At this point, Congress has overwhelmingly reaffirmed the view that veterans have earned and deserve the government's services that are now in effect.

When veterans answered the call in faithful service, our nation, in essence, wrote a check promising certain benefits for life. And it is our duty as members of Congress, indeed our duty as American citizens, to make sure that check never comes back marked insufficient funds.

We still have a long way to go before the country's veterans services and the state of our Armed Forces are as they should be. But, as I report to you this morning, we finally appear to be turning in the right direction.

With Americans like yourselves manning the trenches, I truly believe that will continue on this course and will ultimately triumph.

You and I are blessed. We are citizens of the greatest country the world has ever known. No, we Americans are not perfect and have never claimed to be. Over the span of our history, our country has attained an unparalleled degree of individual freedom, and opportunity, and has become a beacon of life and hope for the entire world.

This is not a gift that comes without a cost. Freedom has never been free. It has taken intense thought, much courage and struggle and unlimited sacrifice. And, as you know from your experiences, this is what it will continue to take to preserve what has been gained over two centuries and to build upon it for ourselves and for generations yet to come.

I appreciate what you do for our country. Indeed, I appreciate what you do for the world. You, The American Legion, and all of the VSO's across this country have truly made a difference.

I close with one of my favorite poems. It's called *A Bag of Tools*, written by R. L. Sharp. And it goes like this: "Isn't it strange how princes and kings, and clowns that caper in sawdust rings, and common people like you and me, are builders for eternity. Each is given a bag of tools, a shapeless mass and a set of rules, and each must make as life is long, a stumbling block or a stepping stone."

Thank you, American Legion, for what you have done for America's veterans. Thank you for what you have done for America. Thank you for being not stumbling blocks, but stepping stones for a higher, better quality of life for all of us in America.

God bless you, God bless The American Legion. God bless America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Congressman Bishop for an outstanding speech, and I do want to thank you very much for your report of veterans issues.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: John Sommer just handed me a message here that the New Hampshire delegation responded to my earlier request to CFA, the delegation donation was $125.00, that the Department matched, of New Hampshire of a hundred twenty-five for a total of $250.00. It says, "Thanks for everything, Joe. Charlie." Thank you, New Hampshire.

Keep them coming. I'm not kidding, Missouri.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

The American Legion is very proud of the employers of America who make hiring veterans a matter of good business. To honor those companies, The American Legion Employer of the Year Award was established.

The companies we honor today have demonstrated a keen sense of understanding in hiring veterans.

This morning we recognize three such organizations as 1996 Employers of the Year.

The awards are given in three categories: One for companies employing 50 or less people, another for companies employing 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 1996 Employer of the Year Award in the under 50 category goes to Ted's Western Appliance Service of Livingston, Montana. Theodore Williams, owner of the company is here to accept the award.

Theodore G. Williams, Owner
Ted's Western Appliance Service
Livingston, Montana

Good morning. Now I know how it feels to get an Emmy Award. Believe me, this is unbelievable.

Last night I was thanked many times for being an employer that employed veterans. Now, I would like to thank you.

As an employer, I have found that the veterans have learned the importance of leadership and are able to take and give orders, or discipline and have developed good character traits. This provides a heightened level of service for our customers. The veterans of the employment services provide opportunities to provide employment and training for our veterans. Without this program, small businesses like ours would be unable to afford the cost to train someone that has all the abilities that I just mentioned.

My thanks go out to my veteran team. In my business they make our business shine.

In closing I would like to thank my wife, Sandy of 24 years for her help and devotion. It would not be where it is today without her help.

And thank you American Legion for this award. And remember what Jennifer sang in her closing song last evening: Follow the light. It is there for all of us, and it shines on Old Glory. God bless you all, and thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Hold on a second, Ted. The award I just handed Ted, it reads: "The American Legion National Award, Outstanding Employer of the Year,

1996. Presented to Ted's Western Appliance Service for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 79th Annual National Convention, Orlando, Florida, September 3, 1997."

You know, I have a dishwasher that's broke that my wife has been getting on me. Maybe, Ted, you can come to St. Louis and help me out. The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to D & H Transport of Yuba City, California. And here to accept the award is the owner, Cecil R. Don.

Cecil R. Don, Owner
D & H Transport
Yuba City, California

Ladies and gentlemen, it's such an honor to be invited here and to represent the trucking industry of the State of California. I'm so thankful that I was picked to come here, and this is serious business, and I want you to know that I love America and I love the Flag. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The award in the more than 200 employees category goes to Comcar Industries, Incorporated, of Auberndale, Florida. Here to accept the award is David Kuehl, vice president.

David Kuehl, Vice President
Comcar Industries, Inc.
Auburndale, Florida

Good morning. In 1964, a recruiter named Chris, convinced me that what I needed in my life was to join the Army. Over the next four years I learned many important lessons about the world, about life, and perhaps most importantly, about myself. Many of those I'm sure were the same lessons learned by everyone here today, and for the most part, by all of the veterans.

Useful trades and skills, along with values such as loyalty, perseverance, dedication to duty, are just some of the things that we have learned while serving our country.

With these skills and embedded values, our veterans represented valuable natural assets and an important resource to American business and industry. With the recent special issue of *The American Legion Magazine* focused on "What's Right With America," well let me tell you there's one more thing that's right with America, and that is our veterans out there running and working in American businesses and American industries.

We still need to do more. There's some areas we need to work on, and that's being done.

I would like to thank Mr. Ron Kelly of the Florida Job Service, Veterans Employment Representative, and the Frierson/Nichols Post 8 of Winterhaven for their support and nomination for this award.

It is with great pride and pleasure that I come before you here today representing Comcar Industries, one of many great businesses that appreciate and value our veterans. And it is with that same pride that I accept this award in honor of those veterans.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Gentlemen, please accept my thanks on behalf of The American Legion and all veterans for your commendable employment efforts.

The Chair now recognizes—before that, hold on Rick. Another check. From the Department of Virginia, $500.00. Keep them coming.

The Chair now recognizes Ray Smith of North Carolina, 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
Ray G. Smith (NC), Chairman

At 9:00 a.m. on August 31, 1997, a total of 89 delegates assigned to the Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans' Preference and on Other Economic Matters convened in Plaza International A of the Peabody Orlando Hotel, Orlando, Florida, to consider 54 resolutions assigned to the committees for action. Ray G. Smith of North Carolina was elected General Chairman and Leonard Shaw of Iowa was appointed Secretary. Wayne Slade of South Dakota was elected Chairman of the Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans' Preference, and Bennie Blink of Iowa was appointed Secretary. James McMahon of Maine was elected Chairman of the Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters, and Bill Christoffersen of Utah was appointed Secretary.

In response to a call by the National Adjutant, a Screening Committee consisting of Ray G. Smith (NC), Chairman, James McMahon (ME), Bill Christoffersen (UT), and Wayne Slade (SD), met at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, August 29, in the Bayhill III room of the Peabody Orlando Hotel, Orlando, Florida, to make recommendations to the Convention Committees on Economics. The report of the screening committee was presented to the Convention Committees and was adopted, with Resolutions No. 45 and 213 held out for separate consideration.

Resolution 45 was briefly discussed and approved. Resolution 213, which originated in the Employment and Veterans' Preference and Other Economic Matters Convention Committees, was amended and approved.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee. A motion was made, seconded and approved to allow the Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections. The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

Committee on Employment and Veterans' Preference
Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 29: Transition Assistance Program To Be Permanently Mandated and Fully Funded
Origin: CO
Submitted by: Employment and Veterans' Preference

WHEREAS, The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is designed to assist separating military personnel to make the transition back into civilian life and is currently co-operated by the Department of Labor, Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, A new independent commission has been formed to study the viability of the TAP as to its effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 calls for the evaluation of TAP to determine if the programs and the agencies involved do indeed help former military members get jobs and assist the disabled veteran adjust to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, The commission will seek to determine if the agencies should continue to administer the TAP; and

WHEREAS, The commission will conduct an 18-month study of the programs to recommend changes based on the findings; and

WHEREAS, The program at the majority of the military bases is staffed by Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) personnel or Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) of the state employment service, who are highly motivated to assist those who are separating to assimilate back into the civilian world; and

WHEREAS, This study may offer the opportunity to the Congress to take this much needed program away from the states and thus give reason for the reduction of the DVOP and LVER programs; and

WHEREAS, The funding for the majority of the TAP program is provided by the DOD and this sum is minimal to assist those who served; and

WHEREAS, The DVOP and LVER staff are provided via funding of the DOL/Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS); and

WHEREAS, DVA provides their staff one day during the TAP workshops; and

WHEREAS, All the agencies provide excellent services to the separating personnel; and

WHEREAS, If these services were turned over to a private contractor the incentive to assist the veterans will be diminished and the staff that dedicate their efforts will join the ranks of the unemployed; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion go on record that as long as there are soldiers, there will be a need for a Transition Assistance Program and that it be facilitated by those individuals who are advocates on behalf of veterans and military personnel; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That funding should be so that this program is a permanently mandated and fully funded program as long as the United States of America maintains a military force.

Resolution No. 30: Oppose Federal Funding for Any Service Whose Maximum Priority Is Not the Veteran

Origin: CO

Consolidated with No. 131 (TX) and No. 132 (TX)

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor is moving toward a One-Stop Center operation at the State level; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that veterans still receive priority (preference) of service prior to their non-veteran counterpart; and

WHEREAS, Once the funding is handed down from the Department to the States, the Governor of each state will decide who will operate the One-Stop Centers; and

WHEREAS, The centers might continue with the State Employment Security Agencies, known as the Job Service, or the funding may take another direction and be operated by the counties under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or even be sub-contracted out to private corporations; and

WHEREAS, The JTPA has historically been deaf to veteran needs and will oppose veterans' priority in most states; and

WHEREAS, If the funds are sub-contracted out to the private sector, the motivation to assist veterans with employment issues will be driven strictly by profits; and

WHEREAS, These actions will eventually lead to cutting corners and ultimately be detrimental to veterans; and

WHEREAS, Priority of service to veterans as outlined by law (Title 38, USC, and 20 CFR) will be satisfied with the Federally funded service provider, no matter whom the governors select, so that each veteran or eligible is afforded the full array of services for which she or he is eligible in order to gain advantages in the labor market; and

WHEREAS, The full array of services include, but are not limited to, job search workshops; labor market information; resume development; interviewing techniques; classroom training; support services; job restructuring; job recommendations; training; career counseling; job placement; employer information; case management; skills enhancement; selective placement; job development; child care information; temporary housing; transportation assistance and discharge upgrade assistance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the majority of these services are provided by the staff in the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives, both programs operated by the State Employment Security Agencies (SESA); and

WHEREAS, If the SESA is not the service provider the staff stand to lose their jobs; and

WHEREAS, If the States elect to operate a joint endeavor with JTPA, the staff stand to lose their jobs or be transitioned into the JTPA as county employees; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion oppose Federal funding for any service provider unless they adopt as a policy that veterans' preference eligibles receive maximum priority of the above noted services; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative staff remain state employees, that they will work within the evolving system and that they will operate and maintain services to veterans as mandated by statute; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the One-Stop Centers work with the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service to ensure the operations of the One-Stop Centers meet or exceed the federally mandated service to veterans.

Resolution No. 38: Employment of Veterans in Government Workforce
Origin: SD
Submitted by: Employment and Veterans' Preference
Consolidated with No. 8 (MA) and No. 13 (MA)

WHEREAS, Our Federal government specially selected as mentally, morally, and physically fit certain members from its society, specially trained this group, subjected them to stringent rules and regulations, removed them from home, family and employment, asked of them a special sacrifice, and required some of them to suffer wounds they will live with forever; and

WHEREAS, A grateful nation, through its representatives in the Congress of the United States and state legislatures, has, in recognition of the special service and loss of employment opportunity while defending the country in time of need, extended a long history of employing the returning veterans by enacting the Veterans Preference Act as contained in Title 5, USC; and

WHEREAS, Absence from the highly competitive job market due to military service creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans in competing for employment with non-veteran peers upon completion of military service; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Preference Act accomplished the legislative purpose of honoring veterans and provides a small advantage in competing for federal, state, county and city jobs; and

WHEREAS, There are prominent groups and individuals in the United States today who ignore the employment disadvantages accrued by individuals due to military service, who blindly allege that preference is "discriminatory," who ignore the many judicial determinations upholding veterans preference, who blatantly overemphasize the advantages of veterans preference although presumably aware of the fact that approximately 28 million veterans in our population have not chosen or been successful in obtaining a federal or state position; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the President of the United States and Governor of each state be informed that The American Legion deplores each and every attempt to degrade, dilute, or modify or create time limitations on the historical precedent of giving job eligibility preference to those who were taken from their communities to serve their country in time of conflict and that the President and Governors reject any and all proposed legislation that would reduce the employment opportunities for veterans in the federal or state workforce.

Resolution No. 115: President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Employment and Veterans' Preference
Consolidated with No. 43 (UT); No. 50 (DC); No. 188 (MI)

WHEREAS, The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped (PCEH) was established at the end of World War II by a grateful nation for the purpose of promoting employment opportunities for disabled veterans; and

WHEREAS, The mission of PCEH grew over the years and now that federal agency is known as the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities because it promotes employment opportunities for all disabled Americans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has enjoyed a long and fruitful working relationship with both the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and its Subcommittee on Disabled Veterans; and

WHEREAS, One of the many fruits of our mutual efforts was the 1990 enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); and

WHEREAS, On August 21, 1974, at its 56th Annual National Convention, The American Legion adopted Resolution No. 557, which put the Legion on record as endorsing a "*National Policy for a Barrier Free Environment*"; and

WHEREAS, That resolution spoke of the need to remove the physical barriers that deny disabled veterans and other disabled persons access to work places, public buildings, places of worship and recreational and entertainment facilities; and

WHEREAS, While ADA requires the removal of physical barriers to the employment of disabled veterans and non-veterans, there are still other barriers such as the negative perceptions that some employers have about persons with disabilities that cannot be addressed by the law; and

WHEREAS, The best way of overcoming these false perceptions and prejudices is by educating the public about the many positive attributes that disabled persons bring to the work place; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion reaffirm its long-standing

support of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and its Subcommittee on Disabled Veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reaffirm its commitment to removing all barriers that prevent disabled Americans from leading full and productive lives.

Resolution No. 128: The National Veterans' Training Institute
Origin: TX
Submitted by: Employment and Veterans' Preference

WHEREAS, P.L. 100-323 established the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) as the primary training center for veteran programs staff and state employment security agency staff nationwide; and

WHEREAS, The National Veterans' Training Institute has had an immeasurable impact on the quality of services provided the veterans of this nation by improving the level and quality of services provided; and

WHEREAS, The FY 1997 administration's budget does not include any funds for the National Veterans' Training Institute; and

WHEREAS, The NVTI has trained over 12,000 State Employment Security Agency staff, Veterans' Employment and Training Service staff and Department of Defense staff, which has resulted in improved job opportunities for veterans; and

WHEREAS, The current downsizing of the armed forces will force many veterans into the work force who will need the services of those individuals currently trained by NVTI; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion petition Congress to support full funding of the National Veterans' Training Institute as required by P.L. 100-323.

Resolution No. 165: Support State Administered Veteran Employment Programs
Origin: NH
Submitted by: Employment and Veterans' Preference
Consolidated with No. 42 (UT); No. 56 (DC); No. 114 (MD); No. 183 (MI)

WHEREAS, Veterans of the U.S. military deserve the best employment and training services possible; and

WHEREAS, Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialists will be providing veterans' services within the one-stop Workforce/Employment environment; and

WHEREAS, Some states have elected to privatize or provide block grants for Workforce Development/Employment and Training services outside state agencies through the use of private contractors or local government; and

WHEREAS, TheVeterans' Employment programs and Disabled Veterans Outreach Programs should not be provided to veterans on a for-profit basis by private contractors or delegated to county agencies of local government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports legislative or administrative changes which mandate the Local Veterans Employment Program and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program in each state be administered and operated by a specified state agency which advocates on behalf of veterans.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 9 (MA) 1997 NC: **Petition Secretary of Labor to Adhere to Requirements of Title 38, Chapter 41, Section 2004**
Resolution No. 10 (MA) 1997 NC: **Employment and Training Service**
Resolution No. 14 (MA) 1997 NC: **Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)**
Resolution No. 33 (CO) 1997 NC: **Reestablish the Local Veterans Employment Representatives Position With the Only Priority Being the Disabled Veteran**
Resolution No. 37 (SD) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress to Appropriate Full Funding of LVER and DVOP**
Resolution No. 47 (UT) 1997 NC: **Jobs For Veterans Program**
Resolution No. 53 (DC) 1997 NC: **Jobs for Veterans Program**
Resolution No. 122 (MD) 1997 NC: **Jobs For Veterans Program**
Resolution No. 129 (TX) 1997 NC: **Employment and Training Program**
Resolution No. 185 (MI) 1997 NC: **Jobs for Veterans Programs**

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 5: Homestead Privilege to Veterans
Origin: AK
Submitted by: Economics

WHEREAS, America has always honored their veterans by granting them homestead acreage ever since the Revolutionary War because of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering granting Alaskan Native Vietnam War veterans limited rights to obtain public land allotment; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are the most homeless group of the population that ever existed in our country; and

WHEREAS, Our Federal government has ample public lands available to grant veterans homestead lots; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That Congress be petitioned to open up homestead privileges to U.S. military veterans on a priority basis.

Resolution No. 7: Support Department of Veterans Affairs Small Business Loan Program for Vietnam Veterans
Origin: MA
Submitted by: Economics

WHEREAS, Small business is the backbone of the American economy; and

WHEREAS, More than nine out of every ten businesses are small firms which produce almost one-half of the Gross National Product; and

WHEREAS, Over one-half of the nation's work force is employed by small business, with the average company employing approximately 11 persons; and

WHEREAS, America has benefited immeasurably from the service of its 27 million living veterans, who made great sacrifices in the defense of freedom, the preservation of democracy, and the protection of the free enterprise system; and

WHEREAS, Reliable sources have estimated that 20 percent of all small businesses are owned and operated by veterans; and

WHEREAS, Because of the status of the economy over the past few years, many thousands of workers have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and have been unsuccessful in finding new employment; and

WHEREAS, One way of combating unemployment is through the creation of new jobs; and

WHEREAS, Government can help to create new jobs by encouraging qualified entrepreneurs to start new small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who want to become entrepreneurs either do not qualify for the direct or guaranteed loans through the Small Business Administration (SBA), or do not apply for such a loan because of the red tape involved in obtaining an SBA loan; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation in the early 1980s that amended Chapter 37 of Title 38, United States Code, to establish a pilot veterans' small business program that was to be administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA); and

WHEREAS, The DVA's small business loan program was never funded and was allowed to sunset on Sept. 30, 1986; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who want to become entrepreneurs could realize their dreams of going into business if the DVA's small business loan programs were available to them; and

WHEREAS, The DVA estimates that if its small business loan program is authorized it will help to cushion the impact of the downsizing of the military by creating a million new jobs over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, If the DVA's small business loan program is re-authorized, it should be opened to post-Vietnam-era veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that would re-authorize and fund a Department of Veterans Affairs small business loan program for disabled, Vietnam-era and post-Vietnam-era veterans.

Resolution No. 20: Home Improvements and Structural Alterations Grants
Origin: ND
Submitted by: Economics

WHEREAS, Service connected and non-service connected veterans who have disabilities require home improvements and structural alterations to make their homes handicapped accessible; and

WHEREAS, The home improvement grant available is a $4,100 one-time grant for service connected disabilities and a $1,200 one-time grant for non-service connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Many young veterans with disabilities may be relocating several times over the course of their lives and furthermore the $4,100 and $1,200 respectively are not adequate given rising construction costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion support legislation that will increase the amount and number of times veterans may receive the Home Improvement and Structural Alterations Grant.

Resolution No. 45: Support for Low-Interest Loans
Origin: UT
Submitted by: Economics
Consolidated with No. 52 (DC); No. 118 (MD); No. 189 (MI)

WHEREAS, Many military retirees and self-employed reservists were called to serve during Operation Desert Shield/Storm and were given a minimum of time to settle their affairs before reporting for duty; and

WHEREAS, Self-employed reservists, both those owning small business enterprises and those engaged in professional medical or legal practices, did not have the protection of law guaranteeing them a job to return to after they had completed their tours of duty; and

WHEREAS, As many as 15,000 of these recalled reservists and retirees found themselves in destitute financial circumstances, often in bankruptcy, following their tour of duty during Operation Desert Shield/Storm or in subsequent service in Bosnia because their source of income completely dried up when they entered military service; and

WHEREAS, The Small Business Administration will not offer low-cost loan assistance because of the bankruptcy or poor credit status of these veterans as a result of their recalled service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports legislation that would provide self-employed recalled reservists or members of the National Guard with the opportunity to apply for low-interest, long-term loans through a program to be funded by the Small Business Administration which would provide the financial support sufficient to restore their credit rating to its status prior to their entry into active military service.

Resolution No. 48: Preference for Veterans in Department of Housing and Urban Development Housing for Senior Citizens
Origin: UT
Submitted by: Economics
Consolidated with No. 51 (DC) and No. 121 (MD)

WHEREAS, There are nearly 12,000,000 living American veterans over the age of 60; and

WHEREAS, Because many of those veterans are living on fixed incomes, it is often difficult if not impossible for them to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) operates affordable housing programs for senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, Many needy and deserving veterans are unable to participate in those housing programs because of long waiting lists; and

WHEREAS, A large percentage of those occupying HUD housing are legal and illegal aliens who have never served this country's armed forces; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports any legislative or administrative initiative that will give preference to American veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Resolution No. 49: Reestablish Adjustable Rate Mortgages for DVA Loan Guaranty Program

Origin: DC

Submitted by: Economics

Consolidated with No. 44 (UT); No. 117 (MD); No. 187 (MI)

WHEREAS, The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P. L.346, 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home-loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA); and

WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgage financing from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the DVA Loan Guaranty Program, and because it benefited the American economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and

WHEREAS, To date the DVA has guaranteed 15 million loans to eligible veterans and has, for the most part, maintained a default rate that compares very favorably with the default rate on private sector mortgages; and

WHEREAS, While many of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing, many others could not have qualified for conventional mortgages; and

WHEREAS, Congress has made numerous changes over the years in attempts to improve this VA program, including authorizing certain pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, In 1992 Congress authorized DVA to conduct a three-year pilot program which allowed VA to guarantee Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMs); and

WHEREAS, During that three-year period the DVA's ARM program became very popular and accounted for approximately 22 percent of all loans guaranteed by the DVA; and

WHEREAS, One of the attractive features of an ARM is that it allows the borrower to obtain a home loan with an interest rate below that of a normal fixed rate loan, thus allowing that person to select the financing option that best suits their needs; and

WHEREAS, Because the DVA's ARM program was underwritten much more conservatively than ARMs available in the conventional market, very few loans went into default; and

WHEREAS, Although the DVA and Congress were in favor of making the program permanent, the Congressional Budget Office blocked a permanent extension because it believed that the cost would be $36 million per year, even though the DVA had proven that it could run that program at a lower cost; and

WHEREAS, A proposal to reinstate DVA's authority to guarantee ARMs has been submitted for inclusion in DVA's legislative program for the 1st Session of the 105th Congress, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion support legislation to reinstate the Department of Veterans Affairs' Adjustable Rate Mortgage program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reaffirm its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Loan Guaranty Service and its programs; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative and/or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service's ability to serve America's veterans.

Resolution No. 74: Funding for Homeless Programs
Origin: PA
Submitted by: Economics

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation to fund the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) program, the Homeless Domiciliary Care Program and the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) rehabilitation program; and

WHEREAS, Some of these programs have been in partnership with veterans service organizations and other non-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, There are estimates ranging from 250,000 to one million veterans who are homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been an active partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs with the HCMI and CWT programs; and

WHEREAS, These programs have proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion shall call on the Congress of the United States to keep the Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill program, the Homeless Domiciliary program and the Compensated Work Therapy Rehabilitation program funded separately from general U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs funding.

Resolution No. 116: United States Savings Bonds Program
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Economics
Consolidated with No. 40 (UT); No. 55 (DC); No. 186 (MI)

WHEREAS, The American Legion has traditionally promoted the United States Savings Bonds Program; and

WHEREAS, United States Savings Bonds have long provided a safe opportunity for systematic investments, with a fair return, and an attractive federal income tax deferral and state and local income tax exemption; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion reaffirm its long-standing support of the United States Savings Bonds Program.

Resolution No. 119: Reimbursement for Correspondence Courses
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Economics
Consolidated with No. 46 (UT); No. 54 (DC); No. 184 (MI)

WHEREAS, Over 1.2 million veterans have chosen to study via correspondence training since 1970; and

WHEREAS, Fewer than 4,000 veterans using the G.I. Bill are actively enrolled in 1997; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are reimbursed only 55% of the total course tuition, a reimbursement rate that has remained unchanged for over 16 years; and

WHEREAS, The average total cost of an accredited correspondence course is just over $1,000, the most cost effective method of education today; and

WHEREAS, Correspondence training is often the only educational opportunity available to veterans who are homebound, hospitalized, incarcerated or living in a rural area where no colleges or schools are within reach; and

WHEREAS, Accredited correspondence institutions offer valuable, salable vocational and professional skills in such in-demand fields as computer programming, health care topics, management, electronics technology, and hundreds of other jobs that will help our nation's deserving veterans get better jobs faster and with up-to-date training delivered with convenience and flexible learning techniques such as Internet-based education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion strongly supports an effort to amend Title 38 to restore the reimbursement rate for correspondence training to the 90% of tuition level where it had been in the 1970s.

Resolution No. 213: Support for Homeless Shelter Funding
Origin: Economics
Submitted by: Economics
As Amended

WHEREAS, as many as one-third of the male homeless population in the United States consists of veterans of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, many of these homeless veterans have availed themselves of programs offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs which are designed to rid veterans of alcohol and substance dependencies; and

WHEREAS, when these veterans leave the detoxification programs they need a structured living environment in order to put their lives back together; and

WHEREAS, due to lack of funds from any source, shelters offering the necessary environment do not exist in most places where they are needed; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Department of Pennsylvania has demonstrated how a successful transitional veterans shelter can greatly assist in the healing process; and

WHEREAS, the National Service Life Insurance program, the Veterans Group Life Insurance program, and the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program all maintain trust funds; and

WHEREAS, the National Service Life Insurance trust fund maintains a value of approximately $13 billion dollars, all invested in US Government securities; and

WHEREAS, the revenue from these investments is used to pay dividends to holders of National Service Life Insurance policies, dividends which are not mandated in statutes; and

WHEREAS, both the Veterans Group Life Insurance trust fund, and the Servicemembers' Group Life insurance trust funds can be invested in stable securities other than US Government securities; and

WHEREAS, funding for homeless shelters which meet the needs of veterans leaving detoxification programs might be obtained from commercial lenders provided that loan guarantees were available from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, under the provisions of "pay-go", the Congressional Budget Office would require that funds be set aside in a certain amount to back up these loan guarantees; and

WHEREAS, the additional funds necessary to back-up loan guarantees could be available from investing National Service Life Insurance trust funds in appropriate investments which normally yield a much higher rate of interest than U.S. Government Securities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, on September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports legislation which would allow National Service Life Insurance trust funds to be invested in bonds rated no less

than "investment grade" by Standard and Poor's, Moody's Investors Service and Fitch's Investment Service; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That interest received from this new investment plan shall be placed in a separate interest-bearing trust fund after the amount equal to the rate of return from investments in the U.S. Government Securities has been returned to the National Service Life Insurance trust funds; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the additional revenue over and above that generated by investments in U.S. Government securities be used to guarantee loans by non-profit groups seeking to borrow funds to open and operate shelters for homeless veterans leaving rehabilitation facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the investments be authorized and funds be actually invested for at least twelve months to generate the funds necessary for the guarantees prior to any money being loaned to support this program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs must approve the plan and be interactive with the program to include at least an annual inspection and financial audit of the facility; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That any changes in the plan must be agreed to by the Department of Veterans Affairs before authorized; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That liability insurance to cover the value of the DVA guarantee must be maintained thus relieving the Department of Veterans Affairs of its obligation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the plan to operate these shelters include participation of the Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists from the local State Employment Security Office to provide professional job placement assistance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That these shelters be operated solely for the benefit of veterans, both male and female, needing assistance.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 12 (MA) 1997 NC: **Support Veteran-Owned Small Businesses**
Resolution No. 18 (MA) 1997 NC: **Support the Small Business Administration**
Resolution No. 206 (NY) 1997 NC: **American Legion and the Homeless**

CHAIRMAN RAY SMITH, North Carolina: Mr. Commander, as a delegate from the great Department of North Carolina, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? There's been a second. All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed.

The aye's have it and the report of the Economics Committee is adopted. Thank you very much, Chairman Ray.

I'd like to announce the fact that the Department of Alaska just presented me with a check for $300 for the CFA. Thank you.

I understand in the wings there's a delegation from Missouri. I wonder what they want? Here they come. I knew they'd come through. They're the Show Me state.

DELEGATE, Missouri: Commander, we have a check to present to the CFA for $2,000.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Whoa, $2,000 from Missouri. Hey, that's great. You've got the general right behind you. Thank you very much, Missouri and Alaska.

The Chair recognizes Roger Tingler of Georgia, Chair of the National Committee on Membership and Post Activities for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Section on Membership, Section III
(of Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Roger L. Tingler (GA), Chairman

Forty-three members of the Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs Section III, Membership, and guests, met at 9:00 a.m., August 31, 1997, in Room 340C of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida.

Roger L. Tingler of Georgia was elected Chairman and Lloyd Ricker of Minnesota was elected Secretary.

National staff provided reports on current activity and future strategies for the following topics: the 1997 Membership Year, the 1998 Membership Promotion, and the DMS and Direct Renewal Programs.

As of Friday, August 29, 1997, membership for the 1997 year stands at 2,827,715.

Our awards program consisted of recognition of those departments achieving target date goals. For the 75 percent target date, December 11th, 1996, an eagle statue was awarded to 31 department commanders and membership chairmen. At the reach of the 90 percent target date, February the 19th, 1997, American Legion his-and-her watches were sent to 23 department commanders and membership chairmen. Fourteen departments were awarded crystal emblem for achieving the '95 target date, which was April the 9th, 1997. And for the 100 percent target date, May the 7th, 1997, three departments earned an embroidered American Legion dinner jacket of 100 percent membership, and a Legion cap.

The Departments of Arizona, Delaware, Mexico attained an all-time high membership of 1997. The Department of Delaware attained an 11th straight all-time high.

During the 1997 membership workshop a drawing was held from among the 1997 members of the gold brigade for award of $1,000 gift certificates. And the winners of these certificates are: David C. Miller of Florida, John J. Revela of Florida, Joe Shelly of California, Leon Sinclair of Virginia, and Stephen German of Delaware.

Two resolutions were referred to the Membership and Post Activities Committee. One resolution was received and recorded. One resolution was rejected. The one resolution received and recorded was Resolution No. 79 of Illinois - Member data forms.

The one resolution rejected was Resolution 142 from Indiana - Establish a commission on American Legion eligibility.

As of Friday, August the 29th, 1997, membership for the 1998 year stands at 1,100,81. And I may add this is 14,000 ahead of this time -- 114,000 ahead of this time last year.

It was readily moved and seconded and carried that the Committee Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the committee report on behalf of the committee. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

One Resolution was received and recorded by the Committee and one Resolution was rejected by the Committee:

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 79 (IL) 1997 NC: **Member Data Forms**

Rejected

Resolution No. 142 (IN) 1997 NC: **Establish A Commission On American Legion Eligibility**

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

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed? The aye's have it. The Report of Credentials and Internal Affairs - Membership is adopted.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Well, we've come to a portion of the agenda that every National Commander looks forward to. I'm no exception. It's time for membership award presentations.

Membership continues, my friends, to be critical to The American Legion. And without an active growing membership our programs, of course, will lose strength, and our voice in Congress will be weakened. Our commitment of service to veterans, their families and communities will suffer.

During the past year three Departments took their membership efforts to a higher level by posting all-time highs. And with 11 years for an-all time high. I would like to ask Robert H. Poore, Department Commander of Delaware, to join me. Commander Poore?

Commander Poore, the efforts of the men and women you represent in your department are heartening. Through determination, hard work and commitment, your membership grew to its highest level ever. It's with sincere gratitude that I present to you a plaque denoting this very great achievement. Congratulations.

Another membership feat to be recognized is reaching and exceeding 100 percent of a department membership goal by May the 7th. I would like to acknowledge the following three department commanders and department membership chairman and ask them to join me right here. Vernon Peterson, the Department Commander, and Commander Paul Lofgreen, Membership Chairman of Utah; Noel Petisce, Commander, and Eugene Pytka, Membership Chairman of Rhode Island; and John Stingerie, Commander, and H.B. Williams, Membership Chairman of Nevada.

Vernon, I'm proud to present to you this plaque which signifies the accomplishments, along with a special designated denim jacket and American Legion cap. Don't be shy, Vern. Come on over here. Come on over here, Vern.

Commander Petisce from Rhode Island. And the Department of Nevada. Let's give them a round of applause.

Come on out here. Okay, come on around here. Don't be shy. You don't have money but you've got membership and that's great.

Thank you very much, guys, and congratulations.

I would also like to note that there were seven other departments which obtained 100 percent membership, and those departments have received a plaque for their efforts. Congratulations to each of you.

You know, this is fun. And the fun isn't over yet. Right now I would like to recognize the runner-up in this year's Recruiter of the Year competition. Maurice Petit, from the Department of Rhode Island. Come on up here, Moe. Where are you at, man? This guy's an incredible person. Mr. Moe, that's right. Maurice, better known as Moe, signed up 526 new members.

Each and every Legionnaire in this convention hall knows the hard work and the dedication that it takes to keep recruiting new members. And, Moe, on behalf of all of the delegates to this convention we say thank you, my friend, and share your secrets of success with others.

Give Moe a round of applause.

I want to tell you, Moe started off—when I visited their department a while back, I presented him with a membership workshop. And they were workshops and not conferences. I presented you with a pin, do you remember that, for signing up a few members? And he's went crazy ever since. It's not crazy, it's great. All right, brother.

I was just informed by National Vice Commander that, in fact, he still has the pin on. That's loyalty, isn't it?

The next gentleman needs no introduction and is no stranger to an American Legion National Convention stage. The success of The American Legion for over 78 years has its foundation in a strong vibrant membership. And membership, of course, is the life blood of our organization and the next individual has again set the standard.

With the recruitment of one thousand and eight new members to earn this honor for the fourth time. Please give a warm round of applause to the National Membership Recruiter of the Year from Post 888 from California, Joe Chilelli.

He told me he was going to do it again. Whoa, Joe, you are one powerful recruiter. You're a recruiting force for the American Legion. I'm indeed honored to present to you the Recruiter of the Year silver cup. Joe, this is but a small token of appreciation for the job you have done and continue to do in the membership endeavors for The American Legion in "Still Serving America."

Congratulations my friend.

Hey, Joe, come back here. The Chilelli family name has long been associated with service in the military. And I know that you formed the Post 888—you know, my post is 777, you told me you were going to do this—with the Chilelli name to honor your relatives who have served with our nation and our American Legion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, will you please rise. Will the color guard please present the special colors. Let's give a right-hand salute. One, two.

...The Delegates salute the Colors.

Stay right there, Joe. Joe, we would like to present these Colors to you, and please take them home to the Chilelli Post 888. And I know you will display them proudly for years to come. Thank you, Joe, for a job well done, my friend.

Hand salute. One, two.

I tell you, that gets to you. I know that feeling. I believe Vern Peterson, the Department Commander of Utah has a few inspiring words that he'd like to share with us.

Address: Vernon Peterson
Department Commander of Utah

Ladies and Gentlemen, my tail feathers are dragging as I lay to rest one fowl friend, Comrade Chicken. Not long ago, I nearly lost another loved one— me. Two years ago, I was

working on a power line when I was nearly electrocuted by 69,000 volts. My life was spared, and I swore that I would remain grounded.

So you can imagine my shock a year later, during the National Convention in Salt Lake City, National Commander Dan Ludwig presented the Department of Utah with a rubber chicken. To say I had egg on my face would be the understatement.

I was a newly elected Department Commander of Utah. And I already had laid an egg, and I was not eggstatic to receive the chicken. We received the chicken because Utah was next to last place in the 1996 membership. I felt like I had dropped my last piece of chewing gum in a hen house.

It was a jolt, far more worse than 69,000 volts that had hit me 12 months earlier. Our rubber chicken became my constant and visible reminder that our beloved Department of Utah was scraping the bottom for membership. Every Utah Legionnaire had egg on his face.

I made a vow to rise above this disgrace. I made a vow to regain our honor. And I made a vow to turn my scrawny, cackling, plucked chicken into cordon bleu. Everywhere I traveled Comrade Chicken accompanied me. When I drove, he was strapped into the seat next to me. When I spoke he was introduced. When I ate, he ate, too. I never have been so tired of chicken in my entire life.

By November, I had started cackling when I saw a chicken. By January I had even given up eating eggs. By February, I had—I don't even want to see a chicken again. And today I despise chickens. If my Comrade Chicken had not died of natural causes, I might have wrung his neck myself. That's just what this kind of disgrace can do to a Legionnaire. It's more stressful than having to listen to your Adjutant.

But, my friends, I must give this chicken his dues. At first he was a grim reminder of defeat. Then we all became obsessed with ridding ourselves of his presence, but in the end, he became our mascot to victory. We are gathered here today to show our respects and yes, even gratitude to our feathered friend, Comrade Chicken. And a whole block of Legionnaires who weren't chicken. Utah is No. 1 in the nation.

Is Past National Commander Daniel Ludwig down here? Would he please approach up here?

...Commander Ludwig comes forward.

Commander Ludwig, in March of this year at the American Legion birthday party when our National Adjutant Spanogle was in Salt Lake City, I made a vow to them that if we stayed in No. 1 throughout the entire year, that I would bring this back, this chicken that you gave me, back to the National Convention in Orlando, Florida, and tell you to put it where the sun don't shine.

Today the Utah Legionnaires are doing the cackling because we have something to crow about. Commander, please pass our dearly departed comrade to another commander who needs to get egg-cited about membership.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER LUDWIG: Thank you, Commander Vern. Could you be a little more clear about where the sun isn't shining?

No, that's okay. Well, this is a fine example of what a little determination can do. Not to mention a bit of humiliation. I am proud of Commander Vern Peterson, and the Department of Utah for hatching out of the nest to soar with the eagles.

Because of the impact this bird has had, it is only fitting that he be passed on to another Department in dire need of inspiration. Therefore, it is my duty as a dedicated Legionnaire, who I might add has already had lunch, that we pass Comrade Chicken to National Commander Joe Frank, as the heir to the Legion nest.

As successor of the bird, it will be up to you, Commander Joe, to bequeath Comrade Chicken to that individual who you deem appropriate to carry on the heritage. So Commander Joe, the bird is now in your court.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Dan, we have—don't run because this ain't over yet. First, Dan, I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my chicken-plucking heart. Since my days are numbered in this high office of National Commander, it's only right that this beloved Comrade Chicken be properly cared for, Commander. After all a dead chicken with the power to turn around a Department's membership is a magical bird whose powers must be exploited in the coming months. You agree, right?

So where's Roger Tingler, Chairman of the Membership Post Activities Committee? Get over here, Roger. Come on up here, brother. Bring the chicken up here.

Thank you again, Dan. Roger, I'm placing you in charge of our Comrade Chicken until such time as a newly elected Commander can determine who should become the caretaker of this bird.

Isn't that great? We can have fun, too, in this organization, and that's good.

Our next speaker is the Pentagon coordinator of activities related to investigating the nature and causes of Gulf War illnesses. He's worked with The American Legion Persian Gulf Initiative, communicating the findings of his investigation directly to veterans.

He's an economist who holds a bachelor's degree in economics and educated from New York University, as well as master's and doctorate degrees in economics from Syracuse University. He's worked with or within the Department of Defense for most of his distinguished career.

Please welcome the Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Gulf War Illness, Dr. Bernard Rostker.

Address: Dr. Bernard Rostker, Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses Department of Defense

Commander Frank, and Ladies and Gentlemen, it's my distinct honor and pleasure to be here today. Before I start with my remarks, I would like to call your attention to an information booth that we've put up today in the exhibition hall. It's at the extreme right side. And I would encourage you to visit that booth. It contains much of the material that I'll be talking about today in my remarks.

Last January, the President's Advisory Committee on Gulf War Illnesses, the PAC, finished their report to the President and the American people. At that time, the PAC had high praise for the government's efforts in caring for its active duty service men and women and veterans who served in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. But was less sanguine about the government's investigation of incidents of possible exposure of U.S. troops to chemical and biological agents. They characterized the Department of Defense's, and I quote, "investigatory efforts" as having been slow and superficial with no credible attempt to communicate with the public on these investigations.

We in the Department of Defense have come to substantially the same conclusion. The PAC in their report didn't, and I quote again, "recognize" that in November of last year, 1996, DOD announced it was expanding its efforts relating to low level chemical weapon exposure. And they said that these investigations they hoped would begin to restore public confidence in the government's investigation of possible incidents of chemical weapons agent exposure.

We are rapidly approaching the one-year anniversary of the establishment of the office of the special assistant for Gulf War illnesses. And I'd like to report to you today on our

expanded effort. Hopefully, you will find that our efforts over the last year are credible, because they reflect the fact that we care deeply about our service personal and veterans, and that we are dedicated to trying to get to the bottom of why so many of our Gulf War veterans are ill today.

While many of you, or most of you are aware of our efforts to report in detail on specific chemical incidents, this is just the tip of the iceberg of the range of activities at my office. Our commitment starts with veterans themselves. We have a number of active outreach programs to bring the veteran into our investigations, and to be available to answer any questions they may have about what happened in the Gulf.

We have an active incident reporting hotline, but instead of just recording and tabulating incident reports, we follow-up each and every report with a debrief by one of our contact managers. These calls often are thirty minutes or longer, and establish a one-on-one relationship between a person in my office and a reporting veteran.

When we started this call-back program last December, we had more than 1200 veterans who had contacted us without any follow-up from DOD. Today, I can report to you that we have attempted to reach every one of those 1200, and have been successful in contacting over a thousand veterans from this original list. In addition, almost 1500 veterans have tried to reach us since our new office was established. And we have debriefed almost 1200, or 82 percent of the veterans, who cared enough to want to share their stories with us.

The contact managers report that feedback from the veterans is overwhelmingly positive, and this is reinforced by my own meeting with veterans. They're often surprised and pleased that someone had called on behalf of DOD. The information that these veterans provide becomes part of our case management process. Their firsthand accounts are a valuable part of our investigations.

Our commitment to keeping veterans informed extends to our presence on the Internet through our Gulf Link home page. Gulf Link provides a means to post new information immediately at the same time it is released in the press room at the Pentagon so that it is available to all veterans. Typically we get 19,000 home page hits in any given week. And we peak at over 70,000 hits per week during important times, such as when we announce the results of our analysis of fallout from the explosions at Khamisiyah.

Gulf Link now includes access to declassified information, our 24-hour Email system, news articles, and case narratives. While Gulf Link has been a great success, we do recognize that many veterans do not have access to the Internet and to reach them we have developed a bimonthly newsletter called *Gulf News*. Copies are available at our displays in the next room where you can add your name to the mailing list as well as to actually try out the Gulf link Internet site.

In addition we have mailed over 150,000 notification letters to veterans concerning possible exposure, and surveyed over 21,000 veterans about specific chemical incidents. In fact, many here today may have gotten a letter or participated in the survey.

Our commitment to reach out to veterans extends to you here at The American Legion and to other veteran service organizations. I have initiated a series of periodic meetings with the VSO's in Washington to give your representatives direct access to information about programs in DOD that may not normally be available. Recent meetings have covered such topics as chemical protection and reconnaissance, depleted uranium and medical recordkeeping.

And finally, my personal commitment to meet with veterans at conventions like this and at town hall meetings throughout the U.S. Last spring we traveled to eleven cities to meet with veterans, to hear what they had to say so that I could better understand their concerns, and determine how we might best meet their needs.

All of this outreach of communication would be worthless if we did not have something to say. Last December, I initiated a formal way to investigate incidents, or cases as we call them, and to report them to you. We increased the size of the staff, and set them to investigating the most important incidents of possible chemical or biological agent exposure, using a formal protocol established by the international community to certify chemical incidences.

We devised the concept of a case narrative as a means of getting the results of our investigation to you before they are finalized, and engage the veterans, those who actually served in the gulf, to help us get the full story out. I insisted that we not only fully document and footnote the case narratives, but also wherever possible link through the Internet our footnotes to the actual documents that we are using, and that are available to the public as part of our web site.

To date, we have published six case narratives and one information paper. By the time we reach our first anniversary we will have published thirteen case narratives and four information papers. The narratives and papers are the most detailed and authoritative accounting currently available to the American people of what actually happened in the Gulf.

As part of this process, we present facts, and then based on those facts, we make an assessment of the likelihood that our troops were exposed. Our assessments run from definite through likely, unlikely, to definitely not. The most important thing, however, is not our judgment, but the facts we present. And we welcome you to make your own assessments.

No discussion of this last year would be complete without a review of the Khamisiyah demolitions. Last year at this time, we placed before you the fact that in March 1991, U.S. troops had most likely destroyed 122 millimeter rockets that were filled with sarin. I say most likely, because there were still many unexplained pieces to the Khamisiyah trail that seemed contradictory. Some of these facts were brought out in our Khamisiyah narrative, and the subsequent CIA paper of intelligence surrounding Khamisiyah. Unfortunately, last year we were unable to complete our analysis of the fallout of Khamisiyah because of the poor information at hand.

Following the President's commitment to you that he would leave no stone unturned, we undertook an unprecedented effort to conduct the best analysis possible, including the extensive ground testing at Dugway Proving Ground and the development of new computer simulation models.

We also initiated a series of G2/S2 conferences to pinpoint where troops were located in early March of 1991. The answer we got from the plume analysis, together with better position time data, put many of the pieces of the Khamisiyah puzzle in place.

It cost a lot of money. It took a priority effort of many people and organizations. And it was worth it. This work will have a profound effect, not only on our understanding of Khamisiyah, but also on how we approach similar problems in the future, and even how we conduct medical research.

These are but a few highlights of what for us is a crusade. Most of the people in my office are veterans. Most have been associated with DOD all of their working lives. I am a Vietnam era veteran and have worked with DOD both in and out of government for almost 30 years. Others are active duty personnel, active reservists, civilian employees, retired enlisted in offices, as well as spouses of officers and enlisted personnel, retired and on active duty. My deputy is a distinguished lieutenant general. We all care deeply about the department, and its people. We care about how you view the department, and how it serves your needs.

Gulf War illnesses are a national problem that the DOD can not resolve by itself. We critically need your support, and the American Legion has been at the forefront in providing

this much needed assistance. Whether it was your National Gulf War Representative, Matthew Puglisi in Washington, or your local chapter coordinators coordinating the town hall meetings. And I would like to take a moment now to thank a few people who I hope are here today, Charlie Knox from Atlanta, Jake Comer from Boston, Pat Smith from Colorado Springs, Joe Padrosky of LaGrange, Ohio, and Michael Ayers of Indianapolis, and Roger Hite of Columbus.

As you look back over the last year, hopefully you will agree that we are addressing your concerns. And that we have had some modest success in providing you with an accounting of what happened in the Gulf seven years ago. While we have much more to do, I believe together we are on the right path. And I thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you very much, Doctor. We appreciate your help and support. Thank you.

For the past several years our nation has taken time to remember the sacrifice and service of the World War II veterans and their families. With us at this time is a man who has maintained a steady course in helping coordinate countless events, coast to coast and overseas.

Please welcome the executive director of the World War II Commemorative Committee, and a member of American Legion Post 141, Richmond, Virginia, retired Army Lieutenant General Claude Kicklighter.

Address: Lt. General Claude M. Kicklighter, USA (Ret.)
Deputy Under Secretary of the Army, International Affairs

National Commander Frank, former national commanders, national officers, my fellow veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's an honor and a humbling experience to be with so many great Americans who represent so much service to our nation.

This morning I'd like to briefly talk about two subjects. First, I'd like to thank The American Legion for all that you and your departments, your posts and auxiliaries did to assist our nation, a grateful nation, as we thanked and honored our veterans as we commemorated the 50th anniversary of World War II.

And second, I'd like to provide a brief overview of the planning for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War. From December the 7th, 1991, through Veterans Day 1995, our nation was engaged in a monumental effort to thank and honor our World War II veterans, their families, and especially the families of those who lost loved ones. Our Gold Star mothers, our Gold Star wives, and our Gold Star children. This group, like you, know that freedom is not free.

Our nation also remembered those who had served on the home front. Who overnight turned America into the arsenal of democracy, supporting not only our forces all over the world, but allowed our allies to stay in the fight by supporting them. To carry out this important mission our nation turned to The American Legion, and to other veteran service organizations, states, communities, civic and patriotic organizations all across this great land and around the world in requested assistance. And the response was overwhelming.

At the close of the commemoration there were more than 7,800 World War II commemorative communities that were deeply involved and engaged in assisting our nation in thanking and honoring our World War II veterans. More than 800 of our commemorative communities were departments, posts and auxiliaries of The American Legion. You were among the nation's leaders in recruiting our communities to get involved. And this had a major impact on what was accomplished.

Another important fact was "*The American Legion Magazine*", which highlighted the effect of World War II to the lives and experiences of our Legionnaires. During this period together, we also emphasize the importance of studying the history of this crucial era of our nation. Together we provided educational materials to more than 20,000 schools. If we learn, if we prepare and remain strong, maybe World War II will be recorded in history as the last world war.

Throughout this period, there were hundreds of major television programs that were produced to support this effort, which had a major impact on improving the knowledge of World War II of Americans, but especially young Americans. Together we worked to tell the story of men and women, and minorities, who made a major contribution to the war, especially women and minorities who had to overcome difficult obstacles to participate.

During this period we remembered those who fought the major battles of the war by holding commemorative events at home and abroad. And The American Legion was there every step of the way. To paraphrase President Roosevelt, he said, "To some generations much is given, to other generations much is asked, but this generation, the World War II generation, has a rendezvous with destiny." And they did.

They first suffered through and overcame the Great Depression and then they were asked to fight the most destructive war in history. A war that we were not prepared to fight. They fought and won that war, and literally saved the world. And then they returned home, said very little, took off their uniforms and built this great nation. What a special generation that World War II generation was.

When World War II ended in 1945, the American armed forces were the most powerful force that the world had ever known. Five short years later in June 1950, when North Korea invaded and attacked South Korea, we had dismantled our armed forces and we were again unprepared to fight. And again we had to buy time to get ready. And we bought that time with the lives of young Americans. We should never let that happen again.

It is now time to start planning and preparing to properly thank and honor our Korean War veterans, a very special group of veterans, and their families. And again we want to especially remember the families who lost loved ones as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Korean War.

The commemorations are scheduled to begin on the 25th of June, 2000. The commemorations will highlight the historical importance of the contributions of our veterans. And sadly, most Americans, including many of our own Korean War veterans, don't fully understand the significance of the great accomplishments that was the result of their service and sacrifice in Korea.

The commemoration events will inform America about the service and sacrifice of our veterans who 50 years ago saved a small nation on the other side of the globe. Many died, and many more were wounded defending the freedom far from home. Our veterans left a proud legacy at Inchon, at Chosin, Shimunthi and Bloody Ridge, and a hundred other places where they fought.

When the guns fell silent over the war torn Korea, the cost had been very high. 35,000 U.S. killed, and 100,000 U.S. wounded. Losses for the South Korean military and civilians were staggering. A very large number of those that were killed in that war were women and children who got overrun by that aggression. And after all these years, there's still many that are unaccounted for.

In June 1953, when the fighting stopped, the war did not end. And that war has not officially ended. And today, U.S. and South Korean forces stand guard at the 38th Parallel. The passage of time has revealed much about the legacy of those who fought in Korea and what they accomplished in the land of the morning sun.

At the end of the war and during the war many questioned our involvement. Today we have the answer, a strong, prosperous and democratic nation of 46 million people who live in freedom. And one of the fastest growing economies in the world. It was the determination and the sacrifice and the valor of those veterans from 22 nations who fought under the United Nations' flag, and defeated a brutal communist invasion.

Contrast this with North Korea, a nation ruled by a paranoid communist dictator confronting nationwide famine, facing a very uncertain future yet heavily armed and on the verge of collapse. What a contrast between democracy and communism for the world to see. Truly a victory that allowed freedom to survive and grow in the south and produce a miracle.

Today work continues for a lasting peace and the possibility for a peaceful reunification of Korea. But this part of the world remains a very dangerous and unpredictable place. Together, we will take all that we learned in commemorating the 50th anniversary of World War II and reinvest that experience as we thank and honor the Korean veterans during the 50th anniversary of that war.

With the Legion's help, we will again mobilize America to insure that every Korean veteran knows that a grateful nation has not forgotten and does remember their service 50 years ago.

We will again request communities and schools to join in this effort all across this great land to help a grateful nation to thank our veterans. And together we will proudly tell this story, and we would tell it properly. I would like the Korean veterans to stand and let us give you a round of applause. Will the Korean War veterans please stand?

As we had for World War II—we had commemorative flags all across our nation—we have now designed a commemorative flag for the Korean 50th anniversary. I'd like to show that to you. As you look at this flag you will see the 22 gold stars in the center. That represents the 22 nations who fought to save Korea. Also you'll see the blue, which represents the United Nations' flag that those nations fought under in Korea. And you'll see the bottom line on that flag which says "Freedom is not free." And that's what this war is all about.

Additional commemorative products and materials are being developed as we speak. And they'll be available very soon to assist us in getting this program moving. And it's time to begin. Later this month we'll provide a draft copy of the commemorative plan to the Legion for review. And in October we'll invite the National Commander and his delegation to the Pentagon and give him a briefing and receive his guidance on what he thinks we should do, and the Legion thinks we should do, to properly thank and honor these veterans.

Commemorations, as we said in the beginning, are scheduled to start in June 2000, and they will end November the 11th, 2003. Events are being planned all across our nation and in Korea. And we've already started working with the Korean government and we'll also be working with the other 20 nations to assist them and involve them in our planning, so that all 22 nations are involved.

It's been said that any nation that forgets its veterans soon ceases to be a great nation. The Legion has helped keep America great by helping America remember what it owes its veterans. We will continue to remember those who gave us this strong, free, and beautiful America. And we will always remember those who did not come home. Those who gave all their tomorrows so that we could remain free. And all your tomorrows as an 18 or 19 year-old is a very high price.

I want to thank the Legion for the wonderful job that you did in helping our nation in thanking and honoring our World War II veterans. And I want to thank you because I know that you will lead our nation in helping our nation thank and honor our Korean veterans.

I'd also like to thank the support you provide every day to the men and women in uniform. The Legion does a great deal to make this nation so special. Especially in the work you do with our children. I'm proud of that work. Also for the elderly, and especially for our veterans. God bless you, and God bless this great nation. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you very much.

Our next guest is serving his second four-year term as Florida's Lieutenant Governor.

This Air Force veteran and attorney has served the Sunshine State well during his nearly 30 years in public life. He's a former member of Congress and a former member of the Florida Legislature.

Please welcome Lieutenant Governor Buddy McKay.

The Honorable Buddy McKay
Lieutenant Governor of Florida

Commander Joe Frank, General Shalikashvili, State Commanders, members of The American Legion.

It's my pleasure to be here on behalf of myself, Governor Chiles, and the people of the great State of Florida, to welcome you here for this Convention.

We are honored that you are here. We believe that you will find that this is the greatest place in America to have a convention. We hope you have a good time, and I think you are going to find this a splendid, a splendid convention.

I want to say hello to the Florida Legion. All Legionnaires are equal, but somehow Floridians are more equal than others, as they say. Very pleased to be here representing the state.

We have a very strong district in the State of Florida. When I was in the Congress, it was my pleasure to brag on Florida, and the Florida district. I might just say that now that I'm working at the state level, you can see the importance of the Legion. You can see the importance of the advocacy.

We don't have the kind of staffing we need in our VA facilities. We don't have the kind of staffing we need in our nursing homes that are a joint federal-state project. And let me just tell you, Carlos Rainwater, the Executive Director of the State of Florida does a tremendous job. But Carlos told me unless we had a contractual arrangement, a contractual arrangement with The American Legion where the Legion can serve, where the Legion can serve as guardians Ad Litum; where the Legion can serve as Ombudsmen, that we couldn't make the program work. So I'm very proud of The American Legion, what you stand for and what you have done, both at the federal and state level.

Let me just say one other thing about the State of Florida. We will have a Korean War Memorial next year. We are going to do that in the State of Florida, and we absolutely agree that this is long overdue.

I want to welcome you, Commander Joe Frank. We are very proud of you as a representative of the Legion, as a Vietnam war vet, and we're very proud of our Past Commander Ray Weaver; our current Commander Bill Seemann, and they have worked hard to put this Convention together, and I'm sure it's going to be a great Convention.

I grew up a few miles north of here in what was then a small town of Ocala.

I went into the Air Force in 1955. People didn't make much of a distinction then between the branches of the service, and people in Ocala just said Buddy's in the service. I suspect many of you in your hometowns had the same experience. The unspoken idea was

that the military, no matter which branch, was a means for citizens to serve their nation in times of need.

All of us got a taste of what it meant to be a part of something larger than ourselves. For me, for my part, this was a great experience in my life. It really was a maturing time, and it's something that I will carry with me the rest of my life.

I served three years; was a troop carrier pilot. I probably dropped some of you out of my aircraft. You probably were very happy to get out.

A lot of my friends say miraculously. I didn't hurt anybody and I flew safely for three years.

Thank God our country is not at war today. But in an ironic situation we're learning that even though we don't have enemies, we have dangers, and the dangers continue. The dangers in Bosnia, the dangers in the Middle East, the dangers in this country. In fact, the call for service today in America, the call for service is as great as the day it was that we joined, and that's why I'm glad that The American Legion is still going strong.

I went to Boys State in 1947. Some of the Floridians that are here will remember my son, John McKay, went to Boys State more recently than that. John McKay is now an M.D. practicing medicine in Tallahassee, Florida. Both he and I believe that this is one of the great experiences of our life. One of the great programs that teaches young people in high school love of country, and that teaches leadership. Two things that definitely and strongly need to be remembered in this country. I hope that my grandchildren will be able to participate in Boys States and Girls State, and the same is true of your youth baseball and your other programs and your scholarship funds.

At a time when our society is incredibly focused on money and selfish pursuits, The American Legion is rendering a critical service to this country by causing people to remember leadership, love of country, and willingness to sacrifice unselfishly for others.

None of us can truly repay our veterans. None of us can truly repay you. The best we can do is to carry forward these ideals, which is what The American Legion is all about.

So I say to you, we are proud of you. We're proud you have chosen Florida to have your Annual Convention.

You stand for the idea that you can get out of the uniform, but that you're still in service, and that's what this country needs.

God bless you. Thank you for having me here, and God bless America. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Governor. Since the founding of The American Legion in 1919, the men and women of our great organization have continued to support a strong national defense as the best deterrent to war.

We are honored to have the most authoritative man in uniform with us today. His military career is certainly distinguished. He's served from Vietnam and Korea to Alaska and Germany. And, at every place he has served he has proven himself being a true leader.

He is a graduate of Bradley University with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He has a master's degree in International Affairs from George Washington University, and he has attended many military schools during his career.

Delegates and guests, please rise and welcome the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili.

Address: General John M. Shalikashvili, USA
The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Let me tell you what a real pleasure it is to once again address this marvelous Convention, and to be here in Florida among so many friends and heroes.

Of course, my staff constantly reminds me that after 39 years in the Army wearing this uniform, it's probably just great to be anywhere at all.

But I must confess that I'm always a little hesitant whenever I'm asked to speak to a large group of outstanding veterans, you see, because according to the laws of probability, one of these days sitting in the audience, there's going to be someone who knew me in basic training, way back in 1958.

And he's going to tell you all those embarrassing stories that I have managed to keep hidden these last 39 years. And after hearing the stories you will all probably wonder how I ever reached the rank of private, let alone the rank of general.

Now, I just returned from a couple of weeks of leave, getting my new home in order in the State of Washington. And I have got to tell you a short story about that. Hi, Washingtonians.

As most of you know, when you finally get away from work and get on a vacation, and certainly when you begin to think about retiring, it's real hard to get around to your normal everyday routine.

So after a few days of just wandering around the house early in the morning, I started my normal routine early in the morning to go out jogging, followed by breakfast at a little pancake house just a few blocks away from where I plan to settle down. And every time I went in these first few days, there sitting in a booth was the same group of locals, always watching me eat my breakfast.

Finally, after a few days, one of them turned around in a booth, and asked me if I was new in town. I told them that I was. And had stayed in a house just down the road from this cafe.

So he turned around to his friends and said, "I told you so."

Then he looked at me real hard and said, "You're retiring, aren't you?" And I told him yes.

And he turned back around to his buddies once more, and with a big smile on his face, told them, "See, I told you so. I bet you are in the Army, aren't you?" he asked. I said yes.

And once again he looked at his pals and said, "See, I was right again."

Finally he asked me what rank I was, and I said, "If I told you, you wouldn't believe me." Right away he turned around to his buddies and said, "See, I told you he's a sergeant major."

Well, I got quite a chuckle out of that exchange myself, because it was clear that my new neighbors thought a lot more of NCO's than they did of generals.

And if that particular guy only knew just how good and just how busy the average sergeant is today, he would think even more of them. For even as we are gathered here today, you and I, at this grand Convention, some 40,000 of our great men and women in uniform, some of them I suspect your sons and daughters or your grandchildren, are deployed on some ten major operations around the globe, and this is in addition to the hundred thousand that have permanently deployed in Europe and a hundred thousand deployed in various areas in the Pacific. And as you might expect, they are performing superbly, continuing the high standards that men like Bob Dole, who the Convention will honor later, and you, our great veterans have set for them. They are today, no matter what people tell you, the best military in the world, bar none. Bar none.

There are none like them in the world today. No other military force could have accomplished all that our men and women have done these past four years. And it is truly amazing to realize that just within the last 12 months, our forces have participated in operations in places like the Peru/Ecuador border, they have guarded the "No Fly Zone" over Iraq; intercepted clandestine shipping in the Arabian Gulf and in the Mediterranean; evacuated noncombatants from four separate countries during crises; searched the jungles of Southeast Asia for fallen comrades; worked hard to stem the flow of drugs; to stop the killing of women and children in Bosnia, and for the 15th year, participated in the observer mission in the Sinai cautiously watching the peace between Egypt and Israel.

And this has occurred, even as we have maintained our very significant commitments in the rest of the world in places like Korea and Japan. And as we build new partnerships in central and eastern Europe.

And throughout these busy, busy times, perhaps the busiest of our peacetime history, The American Legion has been there shoulder to shoulder, in body and in spirit, supporting our great forces.

And I just cannot overstate what your support means to our troops and to their families. And so I thank you all very, very much for your continued support.

Let me assure you, that just like those of you who liberated Europe and rescued the nations of the Pacific, everywhere our forces go in the name of peace, they are making a difference in the lives of those that they have touched.

I still remember as a young boy, seeing American GI's march into Europe and put an end to the bloodshed and the devastation that had taken so many innocent lives and so many of my friends. Those GI's touched my life in a way you will never fully realize, and I stand here today as a tribute to their and your strength, and also to your generosity and to your compassion.

So it should come as no surprise that our sons and daughters who wear the uniform, continue in the grandest American tradition, to make a difference in the lives of others as they continue their missions around the globe.

From the starving refugees they help feed in Rwanda, to the people plucked from rafts in the middle of the ocean, desperately fleeing Castro, to the nearly 2,004 nationals from more than 60 countries rescued from Liberia in the midst of a crises. All, all have benefited from the contact with our forces.

And if you want to know just how much an effect we have on those we help, consider the case of Edessa Dubeka, a young Muslim woman in Bosnia. In August of 1994, she, along with her mother and 50 other Muslims were rounded up in the middle of the night. Edessa Dubeka thanks America's armed forces for giving her back her life and her confidence, just as many of you did in so many far away lands. And she hopes that some day she too can make a difference. For it is important to remember that as she was captured and held by some other warring faction, she and her family and those others were about to be executed, when suddenly in the darkness she heard a voice, "Stop what you are doing. Surrender. We are the United States Marines."

Those who held the people, dropped their weapons. The men did as they were told, and out walked these two Marines. And I'm sure, thereby, prevented this mass murder.

Now why is this story so special? I told you that Edessa Dubeka hopes that some day she, too, can make a difference. Well, she undoubtedly will have that chance, because today she is a Private First Class in the United States Marine Corps, having recently completed training at Camp Lejeune.

You see, when all is said and done, it is our people who are the backbone of our military excellence. And it is your example, your patriotism and your accomplishments that inspire those young men and women who wear the uniform today, and don't ever forget that.

It is their capacity to meet the toughest challenges and to bring life and order and hope to millions of people who have no hope, that helps make America the great nation that it is.

That is why we must do all that we can to preserve the outstanding quality of our men and women in uniform. This means providing them with fair pay, good housing, access to effective medical care and all of those other things that contribute to the quality of life.

But equally important, we need to provide them with the working environment that allows each man and woman to grow and to nourish and to reach their full potential as soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coastguardsmen.

We have all read and heard about the various problems. Problems like hazing and acts of indiscipline; concern over gender denigration and sexual misconduct. Now, the media loves these stories, and in fact for some weeks it was hard to tell the difference between news stories about the armed forces and the network soap operas. Well, certainly these things are problems, serious problems, but I want to assure you they are not epidemics. But even though these social problems occur much less in military than in civilian life, they are especially worrisome for us in the military. For such wrongful conduct destroys the dignity of the individual; damages morale, and it inhibits team work and does blunt our combat readiness. And it is for that reason, that such conduct is flat wrong and that we will not tolerate it.

But for me, readiness is an equally serious concern. For we are beginning to see some early indicators that if not corrected will adversely affect our future readiness. With the booming economy, enlistments as well are beginning to show signs of falling off. And recruiting is becoming more difficult.

Our units in the field, and more to the point, our men and women in uniform and their families are finding it more challenging these days to keep up with the demanding tempo of rigorous training, frequent deployments, and numerous ongoing operations.

In short, these issues demand our attention now, and we have some good plans to right this situation. But this is one area where we will have to be especially vigilant in the future.

Recently, comic strip philosophers Calvin and Hobbes also discussed the importance of looking out for the future. Calvin was talking to Hobbes and said, "You could step in the road tomorrow and, wham, get hit by a cement truck. That's why my motto is, live for the moment." Then he turned to his pal and asked, "What's your motto?" Answered Hobbes, "My motto is, look down the road."

Now, the importance of looking down the road is why this past spring we completed a Quadrennial Defense Review, an exhaustive study of the future and the kind of force that we will need in the challenging years ahead. All indications are that for the next 10 to 15 years, our forces in the field are likely to face a wide range of threats, from terrorists, to rogue states equipped with weapons of mass destruction, to still potent regional powers. And sometime beyond we may even have to face an emerging global power. That's our challenge, to prepare our forces to deal with these security challenges of the future. That by all indications will remain as unpredictable as they are today.

Clearly that means that tomorrow's force must have the new weapons and the equipment that they will need to give it the qualitative edge on any future battlefield.

But we must also live up to the promises we make to those who gave faithful service to our nation. We cannot ask people to dedicate their lives to the defense of this great nation and then turn a blind eye toward them after they leave.

So equally aggressive must be our commitment to the benefits promised to not only our active duty members, but also to our retirees and all our great veterans of military service.

As Teddy Roosevelt once said, "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country, is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards."

The American Legion has helped us so many, many times. Like for instance, the drafting of one of the most important and most successful government programs ever devised in our history, the GI Bill, and I think you will be hearing more about it later on. Thanks for that, to all of you.

And now, again we need your help for so many other worthwhile programs, such as transition assistance for members leaving active duty; access to military medical care for veterans over sixty-five; helping those taken ill as a result of Gulf War service; accounting for our POW/MIAs. And ensuring Congress continues to support our existing retirement program and job hiring preferences for veterans.

If America's armed forces are to continue to be the force of change and of peace and of stability in the next century, then there's much to be done, and it will take the efforts of the entire team, our active force, the reserves and the guard, our outstanding DoD civilians, and most importantly, you, our veterans, who help make us the best, strongest nation on earth, no doubt about it.

You have a great story to tell, and it must be told more often, much louder and with greater vigor than ever before. Because today, from the halls of Congress to the streets of Orlando, Florida fewer and fewer Americans share your experiences as veterans of military service and guardians of America's freedom.

The median age of the World War II vets I'm told is nearly seventy-five.

The median age of the Korean War vet is over sixty-five.

And those young whippersnappers of the Vietnam War years like me, our median age I'm told is now over fifty.

In effect, our population is losing military experience, and the wisdom that comes along with it. We need you now, more than ever before, to help us educate our youth, and advise our citizens and civilian leaders so that they can make informed decisions on these very key issues.

I have been privileged to live in this nation during a very special period. I have watched our nation use its tremendous power and talents to wise and enormous effects. From the day I put on this uniform, I have been proud to be part of that effort, and proud to have served with those of you here in this audience.

Now, as we stand on the threshold of a new century, a second American century I predict, I'm confident that for all we have accomplished this past 50 years, we will accomplish even more in the next fifty.

And so, once again, thank you for your support; your sacrifice and your service to our great nation. You can be extremely proud of what our men and women in uniform are accomplishing these days for our country.

I pledge to you that they will be ferocious and insurmountable in war, and that they are extraordinary and noble in peace, and that they jealously guard your legacy.

God bless you all, and God bless America. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, thank you General Shalikashvili.

Before you go, during an interview on Larry King Live a couple years ago, you were asked what you wanted to do after you retired from the Army, right?

And you said you would like to operate a hardware store in the State of Washington. So we have a little something to get you started in your hardware business. I have asked one

of your old troops, Major General Retired Ron Brooks, to present you a little gift to get you started in your business. Ron.

...Ron Brooks presented a work apron with five stars embroidered on the apron.

GENERAL SHALIKASHVILI: I expect you all to come and visit and buy something. Buy something. Thanks a million. You take care.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: It's been more than 53 years since the GI Bill was passed. And much has happened to change the face of our nation and our world. Many of those changes were propelled by the veterans of World War II and the GI Bill.

With us this morning is the author of the book, *"When Dreams Came True,"* the history of the GI Bill. His research and writing has taken on the aura of a labor of love. This man who is not a veteran, understands and appreciates the impact that veterans and the GI Bill have had on our country.

Please give a warm welcome to Michael Bennett.

Address: Michael Bennett, Author

Fifty-three years ago on January 9th of 1944, Senator Bennett Clark of Missouri introduced a bill into the Congress of the United States. That was in some ways the greatest battle of World War II. It was on a terrain that I believe the General would agree in some ways is much more dangerous than that of the battlefield, it's the terrain of politics.

That bill was not destined to succeed. It succeeded only because there were people who wrote that bill, members of The American Legion, specifically Harry Colmery of Topeka, Kansas, operating on the advice of other members of the Legion, who crafted a piece of legislation that more than any other reflected the values of Americans.

It gave them the right and opportunity to fulfill their dreams as Americans as no other legislation had. That bill was crafted by people who lived up to the words of another co-founder, the other co-founder of The American Legion, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., writing in 1927 in a book entitled *Rank and File*, he said, "I believe that a nation is mirrored in war by the rank and file of its soldiers, rather than any individual strategist, just as I believe that it is mirrored in peace by its ordinary citizens, rather than any brilliant statesman."

The GI Bill of Rights enabled veterans to leap over social barriers that otherwise they might have tried to storm. They became middle-class citizens.

The GI Bill created much of modern American society. Its story up until recently has not been told. That's unfortunate, because what the GI Bill did and what The American Legion did in some ways was more, I won't say important, I won't try to put relative benefits on it, but creating peace is a much more difficult task than winning wars, sometimes.

And that's what they did, they created a stable and enduring peace, and we live with that today.

This was not an accident. The American Legion, as I have come to know in the time since I published the book and I talked to people at The American Legion, created a civic culture in the neighborhoods of this country, and they knew what they were doing.

I would like to quote to you from Alvin Owsley, one of your early National Commanders back in 1922. He said of the Roman legions, "The work of their swords is undone, but their ordered camps have become the great cities of Europe. It is the work of their spade that survives. The work of the humbled entrenching tool has outlasted that of the Roman sword."

And that's what the culture and civilization of America has become largely because of the GI Bill. You will see after I speak, a great clip, from a documentary that PBS will be

broadcasting on October 22nd. That will very vividly illustrate the impact that the bill had through the recollections of many famous people.

But what has to be answered beyond that, beyond the publication of my book and beyond the PBS documentary, is an enduring understanding by the American people of what was accomplished. There have been a number of reviews of my book in many prominent publications, but I think perhaps the most important review was in the *Montana Legionnaire.* And the reviewer there said: "Why don't more people understand the importance of the GI Bill? Why isn't this material taught in our high schools and universities? How can The American Legion be the cornerstone of this legislation and obtain only passing mention in recent national editorials regarding the GI Bill?"

I obviously believe that my book should be in every public library and every school library in this country. I believe that that book should be a text for courses at the college level, in economics, in sociology and history. And in other disciplines as well. I think that documentary should be reshown over and over again, and PBS will be making efforts, I might add, to get attention through premieres, through showings, which I hope you will cooperate with and I'm sure you will.

I would just like to close by saying and referring to the incident which led General Roosevelt to form The American Legion. Incidently, General Roosevelt was leading the breakout from Omaha Beach just at the time that the Bill passed on June 9th of 1944, or shortly after the breakout.

He was a wounded soldier in 1918 and he encountered a Sergeant William Patterson, and he asked him what he wanted to do after the war was over. Sergeant Patterson said to Theodore Roosevelt, he had a dream of going home to start a veterans organization to get the whole job done. A dream of making democracy work for everyone. Sergeant Patterson's son died on the battlefield in France instead, but he passed the dream on, and that dream took fruit and bore fruit in the GI Bill.

I hope that you will help me and help the people at PBS to spread this message. It is a message that needs to be told. It is a message that makes our heritage as American veterans and non-veterans all the more precious for realizing where it came from. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Mr. Bennett for your remarks, and we know you understand why The American Legion is so very proud of the GI Bill.

It is comforting to know that Michael Bennett is not the only one that understands the GI Bill is a force for change. For more than two years, The American Legion has been working with a talented film-maker on a one hour history of the original GI Bill. You received a flyer about the program in your convention packets.

The name of the documentary is *The GI Bill: The Law That Changed America.* The name says it all.

The program tells a special story about the first generation of Legionnaires, and how those World War I veterans, as World War II was winding to a close decided to provide the next generation of wartime veterans with a program that they, themselves, could have used.

That's a common theme throughout the Legion's 78 year history. One group of veterans using their experience to make things better for those who follow. It sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Film-maker Karen Thomas is president of Film Odyssey, a Washington-based production company. Miss Thomas was unable to be with us today, she's still hard at work condensing more than 40 interviews and 100 hours of archival footage into a 60-minute program. But Ms. Thomas has graciously provided us with a short excerpt of the program.

Here's an exclusive sneak-peek at *The GI Bill: The Law That Changed America.*

...At this time the delegation viewed a video tape.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: That was an interesting few minutes and I look forward to seeing the entire production and program. It's scheduled for its national debut on October the 22nd at 8:00 p.m. on PBS, you need to check your local listing, of course, for the time and the station in your respective hometowns.

Our next guest is a retired Air Force Brigadier General, and a woman who knows how to get things done.

She is President of Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Incorporated. For several years she has led the nation's effort to build a memorial for all women of military service.

She is a member of American Legion Post 477 in Chrisman, Illinois.

Please welcome our friend, Wilma Vaught.

Address: Brig. General Wilma L. Vaught, USAF (Ret.)
President, Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

It was 10 years ago in March that I was supposed to go to a meeting of the Women in Military Service Memorial Foundation, and I forgot to go, forgot all about the meeting and I didn't go, and they elected officers, and I became president.

I just want you to know that I have not missed a meeting since.

It seems hard to believe that back in 1987 the small group of us set out to build this memorial.

In 1988 we got a site at the main gate at Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1989 we got a design, and that's when I began to learn that only money builds memorials.

So from 1989 to 1995, when we had the groundbreaking, it was a long struggle, and I was very proud on the day of groundbreaking that then National Commander Bill Detweiler was there and participated in that. He was supposed to help shovel dirt, but you know like most men, they try to get out of it when the work was there. You know, he failed to go down there with his shovel, but we gave it to him anyway.

And then now it's 10 years later, not from 1995, but from when we started, and we're going to have the dedication this October. And I hope that your new National Commander will be there to help cut the ribbon.

And I thought about the plans for the dedication, and since I heard your present Commander Joe Frank sing last night, I'm looking for a singing role for him, at some one of the various events of the dedication. So, Joe, we look forward to your being there to sing.

Well, I just hope that there will be Legionnaires at that, because you have supported us so well. The American Legion has now given just over $200,000 to us. The American Legion Auxiliary today just went over $171,000. And both your organizations will have its emblem there inside the Education Center with one of the exhibit alcoves. So I'm proud of that support that you have given us. So when you come to visit the memorial, and I hope that for the upcoming Legion event in Washington, that you will hold it at the memorial so that your members will see.

And you will see the arc of glass tablets with quotations of women who served. The 80 foot reflecting pool and the water fountain, the Education Center with its theater; its computer register. And that's an area again that the Legion has had an influence because you have registered so many of your members and so many women from your communities. And

our Hall of Honor and the various exhibits. And of course we'll have a gift shop there so we can help take your money, and we've been practicing that for sometime.

And in that regard I wish I could say that the entire memorial will be finished and all paid for. It will not. We are still going to have to raise money to do the exhibits. We will have the World War II exhibit done because for many of the women who will be coming to the dedication, this may well be their last trip to Washington, and we wanted to be sure that we portrayed World War II. And we still have the film giving the history of women in the military yet to do.

So we are about four million dollars short, so I hope you will not cease helping us. I hope you will continue to help us.

And I want to extend my personal invitation to everyone here to attend the dedication. It will be about noon on October the 18th.

We are going to start with a gala on the 16th of October, and I hope the Legion will have a table at that gala.

And then on Friday the 17th of October we will have service luncheons. We will have a reunion at the D.C. Armory that evening.

And then following the dedication at noon on the 18th, that evening we're going to have a candle light march from the Lincoln Memorial down to the main gate, and a service of remembrance.

And then on Sunday morning a time to give thanks at the Amphitheater.

And I just want you to know as you talk to those in your communities who are coming to this dedication, that it is my personal commitment that anyone who is disabled or needs help in any way who comes, if they make it to Washington, we will make sure that they are able to make it to every event they want to attend, including if they are disabled and they want to be in the march and have to be in a wheelchair, someone will be there to push them in that wheelchair. That is my commitment and we'll live up to it.

I just want you to know that we are still selling coins that Congress authorized back in 1994 with the profile of five service women from each of the services, and on the back the memorial. And if you haven't bought one of those for your spouse or whoever you are carrying on some sort of a, you know, an adulterous or whatever kind of relationship with, you know, come by our booth down here in the exhibit hall and we'll sell you one $40.00; $80.00 for the necklace. And you need to get one of those, because one of these days we are going to sell out. I hope.

Now, the important thing is, that we still have about—well, we only have about 200,000 of the 1.8 million women who could have been registered, register. Your points of contact in the Departments and the Districts and the Posts that have appointed some, have been very helpful to us in helping us find those women that we haven't found yet, and helping get them registered. And I ask you to continue that effort. Because the memorial is not about raising money. We had to do it to get it done, but it is about honoring the women who served, and that's the only thing it's about. And if you know of someone who can't make the donation we ask for to register, let me tell you, send in that registration anyway, because the important thing is that we get them registered.

Now I would be remiss if I didn't quote from one of our women who served, because that's what the memorial is about. And I have one. Someone from Port Clinton, Ohio, who wrote in and she said, "I spent four years in the Army. Although now I am married and a mother, I still want to be remembered as a soldier."

And at the memorial, come October the 18th, at the main gate, at Arlington National Cemetery we're going to enshrine the generations of women who have served and who serve

today and give the generations who will follow, a heritage and tradition that's special and honorable as those others have held dear through time.

I thank you for your support. Please keep supporting us, and I look forward to seeing you on October 18th at the main gate at Arlington National Cemetery. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you General Vaught. You certainly are doing a great job and we appreciate you being here.

As we move forward with the business of our 79th National Convention, it gives me great pleasure to present to you a Minnesota Legionnaire who has earned the respect of millions.

She is the chair and the founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Incorporated.

From Northfield Post 84 in Minnesota, please give a warm welcome to Diane Carlson Evans.

Address: Diane Carlson Evans, Chair and Founder
Vietnam Women's Memorial Project, Inc.

We have watched our Commander Joe Frank over the years, we know him as our smiling commander, but now we also know him as our singing commander. But I heard him this morning acknowledge his people from Missouri, that it was those people in Missouri that helped him arrive at this position of leadership so that he could help his fellow veterans. And that's the way I feel about Wisconsin and Minnesota for the genesis of the Vietnam Women's Memorial took place, and if it wasn't for those Legionnaires and those two states, we wouldn't have a Vietnam Women's Memorial. That's where it started, and it was through their belief in honoring women veterans, and their belief in placing a memorial in a National Site at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. that we succeeded. And of course through all of your help in the ensuing 10 years which is what it took.

Not long after the founding of our country, First Lady Abigail Adams said in a very gentle reminder to her husband, the President, remember the ladies.

The Women in Military Service to America, as just represented by President Vaught, and General Vaught, and The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project as you know, are two separate memorials to remember the ladies, remember the women.

These are not your ordinary women. These are women who served our country. We went where we were not asked to go. We went when we were not asked to care. Devotion to mutual helpfulness, one of the founding principles of The American Legion, is the very quality that inspired thousands of women to join the military and do their part to preserve our freedom, which was so aptly talked about this morning by General Brady and the Flag Alliance, and other speakers today, and what it takes to preserve our freedom and what it takes to preserve the fighting strength, which is the motto of the Army Nurse Corps, which was my corps.

The collective consciousness in America easily remembers Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and other cultural icons, and our nation will spend millions of dollars to preserve their memories. But they so quickly forget our veterans. Ideally the money for memorials would come from those people in America who did not serve but live in freedom because of the veterans. But the hard reality is, we served and then we build our own memorial, and then we pay for them as well, because we want to preserve the precious memories of our fellow soldiers.

None of us thought it would be so hard. We need the help of The American Legion and all the other veterans organizations as we continue our work together to meet our financial obligation. Funding for memorials is a challenge, and that's an understatement. We welcome your ideas on what we can do together to raise the remaining construction costs of the Vietnam Women's Memorial.

We dedicated the monument designed by Glenna Goodacher portraying three women and a wounded male soldier, in November of 1993, but we have yet to complete paying for the memorial. We still owe over $200,000 for the construction, the installation, the lighting, the pedestrian walkways and all the other costs that were incurred from the building of the monument.

One way to help is to have your state purchase a replica of the memorial. They are a limited edition, museum quality pieces. They are 24 inches. It's a replica of the monument in Washington, D.C., and we are encouraging all 50 states to have one of these statues in their state. Display it in the capitol rotunda or wherever, whatever public place you think appropriate.

Selling the remaining 60 replicas, there were only 100 made, selling the rest of them would net $240,000. Please contact us. We still have an office in Washington, D.C., to talk with us about how to go about this.

Since I last spoke to you, we have initiated a new program at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial called "In Their Own Words." Every Veterans Day and Memorial Day we sponsor story-telling near the statue. The stories about the women who are cast in bronze and the wounded soldier they care for are told in their own voices, sharing their experiences regarding the Vietnam era. Storytellers are featured every half hour beginning at 9:30 in the morning and concluding at 5:00 p.m., and they are usually nationally televised, and often the stories appear in the news around the country the following day.

As Karen Blixon said, "There is no story without someone to tell it, and that all sorrows can be borne if we tell stories about them."

Our memorial has become a catalyst which honors hundreds of long suppressed stories of the human spirit, not only of the women who served, but all those thousands of men who want to share their stories as well.

The program is significant because these reflections help us better understand that turbulent era, Vietnam. If you wish to participate in our storytelling, again, please contact us in our Washington, D.C. office, at the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project.

We must teach our young girls, our daughters who are now becoming young women, that it is their equal responsibility to preserve our freedom. This is not just something for the men alone. That's a stereotype, that's a myth. And the more we begin educating in our schools and through our memorials, that it's the women's responsibility as well as men to preserve the fighting strength and to preserve the freedom, the stronger and greater country we will be.

We continue our work with students, producers and writers interested in the Vietnam era, and there are several documentaries underway, hopefully to be shown within the next two years on PBS.

We are facilitating veterans administration sponsored research on the health outcomes that are mandated. A public law that was mandated to address the health concerns of women Vietnam-era veterans. I believe the results of this study are to come out in 1998.

Also, a Vietnam Nurse Veterans Psychophysiological study is currently being conducted by Meg Carson of the Manchester VA Research Service at Harvard Medical School.

Royalties and donations to the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project continue to help fund the balance of the construction and installation costs of the memorial and our programs.

This fall, the Goebel Factory in Germany who produces Hummel figures, will be marketing a plate with the likeness of the statue, and sold in base exchanges around the world. With this support we are working toward our long-standing mission to promote the health, the healing of our nation's veterans, and educate future generations about those lessons of life, and freedom, and the price of war and peace. Those very lessons we learned in Vietnam.

We are developing a celebrity anniversary program for next year. Believe it or not, next year is the 5th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, and we welcome your ideas for the program for that event.

It's been said that memories are like stones. Time and distance erode them like acid.

In honor of those men and women whom I cared for in Vietnam, in honor of the women who worked so hard to save for all those men who were wounded and died in Vietnam, I will continue to fight to preserve those memories so they will not be worn away like acid.

Thank you to each and every one of you in The American Legion. To all of those very special National Commanders since 1985 when I first came before you to ask for your support. Thank you for helping me make this dream become a reality.

God bless you. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Diane.

Our next guest is a brave American who found within himself the ability to overcome every obstacle, every emotion, every feeling, in an effort to take care of his comrades while under heavy fire in Vietnam. For his actions in Tay Ninh Province in April of 1970 he was presented the Medal of Honor.

Nearly three decades later he comes before The American Legion National Convention as the author of a powerful book: *Beyond The Medal: From Their Hearts To Yours*. His book is a collection of memories, harrowing situations, and gripping emotional climaxes which brings together the experiences of America's most valiant sons. More than 80 living recipients of the Medal of Honor tell in their own words about the people, the incidents that have shaped their lives.

It is with great pride that I introduce to you a great American and a member of American Legion Post 211 in Colorado, Peter Lemon.

Address: Peter C. Lemon, Author

Thank you. It's an honor for me to be here today, to be a part of the Legionnaires, to be a veteran of the United States of America. I am on a quest. I'm on a mission. The reason is because I have the Medal of Honor. Although it's an individual award, it really belongs to Echo Company, 2nd 8th, Recon, First Cavalry Division. It belongs to my guys that didn't make it: Casey Waller, Nathan Mann and Brent Street. But it is representative of the 40 million veterans that have served in combat in the last 221 years. All of you.

It is representative of the tens of millions of people who have served in the military, and are still in the military as peace keepers of this world. My mission for the last two years is to bring to life the Medal of Honor recipients, because they are a dying breed. There are 169 living Medal of Honor recipients out of the 3400 that have received it in the last 135 years. 107 are over the age of 65. And no one has taken the time to capture who they are as an individual, the essence of who they are. What they believe in. Who their mentors were. We can't find that in the history books.

Yes, there have been some publications, autobiographies and biographies about the particular action for which they received the award, and duly so, that should be in history. But what also should be in history is what type of individual constitutes receiving our nation's highest award.

Now I want to digress a little bit, 27 years ago. It was at about 4:30 in the morning. My whole unit was just about medivac'd out. And we're laying in a hospital bed. And it seemed to me it was just within a matter of hours that the headquarters company came into us. We're all lying in cots, all wounded, all being taken care of, but headquarters company came through and they said you are going to be receiving a Bronze Star. You will be receiving a Silver Star. Lieutenant, you'll be receiving the Silver Star. You'll be receiving an R Com. And, Mr. Lemon, you're going to be put up for the Congressional Medal of Honor. Being a young man of 19 years old I looked around, looked at my buddies, and I thought to myself, well, what more, what could I have done that they didn't do. Because I was there. I saw them in action.

About a year later, approximately six months after I got out of the service, I was asked to come to Washington and receive the Medal of Honor. Reluctantly I did, because I also felt that the Medal of Honor really belongs to the guys in my unit, it doesn't belong to me. I went there and I accepted the award. But I spent about another six or seven years in the jungle mentally, and I never got out of it. And if it wasn't for a veteran service officer, and an organization like The American Legion, I would have been back in those jungles still today. Thank goodness that that occurred, and that was when I was 27 years old.

In the first 13 years after receiving the award, I never wore the Medal of Honor because there was always something missing in my life, and those were my comrades. In 1983 I got a call from a friend of mine, Alan Rapaport of Brooklyn. He says, Pete, I want to get together with you. I thought, my gosh. This is one of my lost comrades. Yeah, I want to get together with you.

And we met at a bar. And we had a lot of great conversations. It was my first healing point in life. It was a very emotional part in my life. From then on I started getting in touch with other guys that were in my unit. And as I began to get in touch with these individuals, my comrades, I started wearing the Medal of Honor because I really realized at that point that it doesn't represent me; although it was given to me, it represents them. And I have to wear it in behalf of them and everybody that has ever served our country in the name of freedom.

Well, approximately two years ago I was at the Philadelphia convention, 1995. And I took my two youngest kids, they were 9 and 11 at that point. And they said—we went to a banquet—and they said, Dad, we've been to a lot of these things before. We know they have the medal, but who are they. And I couldn't answer that question. I didn't have a readily available answer to them. As I was flying home I thought, you know, that's a terrific question. And I don't have that answer, but I think I can supply it. Because I think the youth of the United States wants to know about our veterans, and about our Medal of Honor recipients. This would be a good platform to let them know.

So I thought my idea would be to contact all the recipients, which I did. They wrote in stories. I did no interviews. I didn't want to sway them one way or the other. I said provide an opportunity for the United States of America to see, to get a glimpse and see who you are as a human being, what you stand for. It came in fits and starts. There was poetry, short stories, quotes, short vignettes, and every single one of them was touching. As a matter of fact, there was some of them were so touching I'd get home and I'd open them up and I'd start reading them and they were in long hand and I'd just be crying in tears. And then I'd

have to turn to my computer and start typing it out in my computer and I'd be in tears again because they were so emotional, moving.

My lieutenant, who spent the last 16 years in the Palo Alto, VA mental hospital, said we are all prisoners of war. We are emotional prisoners of war. And that is the truth. Anybody that has ever been in combat understands that that's something that you live with for the rest of your life.

Well, that's what they shared with me. They shared with me who they were. And that allowed me to be, also to be a human being. To not be the myth that we probably are to some. That we're like Rambo in the movies. We know that that is not the case.

Mike Fitzmaurice wrote in and he talked about Camp Eagle. As a matter of fact, I want to share that with you. The book is set up so you have a picture of the individual, underneath the picture is a synopsis of his citation. A citation is usually, as you know, one or two pages long. This is about six or seven lines. And if I could share with you. He and three soldiers were occupying a bunker when the enemy threw in three explosive charges. Quickly Fitzmaurice threw out two, then hurled his bulletproof vest and his body over the remaining charge. He absorbed the full blast to shield his comrades. Wounded, his sight half gone, he left his position and charged the enemy. That is what he did. But now, let me read to you who he is.

He entitles it, *Peace on Earth.*

> I remember we were stationed in Camp Eagle, Vietnam 1970, it was Christmas Eve and as it happened every night someone went out on an ambush. This night I was along. We wait until dark and then head out to the graveyard outside the camp and set up the ambush of the enemy. It was raining like crazy, we were all cold and wet, when this helicopter starts flying around, playing Christmas songs, something with peace on earth and goodwill toward men. Now it's been 25 years and that Christmas in Vietnam is still as clear today as it was then. Funny what you remember, peace on earth and goodwill toward men.

General Patrick Brady, he writes about courage. Not the combat type, but the moral type of courage. We have Lou Millet, a marine, he wrote three poems, but one was very short, and it said, "If I am a slave and you are free, will you fight for my liberty?" Now you know what Lou stands for in his life. And that's what this book is about.

Although it came in in fits and starts, I'll tell you what, it compiled into a tremendous piece of work. And although they did say I'm the author, I'm humbly just the compiler. And being one of the youngest recipients of this award I feel honored that I can be the compiler.

I would like to read you one last one. And that is by Paul Wedifer. *No better price to pay.*

> The congressional Medal of Honor has certainly altered my life in many ways from 1944 to the present day. The older I get the more I think how wonderful it would be if there were no longer a single living holder of the Medal of Honor in the United States of America. That would mean that we finally learned how to live in peace. There could be no better price to pay for the elimination of the Medal of Honor than a truly peaceful U.S.A. and a truly peaceful world. I wonder if we will ever learn. I pray to God we do.

Every single one of these stories, quotes, vignettes, are from the heart. I've never read such inspirational pieces in my entire life. As a matter of fact, it was been endorsed by Colin Powell. "Our country's Medal of Honor recipients hold a special place in the hearts of all Americans." Elizabeth Dole, "*Beyond The Medal* offers an inspiring fact that freedom isn't free." Bob Hope, "Get out your flags and your handkerchiefs and prepare to be inspired by

the words and the warmth of our nation's most valiant heroes in *Beyond The Medal*." Ross Perot, John McCain, President Ford, Daniel Ludwig. They all praise this book. And the reason that they praise it is because not only does it speak about the Medal of Honor recipients, but it speaks about the 27 million veterans that are living in the United States of America today, and the hundreds of millions that have served this country.

Now since it's been out, I want you to know that I have a new mission. And that mission is to make sure that this book gets in the 118,000 public and private schools. Now this wasn't my idea. This was John McCain's idea. It's William Coors, Chairman of Coors Corporation. It was the felon that was incarcerated who wrote a letter that said, "This has really moved me. I think this should be in every school because it could have helped me." It's the 8th grader, Matt Mitchell, who has written and said, "Gosh, you know, I never knew that war was so sad. I never knew what everybody went through." He's an 8th grader and he wrote me to do that as a book report.

This book has only been out since Medal of Honor Day, March 25th. All those letters continue to inspire me to make sure that this gets in all the schools in the United States, K through 12. There's 118,000 of them. I teach part time, and I would be honored to see that in every single school.

Now, I want you to know also, that I brought 300 books to this convention. Forty of them have been purchased. If you would like to purchase one, I am over at the exhibit, I'd be more than happy to sign a book for you. $7.00 of every single book will go to the Medal of Honor scholarship fund. It goes to the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts. The Boy Scouts, of which I'm a Cub master of 110 scouts. It goes to the Boys Club, Girls Club. It goes to abused kids.

So that a lot of the funds to this book goes to very, very beneficial youth. And those are the people that we're trying to touch in this world. Because the future of this world is not in our hands, it's in the youth. And I firmly believe through a book like this and through the service that The American Legion gives and our dedication as veterans to the youth, we can have a future that is very bright for them. And that's what I would like to be able to see.

I want to thank you very much. God bless every single one of you, and God bless the greatest nation in the world, the United States of America.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Peter. Thank you, Peter, very much. Since the founding of The American Legion in 1919, finding jobs for our comrades has been the underlying concern of our organization. Employment of veterans is also a major concern of our next guest, a special guest. When I reviewed a listing of this remarkable woman's duties and the special committees and boards which she serves on, I was impressed. Among those duties are administration of the Job Training Partnership Act insuring federal contractors take action to employ disabled and Vietnam-era veterans. And responsibility for the United States Employment Service which helped veterans through state and local offices.

She also oversees employment and training programs for veterans and military reservists and chairs the Committee on Veterans Employment. It is a real pleasure to present to this 79th National Convention the Honorable Alexis Herman, secretary of Labor.

Address: The Honorable Alexis Herman
Secretary of Labor

Good afternoon. I want to thank National Commander Joseph Frank for his generous introduction, and for the invitation to be with you this afternoon. To you, Commander Frank, to the National Vice Commanders, to National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, speakers and

delegates, it is an honor and a privilege for me to be here in Orlando to address the 79th National Convention of the world's largest veterans service organization.

I want to extend special greetings to Legionnaires from my home state of Alabama, including Tom Carr, the Labor Department's Veteran Employment and Training Representative. I also want to say that we will deeply miss Tom's predecessor, Jimmy Gates, who passed away this year.

I am extraordinarily proud to be here today as your 23rd Secretary of Labor, and to pay tribute to the men and women who have worn the uniforms of our country's armed forces, who have given us all the best opportunity in the world, the opportunity to live the American dream. By your sacrifice and selfless dedication to the American way of life, you have made that dream possible. In times of war you have put yourself in harm's way so that we at home could sleep safe and secure.

Today, in a time of relative peace, American men and women still find themselves far from home on freedom's watch. No words can adequately express the debt that we owe to you, and to the thousands who, in the immortal words of Abe Lincoln, gave the last full measure of devotion. So I can only say to you today from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

I also want to thank the Legion's one million member Women's Auxiliary, for its strong tradition of voluntary community service. For volunteering in veteran's hospitals and retirement homes. For providing wheelchairs for disabled veterans, for sponsoring Boy and Girl Scout troops, and for providing millions of dollars in scholarships to deserving students. These generous programs build citizenship. They solidify community values and they certainly strengthen, my friends, the bonds of family.

It was in my own family growing up as a young girl in Mobile, Alabama, that I learned firsthand the contributions that veterans had made to our country in war and in peace.

Now I know you don't come before the world's largest veterans organization, Commander Frank, and single out any one single branch of the service, but I must pay tribute to the two Army uncles who, in fact, raised me and I will always reserve a most special place in my heart for my Uncle Matt, Dr. Broadus Butler, who was a member of the famous Tuskeegee Airmen. He was, in fact, until his death last year, president of the Washington chapter of the Tuskeegee Airmen. Whenever I saw him in uniform, in the red blazer, I felt inspired by his devotion to God, to country, and to the American people. He knew that what it meant to fight for America's freedom was in fact the greatest gift in the world. And he knew also that it was not easy.

He was a leader during his service years, and in fact, a leader for the rest of his life. He showed me that American's veterans continue to be a national resource, as a voice of conscience, and as valued members of their communities and the civilian labor force.

But Uncle Matt also taught me something else that I shall never forget, that veterans are the men and women who protect our country when we go to war. And as such, you have earned and deserve a fair measure of protection, and respect in between the wars.

The American Legion, and its three million members, have always been a clear and articulate voice on behalf of all the 27 million veterans and their families. And I want you to know today that this administration listens to that voice. At the Department of Labor, the Veterans Employment and Training Service, or VETS as we call it, is a strong advocate and resource for veterans. And it is a central agency to the mission of the Labor Department. And I will treat its issues, your issues, as among my highest priorities.

I'm very proud of the fact that at the Labor Department we know the value of veterans. More than 21 percent of our employees have served in the armed forces. A percentage that is nearly double the rate for the overall civilian work force. I'm equally proud of the fact that

the Labor Department has had historic leadership in advancing the employment rights of veterans.

It was 20 years ago when I actually first came to the Department of Labor, under another president, then President Jimmy Carter. And working with Secretary of Labor, Ray Marshall, it was Secretary Marshall who actually appointed Rowland Mora, who was the first Deputy Secretary for Veterans Employment. Rowland was a disabled Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam war. And I had the opportunity to work very closely with him 20 years ago on employment programs for veterans. And certainly that tradition continues today.

And I was equally proud as Secretary of Labor to come to the department and to work initially with Preston Taylor who led that from 1993 until this spring. And with me today is the man who I expect will lead this agency into the next century, Assistant Secretary Designee for Veterans Employment and Training, Al Verago. I know that Al addressed this audience this weekend. But I want you to know also that Al was nominated last week by President Clinton. And he is the man I know that many of you have come to know and respect. As you know, Al's door is always open to veteran services organizations. And I want you to know today that mine will also be open to you.

Last week, as Secretary of Labor, I traveled on my very first Labor Day tour to more than six cities throughout the nation. I began a Labor Day tour last week in Seattle, Washington to listen to America's work force. I traveled from Seattle, Washington to El Paso, Texas, from Mobile to Nashville, Tennessee, to Minneapolis, Minnesota to the coal mines in Morgantown, West Virginia in the heart of Appalachia. And there I heard workers talk to me today about what it means to get it, to keep, and to hold a good job. What it means to raise a family today.

I listened to America's workers talk to me about the pleasures and pain of work. I listened to them talk to me about the wonders and the woes of work. And I heard on my trip that the American worker today is feeling good about our American work force. Like The American Legion, I believe that our work force today is solid. That it is strong. That it is proud. But I also heard a quiet unease in our nation's land. I heard an unease in spite of the fact that we have created more than 13 million new jobs. That our unemployment rate is the lowest that it has been in 24 years. In fact, inflation is at historic lows and corporate profits are indeed rising.

But the quiet unease that I heard from America's workers is the fact that while we were enjoying a great economic boom today, that these are not times where necessarily we feel as though we have broadly shared prosperity in the land. And that what we must do as a nation is to make sure that the lowest unemployment rates that we see nationally today are in fact felt in every town, in every community, in every city today. So that all of us can truly benefit and participate in this great American dream.

I know that in order for us to have broadly shared prosperity in our nation today, that it is truly going to take the involvement of all of us to be partners in this historic journey into the 21st century. You especially have a role to play, The American Legion, in making sure that we can achieve broadly shared prosperity today in the nation. Because the American Legion, with its solid commitment to service, can truly be one of our strongest partners in this endeavor.

The unemployment rate for veterans is at 3.3 percent. Much better than the overall civilian worker force. But as far as I am concerned, that is still 3.3 percent too much.

What's more, abundant jobs and a booming economy by themselves in fact do not guarantee good lives. Our economic accomplishments will remain incomplete until every American can reap the full benefits of our nation's wealth. But perhaps you would ask today

exactly how can we do that. Well, I have articulated five goals as Secretary of Labor that I believe at least put us on the right path today of insuring that every American can, in fact, reap the full benefits.

The first goal is to insure that we equip every American with the skills to find and to hold and to keep good jobs with rising incomes throughout their lives. This means rethinking and reforming our system of education and training in our rapidly changing global economy. The workers who succeed will be those who can improve their skills throughout their careers.

I want to assure you the employment and training initiatives that we are embarking on certainly benefit America's veterans. That is why I have an Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training chaired by your very own Jim Hubbard.

Jim is also the driving force behind another important project, a research report on how veterans can get credit for the skills they learned in the military when they seek civilian jobs. I have just received a copy of that study focusing on health care and aircraft maintenance. Those are the careers that this study has targeted. And I recently read a very persuasive column about the issue of civilian licensing in the *Wall Street Journal*, written by none other than Steve Salerno, the publisher of *The American Legion Magazine*.

I will take these suggestions very seriously. These are issues that I've worked on for much of my adult life. And certainly making service training translate to the private sector work force is a key priority for lifelong learning.

I also want to thank you today for the support that you have given to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. The support that you have given us that has enabled states, in fact to make grants, says today that these disabled vets now can work with local veterans employment representatives to help veterans receive their fair share of employment opportunities through America's job bank and other networks and resources of our employment security system.

And I want you to know that I'm going to work very hard to guarantee that we have enough of these veteran employment and training specialists to improve veterans access to high quality jobs, to insure that they always get the assistance that they will need. This is critical to my goal of achieving lifelong learning and skill development for all Americans.

My second goal is to help move people today from welfare to work. I truly believe that a paycheck is, in fact, the passport to dignity. But if people don't have a home, a mailing address, a telephone, a place to dress, a place to shower, how can they hope to find and keep a good job?

I am deeply troubled by the fact that thousands of veterans are caught in a desperate cycle of homelessness, joblessness, substance abuse and aimless wandering. No nation is so rich that it can squander such a valuable pool of talent and character. In many cases the reason for their homelessness can happen to any of us. The death of a loved one. The loss of a job, or prolonged illness. In some cases their problems are associated with posttraumatic stress disorder, and the difficulties of transitioning from military life and transferring their skills to civilian jobs.

Regardless of the causes, these veterans are generally highly skilled, highly intelligent, highly motivated men and women who would be an asset to any organization. That is why President Clinton and I support a request to Congress to restore the Labor Department's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. The funding is, in fact, modest for fiscal year 1998. 2.5 million dollars. But if Congress approves this request, it would be available to help more than 4,000 homeless veterans find unsubsidized jobs. And we need your help to make this goal a reality.

My third goal is to guarantee that all Americans have safe, healthy and fair workplaces with the rights they respect, and certainly deserve, with equal opportunity for all. That means, that when veterans, reservists, or National Guard members are called to serve in uniform, or to train to keep their military skills sharp, they should be able to expect their civilian jobs to be waiting for them when they return. These are not courtesies, my friends, these are non-negotiable rights. These men and women must retain their seniority and their health and retirement benefits as if they had never been away. Safeguarding re-employment rights like these, and enforcing anti-discrimination regulations covering disabled and Vietnam-era veterans are vital obligations of the Labor Department.

Once again I want to thank the Legion for its strong support for legislation that President Clinton signed in 1994, which strengthened and consolidated these rights. And I thank you for your efforts to help insure that the Labor Department's Agency for Veterans has adequate funding for its enforcement responsibilities.

My fourth goal, I want to help working men and women strike a better balance between work and family. If we are to enjoy domestic tranquility, as well as economic prosperity, and if our country is to succeed, Americans must be able to succeed at home as well as on the job.

And my fifth and final goal, is to make sure that all Americans are economically secure when they retire because they have earned it with a lifetime of labor. Protecting pensions, expanding coverage and encouraging retirement savings are in fact top priorities for me, as Secretary of Labor.

It was, in fact, this final goal, the question of pension benefits, that found me in the middle of a very tough and bitter strike just a couple weeks ago. For 15 days, the management of the United Parcel Service company and its Teamster employees and their unions were at loggerheads. Now historians will determine exactly when the talks turned, when, in fact, did the deal gel. But I have my own analysis. You see, I think both management and the workers realized that they could not, in fact, survive without one another. The success of one side depended on the success of the other. The two sides came to understand that they, in fact, needed each other. And the rest of us needed both of them.

Recently, I heard a great story from a UPS driver on his very first week back on the job. One afternoon he came upon a woman returning to work, that day after the strike, that he had been delivering packages to for 15 years. She ran up to the driver, she wrapped her arms around him, and she said, "I'm so glad to see you. Are you all right? You see, I've had three jobs, and two husbands. You're the only stable relationship in my life."

She said if anything had happened to you, I really don't know what I would do.

Now, as I traveled here today to speak to you, I thought about that statement from that woman—if anything happened to you I don't know what I would do. That about sums it up for me when I think of America's relationship to its veterans. And so, for me today in conclusion, as your Secretary of Labor, it is my honor, and my obligation, to work for an America where every woman and man can find useful work with rising wages. An America that offers opportunity for our youngest people and security for our elders, and respect for the millions of great Americans that you so eloquently represent here today. Who have willingly postponed personal gain and sacrificed family pleasure to proudly wear the uniforms of our armed forces.

I know that together we can make sure that the vision of America will be, in fact, a reality fulfilled and not a dream deferred. For veterans, for all Americans.

I thank you for the privilege of speaking to you today. May God bless each and every one of you for your dedicated service, for the outstanding work that you do, and may God bless these United States of America. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Madam Secretary. That was a very, very inspiring talk.

Seabury & Smith and RXAmerica are among our corporate partners. They offer The American Legion a discount prescription program, and since 1995 Legionnaires, Sons of the American Legion members and their families have saved nearly 6.4 million dollars. Currently, just four percent of the membership has taken the advantage of the savings offered by this program. This is another benefit of your American Legion and SAL membership.

I would like to introduce Bruce Henderson, a member of Post 44 in Broad Ripple, Indiana, from Seabury & Smith, to tell you a little more about the program.

Address: Bruce Henderson (IN), Seabury and Smith
Discount Prescription Program

Good afternoon. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you out there, and there are so many of you who have not only used the program, but have helped to spread the word and promote this program. We have had a good start. Members have saved over 6.4 million dollars. That represents an average savings of over 17 percent. However, the range of savings has generated from zero to 83 percent.

We need to do some more work in that only four percent of the American Legion membership and SAL and their families have utilized the program. There are many more out there that could use this savings, and I appreciate your continued help and effort to get the word to those individuals.

In response to Legionnaires' requests we have made several additions to the network during the last year. Wal-Mart and Kmart were added last year. And I'm pleased to report this year that we have added Thrifty Pay Less on the West Coast, and most recently Walgreen's. These are important new additions to the pharmacy network. So please spread the word back to the posts.

A few things to remember. First and most importantly, all American Legion members and SAL members, including their families, are automatically enrolled in this program. There is no additional enrollment that is needed. All you need is your American Legion or SAL membership card at the pharmacy. Or, you can use the toll-free number for either information that the pharmacy may use to fill your prescription, or to fill a mail order prescription where you can receive up to a 90-day supply instead of a 30-day supply at the store.

Please help us get the word out to those members that think they have to enroll in something. They do not. They are already enrolled in this program.

There are thousands of participating pharmacies across the country. Please encourage people to use the toll-free number so that they can be directed to a pharmacy nearest where they live. Remember, the biggest savings can be generated by the use of generic drugs. Ask your doctor and/or your pharmacist if a generic drug can be used and is available.

Spouses of deceased Legionnaires and SAL members are also eligible. Please stop by the booth out here. I'll be glad to give you additional information, or call your department headquarters for additional information, so that we can enroll any deceased members of the American Legion or SAL.

So far this program has generated over $450,000 of revenue for the American Legion, including the revenue going to each individual department. We have a lot more work to do, and that should grow as we get the word out to each member in the post so that all can take advantage of this program.

If you or your pharmacist or the pharmacist that you deal with have any questions, again I encourage everyone to use that toll-free number. That information can be given to the pharmacist, many of which may not be familiar with the program. Please let them know they can call that number so that they can have access to the program.

Again, we need your help to continue to spread the word. I appreciate the opportunity to continue to work with you, and I thank you very much for your time. May God bless.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Bruce.

Kirke-Van Orsdel is one of our corporate partners and administrator of the Legion's life and health insurance plans. In cooperation with Union Fidelity and Hartford Insurance Companies over 48 million dollars in claims have been paid to the survivors of Legionnaires. This is another benefit to your American Legion membership.

The insurance plans have generated over 2.3 million dollars annually in revenue to The American Legion for use in support of American Legion programs. KVI currently administrators health products at various departments under the national health program. With us today is KVI account executive, Bill Plackett, a member of Post No. 176 in Springfield, Virginia, and a veteran of service, retiring as a master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. Please welcome Bill Plackett.

Address: Bill Plackett (VA), Account Executive
Kirke-Van Ordel

Thank you, Commander. KVI, Hartford and United Fidelity Insurance Company are very, very proud of our partnership with the American Legion, and the myriad of youth programs that you do support. We additionally are looking forward as we move out into the various departments to offering vital health care benefits to the members of those departments. We look to an expanding relationship over the course of the next few years.

In keeping with our dedication to our partnership, and the commitment to the furtherance of the youth programs, I'd like to present a donation to the Commander in the amount of $5,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation to further the vital work that they're doing with our American youth. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you. Outstanding. Five grand. Thank you very much.

Tomorrow morning, we will be drawing the name of the lucky winner who will be driving a new 1998 Buick LaSabre. It could be you. Think about it. To be eligible, though, you must deposit your tickets in the barrel at the National Emergency Fund booth in the Exhibit Hall.

While you're dropping off your tickets I also hope you'll drop off some money to help again the National Emergency Fund. It's a program that proves, my friends, that we care about each other.

Our National Convention Blood Drive continues in the Exhibit Hall also. And this is the final day of the drive. So far, you have donated 100 units. I'd like to see us meet or exceed our goal of 180, so take time to donate today, please.

Be sure to pick up free copies again of the *Daily Dispatch*, and share them with your fellow Legion members at home, and each morning edition includes a comprehensive news report from the previous day's convention activities. And make it a point to subscribe to the Legion's only national newspaper. Sign up today and you'll get a special discount rate and commemorative pin.

We still have a few tapes at the Citizens Flag Alliance booth—I'm really surprised about that—in the Exhibit Hall of the songs John Schneider sang today, *I Love Old Glory*. And for a donation of $5.00 you can get one of those tapes.

At this time, I'd like to recognize Chester Stellar of Ohio. Chester is the Chairman of the National Convention Committee of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation for the purpose of making a presentation and report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Chester F. Stellar (OH), Chairman

Ninety-five members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 31, 1997 in the Peabody Orlando, Orlando III, Convention Level and agreed on the following report which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Carroll Williams, Maryland, Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary Chairman. Philip Wilkerson, Maryland, Deputy Director, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary Secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent Chairman. Chester F. Stellar, Ohio, Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Pat Phillips, Georgia, as Committee Secretary, Theodore Coleman, New York, Chairman, and Teddy Duckworth, Wisconsin, Secretary of the Medical and Hospital Subcommittee; and J.G. 'Tracy' Taylor, Florida, Chairman, and Gary Jones, Missouri, Secretary of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Jacqueline Garrick, Deputy Director, and Harold T. Kelly, Assistant Director to Medical and Hospital; Carroll Williams, Director, and Philip Wilkerson, Deputy Director for Operations to Claims and Rating.

As has been the custom for the 53 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a three-day preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their analysis, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. The Screening Committee was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

Region 8	—	William (Bob) Wallace (WA)
Region 7	—	Terry Tracy (CA)
Region 1	—	Walter Pytka (RI)
Region 2	—	Dennis Harris (VA)
Region 3	—	John Brokens (IA)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eightieth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 56 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for 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 as Amended	16
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	3
Referred to the Standing Commission	11
Received and Recorded	21
Rejected	5

A report of action taken on the 11 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, and, in addition, will be contained in the National Adjutant's report to the Eightieth Annual National Convention.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 6: Support Establishment Of A VA Outpatient Clinic In Western Region Of Maine
Origin: ME
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There is a growing need in the Western Region of the State of Maine to provide necessary support for the health needs of an aging veteran population; and

WHEREAS, There is a considerable distance of travel from most locations in this area to the Togus VA Medical Center where this care can be provided; and

WHEREAS, The health of many of those needing that type of care is to a point that they are unable to make the trip both ways in a single day without causing both mental and physical stress on that person, aside from the risk from transporting them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports the creation of a VA Clinic in the Western Region of Maine as determined by the need and veteran population to support such a facility.

Resolution No. 31: Expand VA Services at the Former Fitzsimmons Army Hospital
Origin: CO
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Fitzsimmons Army Hospital has been officially closed; and

WHEREAS, The Fitzsimmons Redevelopment Authority has received final approval for plans to convert the site of the former Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center to a Bio Science Park with the anchor tenant to be the University of Colorado Health Science Center (UCHSC); and

WHEREAS, The redevelopment plan for Fitzsimmons includes a Colorado State run Veterans Nursing Home and Domiciliary; and

WHEREAS, The Denver VAMC has plans to open an outpatient clinic at the Fitzimmons site; and

WHEREAS, A Fisher House serving families of veterans that are patients at the Denver VAMC is currently in operation at the Fitzsimmons site; and

WHEREAS, The UCHSC has developed and has started implementing a long range plan to relocate their existing facilities including their hospital to the former site of Fitzsimmons; and

WHEREAS, The Denver VA Medical Center has a long standing association with the UCHSC in sharing medical staff, training and medical research; and

WHEREAS, The existing site of the Denver VAMC has significant space and parking problems that could be relieved by relocating to the Fitzsimmons site; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion go on record in support of expanding the Denver Medical Center to the previous site of the Fitzsimmons Army Hospital; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage VA to develop a long-range plan to expand clinical functions from the Denver VAMC to the former site of Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to coordinate the proposed relocation of the Denver VAMC to coincide with the planned relocation of the University of Colorado Health Science Center.

Resolution No. 68: Recognition for Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown
Origin: WI
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Secretary Jesse Brown has served his country as a member of its Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Brown has served the veterans of this country in various capacities; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Brown has repeatedly stood "tall" as Secretary for Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Brown has taken his cause to all corners, daring those who challenge, to increase veterans benefits on all fronts as "duly earned benefits" and "not welfare"; and

WHEREAS, Secretary Brown leaves his office having earned the respect of all who came in contact with him and/or his staff; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion hereby extend sincere appreciation to Secretary Brown for his outstanding courage and dedication to those causes which burden those valiant members of America's Armed Forces, the injuries, disease, and want of assistance as expressed by The American Legion.

Resolution No. 77: The American Legion Policy on Long-term Care
Origin: PA
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated with No. 72 (PA)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to developing a comprehensive solution to preserve and improve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. This goal includes providing a coordinated continuum of long-term care to meet the needs of the individual veteran. This continuum is linked to acute care and ambulatory care services which are provided as needed; and

WHEREAS, Long-Term Care (LTC) within the Department of Veterans Affairs is a continuum of primary care provided to veterans over a period of time who suffer from severe chronic service-connected disabilities and the conditions of aging and/or the disease process. Within VA, long-term care includes skilled and unskilled care; nursing home care; home health care; adult day care; community residential care; specialized rehabilitation care,

including Alzheimer's and Dementia care; psycho geriatric care; domiciliary care; assisted living; hospice and respite care; geriatric assessment and management programs; and Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCS); and

WHEREAS, Veterans who are accepted into the system of care provided by VA, under whatever provision of the law, remain the responsibility of the Department. It matters not whether the law changes, because it can only change for the future. VA's charge includes providing quality improvement oversight for long-term care provided by the Department or through private contract. If a veteran is accepted as a long-term care patient, no matter when or under which existent provision of the law, he or she remains the responsibility of the VA medical care system. To do anything other is ethically and morally wrong and breaks the benevolent contract established with veterans by the nation; and

WHEREAS, The GI Bill of Health proposes important changes to the VA health care system that are needed to meet current and future challenges; and

WHEREAS, There is currently a substantial aging veteran population that will present significant demands on the VA health care system well into the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, Congress and the Executive Branch must recognize that there are generations of veterans who were promised "health care for life" by the Department of Defense and who have held this promise as truth; and

WHEREAS, To accomplish the long-term care objectives of the GI Bill of Health, VA must recognize the changing health care-needs of the population and provide veterans access to the appropriate level of care as change occurs. VA must develop needed services in the least restrictive and most cost effective environment while promoting the maximum level of independence and quality of life for the veteran; and

WHEREAS, The VA health care system is a budget-driven system that is not able to sufficiently meet the demands of the veteran community for long-term care. Without significant budgetary reform, VA will continue to reduce long-term care programs and services and place greater reliance on community, state and other federal programs to provide health care to aging veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion commend a VA long-term care policy that provides a mandatory continuum of care to all 100 percent service-connected veterans; to service-connected veterans whose medical condition requires such care; to eligible veterans whose medical condition requires long-term treatment; and all other eligible veterans through the establishment of a health benefit plan that operates on a premium and co-payment basis, as recommended by the GI Bill of Health; and, be it further

RESOLVED, At which time an effective date for a mandatory long-term care benefit plan is established by the Congress, those veterans already receiving such care will be grandfathered into the plan, and will continue to receive an appropriate level of care with no future obligation for payment; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) will develop a strategy to ensure that comprehensive long-term care services, as outlined in the GI Bill of Health and authorized by the Congress, are provided throughout each network.

Resolution No. 83: VA Allow Filipino Claims Folders Reside in Veterans State of Residence
Origin: IL
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In accordance with VA Manual M21-1, Part II, Chapter 4, Subchapter 1, claims based on service with the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines which such forces were in Armed Forces of the United States, Special Philippines Scouts and Alleged or Recognized Guerilla Service are under the exclusive and permanent jurisdiction of the Manila VA Regional Office; and

WHEREAS, Some of these veterans are now naturalized U.S. citizens or are now legally residing in a different city or state in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The veterans or their veteran advocates have no access to their claim folder while it is at Manila VA Regional Office and unable to receive due process of their claim; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the VA manual be changed to allow the veteran's VA claim folder to be located in the same state as the Filipino veteran's place of residence, which will allow due process to be afforded these veterans.

Resolution No. 84: Support the Continuation of Inpatient/Outpatient Services at Lakeside Chicago VAMC and West Side VAMC
Origin: IL
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Chicago Health Care System is to provide quality medical care for Chicago area veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA has begun enacting major budget cutbacks that threaten to reduce the number of employees and services available at Lakeside and West Side Divisions; and

WHEREAS, VA plans to integrate these two hospitals which serve Chicago area veterans; and

WHEREAS, Lakeside and West Side Divisions are currently operating at only eighty-five percent of the last year's funding level; and

WHEREAS, VA has already trimmed more than one hundred employees at Lakeside and West Side Divisions by offering buy-out packages, and due to budget restraints an additional two hundred federal employees could face layoffs starting in March 1997; and

WHEREAS, In addition to reducing the number of employees at these two divisions, VA has halted the construction of suites intended to provide speciality vascular testing for patients; and

WHEREAS, Patients in need of advanced vascular testing are now forced to travel outside of Chicago to Hines Medical Center in west suburban Maywood; and

WHEREAS, West Side Division has stopped accepting referrals for surgery from North Chicago VA Medical Center and is sending all of these cases to Hines VA Medical Center in Maywood; and

WHEREAS, Further cutbacks which will be implemented over the next year will negatively affect the quality of medical care available to Chicago area veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA has formed a blue-ribbon panel of professionals, the Integration Coordination Committee, to review and implement all proposed cutbacks and consolidation of services between these two Divisions, their report being scheduled for release in December 1997; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion exert its full power and influence to insure that Lakeside and West Side Divisions remain open and that both divisions continue to serve Chicago area veterans on both an inpatient and outpatient basis.

Resolution No. 104: Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated with No. 16 (MA); No. 32 (CO); No. 152 (NJ)

WHEREAS, Approximately 700,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Gulf War veterans were exposed to many environmental hazards during Operation Desert Storm, and thousands of them consequently suffer from an illness, or illnesses, known as "Gulf War Illnesses"; and

WHEREAS, Almost 100 scientific, medical and clinical studies are investigating the health effects of most of the environmental hazards Gulf War veterans were exposed to during the Gulf War to include: chemical warfare agents; pesticides; investigational drugs; stress; and others; and

WHEREAS, There are few efforts underway to determine which medical treatments are most effective in alleviating the symptoms of Gulf War Illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense failed to adequately record which troops received an investigational drug, used as a nerve agent pre-treatment, which now leaves scientists handicapped in their efforts to study the health effects of this drug; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other federal agencies are attempting to determine which troops were exposed to hazardous materials and toxins in the Persian Gulf during the Gulf War, and such attempts will very likely be met with failure due to poor record keeping, missing operational logs and the passage of time; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs has a backlog of Persian Gulf Environmental Hazard Claims that numbers over 14,000; and

WHEREAS, The military services have come to depend on Depleted Uranium, a toxic and radioactive heavy metal with pyrophoric (flammable) properties, as a kinetic energy penetrator fired from tank and aircraft cannons against enemy armor; and

WHEREAS, Depleted Uranium burns after hitting a target, releasing aerosolized uranium particles into the air, exposing troops who come in contact with the target; and

WHEREAS, The scientific community and the Armed Forces do not have adequate medical or exposure information to determine the exact health effects caused by exposure to aerosolized Depleted Uranium particles; and

WHEREAS, Depleted Uranium munitions were fired at, and destroyed, thousands of Iraqi tanks and vehicles during the Gulf War, scattering over 350 tons of Depleted Uranium throughout the theater of operations; and

WHEREAS, A 1993 United States General Accounting Office report found that most American ground troops were inadequately informed about the use and danger of Depleted Uranium munitions, and as a result, entered destroyed Iraqi tanks and vehicles and were exposed to Depleted Uranium particles; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion encourages the Federal Government to fund outcome studies and randomized controlled trials in order to understand

which medical treatments are most effective in alleviating the symptoms of Gulf War Illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Department of Defense to properly inform troops about the use of investigational drugs, and keep accurate records about the dosages and frequency of use; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the United States Congress to consider legislation that would grant the benefit of the doubt to Gulf War veterans concerning exposure to environmental hazards and toxins in the Persian Gulf as was done for Vietnam veterans and Agent Orange in 1991; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Department of Veterans Affairs to adequately train and support VA personnel who adjudicate Persian Gulf Environmental Hazard claims as they attempt to reduce the huge backlog in claims; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress to oversee the adjudication of Gulf War Environmental Hazard claims to ensure that they are processed efficiently and properly; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense require commanders to adequately inform their subordinates about the dangers of approaching targets that have been destroyed by Depleted Uranium munitions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense immediately conduct peer-reviewed scientific studies to determine the extent of fallout near targets struck by Depleted Uranium munitions; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs conduct epidemiology studies examining Depleted Uranium exposure and long-term health outcomes.

Resolution No. 127: Amend Title 38 USC to Provide Care for World War II Veterans
Origin: TX
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, World War II veterans ages range from 70 to 90 years; and

WHEREAS, Their need for medical care has increased to exceed most of their disposable income; and

WHEREAS, Their hazardous military duty is a contributing factor to their need for increased medical care; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 104-262 fails to provide reasonable medical care for World War II veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion go on record as supporting amendment of Public Law 104-262, VA eligibility rules for both inpatient hospital care and outpatient medical services for first eligibility group. Item (e) to read veterans of the Mexican Border Period, World War I and World War II.

Resolution No. 150: Maintain Separate Management for St. Cloud and Minneapolis VAMCs
Origin: MN
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 13) is studying the possibility of consolidation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, St. Cloud, and the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, into one Medical Center under the auspices of one Director; and

WHEREAS, The possibility of combining some medical and non-medical services has merit, and could be a cost-savings measure in partially solving VISN #13 budget problems, now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and that of the VA Medical Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, are now, and have long been, very different; and

WHEREAS, The VA Medical Center in St. Cloud has long been the primary facility in Minnesota providing long-term care of psychiatric, as well as the only in-patient VA facility in Minnesota, for court committed chemically dependent veterans; and

WHEREAS, It is felt that it could be in the best interest of the veterans of the State of Minnesota to not consolidate these two facilities but to retain separate Directors to ensure the fullest supervision of their independent missions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion, Department of Minnesota, support the hiring of a separate Director for the Medical Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be provided to the VISN #13 Director, as well as the Minnesota U.S. Senators and Representatives in Washington, D.C.

Resolution No. 153: VA Provide Appropriate Services to Families of Hospitalized Veterans Prior to Discharge

Origin: NJ

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs must provide timely care for all honorably discharged veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs must provide nursing home care to all honorably discharged veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs should not discharge mental, emotional or physically disabled veterans from hospital or nursing home care when such action will cause hardship on family or spouse; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion take appropriate action to urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to fully involve the veteran, spouse, and family in the discharge planning process through counseling sessions, referrals, and any needed documentation requested.

Resolution No. 168: Provide Presumptive Service Connection for Cold-related Injury

Origin: VA

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Thousands of Armed Forces personnel during their active military service in wartime during World War II and Korea, including prisoners-of-war, and in peacetime have been exposed to periods of near-freezing and sub-freezing temperatures without adequate clothing or shelter; and

WHEREAS, Many of these individuals as a result of such exposure suffered hypothermia (an abnormally low body temperature) or frostbite (freezing of tissue) in various parts of their bodies; and

WHEREAS, As the result of their cold-exposure, they suffer from long-term adverse effects, such as chronic pain, numbness, sensitivity to cold, tissue loss, nail abnormalities, color changes, locally impaired sensation, hyperhidrosis, or certain x-ray abnormalities; and

WHEREAS, Currently 38 USC 1112(b) only provides for presumptive service connection for the organic residuals of frostbite in those individuals who were held as prisoners-of-war for 30 days or more; and

WHEREAS, Although many former POWs did, in fact suffer from frostbite, many others suffered prolonged hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature) without actual frostbite and as a result of such cold exposure developed chronic cold-related disability; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the current criteria of 38 USC 1112 - Presumptions relating to certain diseases and disabilities—which only recognizes the organic residuals of frostbite—is too limited and restrictive and should be updated to reflect advances in medical knowledge about the long-term effects of cold injury; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion seek legislation amending 38 USC 1112(a) to include the organic residuals of hypothermia, including frostbite, among the presumptive disabilities in the case of any veteran.

Resolution No. 173: Urge U.S. Army to Grant Vincent Reyes Fitzpatrick a Commission Denied in 1918

Origin: PR

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The War Department established a 3rd Officers Training Camp at Camp Las Casas, in San Juan, Puerto Rico from June 21 to November 6, 1918 into which Vicente Reyes Fitzpatrick volunteered; and

WHEREAS, Camp Las Casas was to select no more than 600 men and these men were to be commissioned in the grades up to and including Captain; and

WHEREAS, A selected 25 members of this camp were to be commissioned as Captains based on their merit headed by Pedro Albizu Campos in the #1 position and Vicente Reyes Fitzpatrick in the #25; and

WHEREAS, These men were to have graduated on or about November 11, 1918 but due to the nature of the communication of the time, received late notice of the Armistice and the camp was dissolved; and

WHEREAS, These Commissions were given to the local/stateside politicians at that time and they passed them over because of political/racial motivations at the time. The peculiar situation existing allowed for the politicians to take upon themselves the responsibilities of the War Department regarding who would be commissioned and who would not. Not one grade of Captain was granted to the 3rd OTC of the 375th in Camp Las Casas in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, Vicente Reyes Fitzpatrick, a life member of Puerto Rico Post 1 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, has been a member of The American Legion for more than 75 years and has honorably served the Puerto Rico Department of The American Legion as follows: Department Historian, Department Service Officer, Post Commander Post 1, District Commander—1st District, Vice Commander, National Executive Committeeman of Puerto Rico 1948-1953, Department Commander, Department Representative for VA claims, Department Chairman, Rehabilitation and Service to Veterans Committee; and

WHEREAS, Resolution to support Vicente Reyes Fitzpatrick in this case was unanimously approved in The American Legion Department of Puerto Rico Department Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico on June 22nd, 1997; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urge the United States Army

to grant Vicente Reyes Fitzpatrick his Commission of Captain from Company D of the 3rd Officers Training Camp of the 375th Regiment of Camp Las Casas, San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1918.

Resolution No. 193: Support Additional VA Inpatient Care Capacity for Northern California
Origin: CA
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) closed the VA Medical Center, Martinez, CA in 1991 with no provisions in place for inpatient medical treatment of approximately 440,000 veterans in Northern California; and

WHEREAS, VA made a detailed complete study of several locations in 1992 and 1993 and chose Travis AFB as the best possible location to build the replacement center of the VA Medical Center at Martinez, then established a Northern California Health Care System; and

WHEREAS, 67 working groups of over 200 personnel created the integration plans for the State of the Art 21st Century Replacement VA Medical Center at Travis AFB; and

WHEREAS, President Clinton sent Vice President Al Gore to represent him in the ground breaking ceremony of the Replacement VA Medical Center at Travis AFB, California in 1994 with a promise to see this project completed as soon as possible; and

WHEREAS, Six years have passed and only a parking lot and a warehouse have been built and the medical hardship of the veterans of Northern California continues; and

WHEREAS, A GAO report of September 3, 1996 and in 1997 an independent agency, Price Waterhouse, was contracted to determine if the 243-bed replacement hospital at Travis AFB could be justified—allowing six months for the study and no time for a rebuttal by the concerned veterans of Northern California; and

WHEREAS, The study, Assessment of Veterans' Health Care Needs in Northern California, at a cost of about $400,000 is flawed with misconceptions; the Medical Mission of the VA and the unique needs of the veterans counted as only 10% of the study; research and teaching counted as only 5% of the report; a 30% factor of the report concerns access and is totally misrepresented; and the report does not even consider one of the most important issues—Quality Control; and

WHEREAS, Martinez VA Medical Center had 8,000 inpatients during the last full year of operation in 1990—17% of all California veterans who were VA hospitalized during the year—and 230 inpatients at the time of closure, only 25% of these veterans have made it to other VA medical centers which are overcrowded and difficult to access; and

WHEREAS, The VA Medical Center of Martinez, California was closed in 1991 and has not been replaced after six years. Travis AFB was chosen as the ideal location. A House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation Hearing on the VA Hospital at David Grant Medical Center at Travis AFB was held January 10, 1994, the replacement hospital was approved, and the ground breaking ceremony followed; and

WHEREAS, The 440,000 veterans of Northern California (29 states have a lesser veteran population than this catchment area) lack adequate VA facilities and continue to face medical, personal and financial hardships; and

WHEREAS, Senator Boxer prior to recess of Congress moved before a Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate that the Price Waterhouse report be accepted as written and that the bill for the report be paid from the $32,000,000 appropriated for the VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the President be more thoroughly advised by both the Department of California and the National Organization for the need of the VA Hospital at

Travis AFB, to treat inpatient veterans, who number over 440,000 in the catchment area of Martinez, and the Department of California and the National Organization provide the necessary leadership that will accomplish the construction of the replacement VA Hospital at Travis Air Force Base; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek a replacement VA hospital, as it was promised, for the closed VA Martinez Hospital; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, Department of California, at the Department Executive Committee convened in regular session August 9-10, 1997 endorses the construction of the replacement VA Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Organization of The American Legion take whatever action necessary to convince the U.S. Congress and President of the United States of the need for the continued construction of the replacement hospital at Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield, California, as a joint venture with the David Grant United States Air Force Medical Center at Travis Air Force Base.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Mr. Chairman, will you yield for a special distinguished figure?

CHAIRMAN STELLAR: Mr. Commander, we will gladly yield.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Ladies and Gentlemen, at this time we honor, with the highest award of our organization, a great veteran, a great public servant and a great American.

The American Legion Distinguished Service Award is given to distinguished Americans in recognition of their outstanding service to the nation.

The recipient of the 1997 award is a combat veteran of World War II who consistently supports the mission of our country's military. He is an avid and ardent supporter of America's veterans.

Recently he accepted the role of National Co-Chair of the World War II Memorial national campaign. The goal: Build the World War II Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

There is no doubt this great American upholds the highest principles and objectives of our democratic society. His life-long dedication to America and Americans is unquestioned.

It is an honor to present the Distinguished Service Award to a great Legionnaire from Kansas, the Honorable Robert Dole.

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Award
The Honorable Robert J. Dole (KS)
Former United States Senator

Well, I finally won something.

And I would ask if you would take a check, but you would probably want to see my I.D.

But let me say that I'm very honored to be here, and I have been at the last two National Conventions.

I'm very proud to be a Legionnaire. My father was very proud to be a Legionnaire. In fact he's been gone now for about 20 years, but I still keep his Legion suit which he was very proud of.

This is a great organization. And it's a special honor to have been nominated by Commander Frank to receive The American Legion's Distinguished Service Medal.

Before I make just a few remarks, I want to say that the men and the women in the audience, because the women will be responsible for getting their husbands and sons to go see their doctor. When I leave here I'm going to go do a taping for The American Cancer Society, the Florida Division, on prostate cancer. And I might save somebody's life here today if you just follow my advice. I'm not a doctor but I have had prostate cancer, I have had the operation six years ago, and I'm in great shape because somebody told me about a PSA test, and somebody told me early detection could save your life.

So I would just say to the men here, particularly if there is any of that prostate cancer in the family, you ought to start getting that PSA test when you're forty. And in any event, no later than when you are fifty.

So I would urge all men here and their wives and friends to urge the men to get the PSA test. It may save your life. No question about it.

In receiving this award today, I join the ranks of distinguished Americans who have similarly been recognized since 1921, including my personal hero and fellow Kansan, General Dwight Eisenhower.

As freedom's heroes and America's Patriots, each of you should be proud of the special place you hold in history.

Each of you have answered America's call to fight, if necessary, for our freedom or to defend the peace in which we may have prospered for so many years.

Each of you knows the importance of wearing the uniform of your country and the importance of putting your country first; willing to bear any sacrifice to keep her free.

Whether you served in World War I or II, or in Korea on in Vietnam or Lebanon or Grenada, Panama or the Gulf, we will never forget our responsibility to those who have worn the uniform at home or abroad in service to our great nation.

The American Legion was founded as a wartime veterans organization, but its mission still holds true today. And thanks to a grassroots organization of staff and volunteers around the world, the Legion upholds the strong message of patriotism.

Its crucial voice is heard from the city halls of middle America to the halls of Congress.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank the Legionnaires for the work that they have done to help make the World War II Memorial a reality. And you will be hearing from General Herrling when I finish, and he will give you more details, but I would just touch on it, because I want to stress the role The American Legion has played.

This past May, the National Executive Committee passed a resolution to support the construction of the World War II Memorial, according to the design selected by the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the site that was dedicated on Veterans Day 1995 by President Clinton. Twenty-six of the nation's most respected veterans groups and The Daughters of the American Revolution have also pledged their support to the site and proposed design.

We were pleased that Commander Frank chose to make the first public testimony of his tenure before the Commission on Fine Arts in July. His words of support and profound insight helped build a more convincing argument for the World War II Memorial.

Several weeks later, Vice Commander Robert Bowen gave his valued perspective before the National Capitol Planning Commission.

The spirit and dedication of the Legion was also felt through the many other officials and members who were present at these hearings.

Just as the Legion has been united in the support of the memorial, the effort behind the war was a tremendous coming together of Americans from all walks of life. It was that collective spirit which made us victorious.

And never before in our nation's history had there been such unity of purpose and ultimate sacrifice in the name of protecting humanity against the tyranny of aggression and evil. And although at the time I am certain we did not fully understand it, we fought to establish a new place for America in the world. On countless battlefields our nation found its confidence in its mission, a mission of influence, a mission to uphold democratic ideals.

Not to be forgotten were the heroes on the home front. American men and women of every race and religion served in the factories and on the farm and its volunteers in hospitals and in countless other ways, for the diversity of our people, the commitment of our citizens and the power of its industrial strength, the United States became the arsenal of democracy.

For the rest of this century our county made good on its responsibility to serve as a beacon of hope and freedom for the world.

And World War II is not just chopped liver. It's one of those rare events in history that look even larger from the distance. For those of us who served, we did not see the big picture. We saw the small struggles. We saw the next hill or wherever we may have been. We did not hear the call of history, we heard the voice of friends; voices that still haunt and comfort the memory of so many veterans. Voices of confidence; voices of fear; voices that ended in a moment in a place far from home.

To this generation we owe a debt. We pay it with a pledge to preserve that memory against the tide of time. And I'm very honored to be the volunteer co-chairman of the effort to raise a hundred million dollars so that World War II, and more importantly those who served in World War II at home and abroad, and in the fields and in factories will never be forgotten in the United States of America and around the world.

And I would just conclude by saying as long as there are individuals like you to serve as living role models and educate future generations of Americans in developing their understanding of the important legacy of freedom and democracy, the memory will last forever.

Again, my deepest thanks for this award, and the opportunity to be here today. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: As members of The American Legion we look forward to the leadership Bob Dole brings to the World War II Memorial Project. He is a man who knows how to build consensus, and bridge gaps to achieve an objective.

Our next guest also has a significant interest in the World War II Memorial Project. He is the Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

He is a retired United States Army Major General, having served our nation for more than 35 years in uniform. He served two tours in Vietnam. Among his many decorations are the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Air Medal.

Please welcome Major General Herrling, United States Army retired.

Address: Major General John P. Herrling, USA (Ret.)
Secretary, The American Battle Monuments Commission

It's a privilege and a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon. And it was a real pleasure to see Senator Bob Dole receive The American Legion Distinguished Service Award. I can think of no other American who better embodies the values of this country than Bob Dole. His is a life of selfless service, sacrifice, and a true commitment to the American spirit and American values. And I congratulate the selection committee on awarding him this very prestigious award.

My purpose today is to brief you on the status of the World War II Memorial, a memorial to honor the service men and women who served in World War II and to all those on the home front who sacrificed to defend freedom and democracy.

I'm the Secretary of the Battle Monuments Commission, a federal agency that was founded in 1923. We are also the agency who is responsible for erecting the World War II Memorial. But the agency's history goes much beyond that.

The American Battle Monuments Commission has the responsibility for the care and maintenance of 24 memorial cemeteries, all of which are overseas. There are twenty in Europe, one in North Africa, one in Manila, one in Mexico City and one in Panama. In these 24 cemeteries rest in honor the remains of 130,000 U.S. Service men and women who died in the defense of our country. Approximately 91,000 of them are in World War II cemeteries.

The American Battle Monuments Commission is also responsible for the care and maintenance of 27 federal memorials. Most of those are also overseas. Together these memorials, cemeteries and monuments are among the most beautiful and well-maintained in the world. Approximately nine million people visited our cemeteries and memorials last year. Mostly non-Americans.

So I would like to make a simple request of you this afternoon. If you are traveling overseas, check to see if there's an American cemetery along your travels. A visit to one of our cemeteries is not only inspirational, but it is a moving and emotional experience that you will not soon forget. The beauty of the architecture and the landscaping and the endless rows of crosses and Stars of David will fill you with both pride and sorrow. And the stark realization will be brought home once again that freedom isn't free, it's paid for with young lives and with national treasure.

So if you have the opportunity, please visit one of our nation's overseas military cemeteries.

Now I would like to spend the next few minutes updating you on the World War II Memorial and The American Legion's active involvement in this important national project.

I want to personally thank your National Commander, Joe Frank, for coming to Washington this past July and testifying before the Commission on Fine Arts, one of the approving bodies for the memorial. Joe Frank's presentation at the hearing was hard-hitting and convincing. And he made it very clear to the chairman and the members of that commission the importance of the World War II Memorial to Americans across this country.

In his remarks your National Commander said, "The American Legion's National Executive Committee studied the plans for the World War II Memorial in May of this year. The NEC, acting on behalf of three million men and women of The American Legion, unanimously approved a resolution committing The American Legion's support for the proposed design and the location at the Rainbow Pool.

"My appearance here today," he said, "is based on that resolution."

Later he went on to say, "Mr. Chairman, as we approach the end of this century, it's appropriate that we leave for the generations that follow, the clear reminder of the contributions made during World War II by your parents and grandparents. They were giants, and we stand on their shoulders. For all they have done, the World War II generation has earned a spot smack dab in the hearts of all Americans. This memorial needs to be smack dab in the heart of our nation's capital."

The commission was moved by his remarks, and at the end of the day they reaffirmed the Rainbow Pool site for the memorial, along with requesting changes to the design concept.

When it counted, your National Commands was there with a strong clear voice, and an undeniable message. Joe, thank you for that great support.

One week later, Mr. Bob Bowen, your National Vice Commander from Virginia appeared before the National Capitol Planning Commission, the other Washington agency that must prove both the site and the design for the memorials.

As Joe Frank had done a week earlier, Bob Bowen let the commission know that the National leadership of The American Legion, and its membership across this country strongly supported the World War II Memorial site and design. Again, the message was strong and clear. He said, "The World War II veterans and those supporting on the home front, deserve the finest memorial that we can design located in the very heart of this nation's capital."

And throughout this process, John Sommer and Phil Budahn from The American Legion's Washington Office, worked with me and my staff to orchestrate The American Legion's support of the World War II Memorial. John and Phil, thanks for all the great behind-the-scenes work.

I can't tell you how important Joe Frank's and Bob Bowen's testimony was at those two hearings. For there are those in Washington D.C. who don't agree that the World War II Memorial should occupy one of the most important sites in the nation's capital. A site located between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial.

There are those who strongly disagree with the design concept for the memorial. These people have a right to their views, but it is heartening to see that the real support for the memorial is coming from Americans across the country, and The American Legion is out front leading the way.

So where are we today? The answer is one: We have the best site in Washington on which to build the memorial. And two, we are back to the drawing board with the design concept. We are not back to square one, but we will have to make some major modifications to the design. This is not unusual for memorials or monuments in Washington, D.C.. They all go through the same degree of scrutiny and modification. Henry Bacon's original design concept for the Lincoln Memorial was rejected. He went back to the drawing board and what emerged was a better design, the Lincoln Memorial that we know today.

Now, the American Battle Monuments Commission will go back to the drawing boards and sometime this fall we will bring a revised design concept to both the Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capitol Planning Commission. It will be a better design than we have today, and we will get it approved.

In the meantime, we will continue our fund-raising efforts to raise the money to build the memorial.

And we were fortunate to get Senator Bob Dole to chair our fund-raising campaign, and he will be joined by Mr. Herman Harrington, the Chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission as The American Legion's representative to the national campaign.

Let me summarize by saying, The American Battle Monuments Commission is fully committed to the World War II Memorial, and is working hard to get the memorial built before too much more time goes by.

We will continue to need The American Legion's support. You can help by writing your Senators and Congressional Representatives, reminding them that this country owes a great debt to the World War II generation, and you want their support for this memorial.

At the state and local level, you can encourage your governor and members of the legislature to pass special resolutions supporting the World War II Memorial.

Finally I would ask each of you when you return home, to communicate to your communities the importance of this memorial, and its legacies and lessons for future generations of Americans.

The World War II memorial is not just for Washington, D.C., it's a memorial for the entire country. And when it's all said and done, this battle will not be won in Washington, D.C., it will be won as it always is, by the voices of the people in the cities and the farm communities across this country.

We need you to join in that strong voice. And in doing so, you will be joining Senator Bob Dole and millions of fellow veterans in every state across America, and you will be joining former Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan and Bush, who, in a letter, asked Americans to support a memorial which, "Will inspire future generations to carry on the legacy of those Americans who stepped forward when their country needed."

With the help and the support of The American Legion and other veterans groups, we will build this memorial. And it will be a lasting tribute to an extaordinary generation of Americans, a tribute long overdue.

Please help us in any way you can. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: General Herrling, thanks for updating our delegates on the progress of building this long-overdue memorial.

Our next speaker has represented The American Legion on many occasions in issues involving World War II. You know of his constant efforts to ensure the Smithsonian Institution displayed the Enola Gay in an honest historical context, not distorted context that fit some politically correct agenda.

He once again is serving as your representative to the World War Memorial Advisory Committee. He is the Chairman of the Internal Affairs Commission and a proud Legionnaire from New York. Please welcome Herm Harrington.

Address: Herman G. Harrington
Chairman, Internal Affairs Commission and
Member, World War II Memorial Advisory Committee

Mr. Commander, ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you this afternoon about the World War II Memorial Fund. As your representative to the Campaign Cabinet for the World War II Memorial Project, I am encouraged by the support and direction of Senator Dole and Fred Smith as the co-chairs of the project.

You have heard from Senator Dole and Major General (Retired) John Herrling on the up-to-date project information. I want to report that The American Legion will begin our fund-raising the week of September 8th. We will be making a mailing to 450,000 World War II, Korean, and Vietnam Legion members. After this initial mailing and as the campaign develops, we will increase our mailings.

We have an agreement with the American Battle Monuments Commission to flag all Legion donors who have already donated so that future Legion mailouts will not be sent to them. All Legion donations should be mailed to: The American Legion, PO Box 781138, Indianapolis, IN 46278-8138. I encourage you to visit the American Battle Monument Commission display in the Exhibit Hall to pick up a brochure which also contains the address I just mentioned and as posted on the screen.

It is appropriate that we leave for generations to follow, a clear reminder of the contributions and sacrifice made during World War II. Veterans, I encourage your support.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Ladies and gentlemen, you have just heard a remarkable update on the World War II Memorial project. Now it is our job to get all of our

members to write and support the construction of this very important memorial to preserve the contributions of perhaps the greatest generation of Americans.

Chairman Stellar, would you please continue with your report?

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN STELLAR: Thank you, Mr. Commander. We go on to Resolution No. 216.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (cont.)
Chester F. Stellar (OH), Chairman

Resolution No. 216: American Legion Policy on the State Veterans' Home Program
Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans' Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of Title 38, United States Code, VA is authorized to make payments to states to assist in the construction and maintenance of State Veterans' Homes; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are 89 State Veterans' Home facilities in 42 states with over 23,000 beds providing nursing home, hospital, and domiciliary care; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans' Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to VA's own nursing, hospital, and domiciliary programs; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes the Grants for Construction of State Veterans Homes Program which provides funding for 65% of the total cost of building new veterans' homes; and

WHEREAS, VA has not been able to keep pace with the number of Grant applications and currently, there is over $228 million in unfunded new construction projects pending; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes per diem payments for veterans residing in State Homes which covers only about twenty percent of the cost of domiciliary care and twenty five percent of the cost of nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, Under Title 38, United States Code, veterans who are paid increased compensation or pension at the aid and attendance (A&A) rate while a patient in a State Veterans' Home are entitled to receive drugs and medication from VA; and

WHEREAS, VA is seeking to impose restrictions on this program whereby it will pay either the authorized nursing care per diem rate or provide drugs and medication to eligible state home A&A veterans; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the growing long-term health care needs of older veterans, it is essential that the State Home Program be maintained as a viable and important alternative health care provider to the VA system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion support an increase in the amount of per diem authorized for nursing home and domiciliary care provided to veterans in State Veterans' Homes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the continued provision of prescription drugs and medications to state homes A & A patients and the payment of per diem to State Veterans' Homes; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress be urged to fully fund State Veterans' Homes Construction Grant category one projects for FY 1998 which will provide an additional 1,500 long-term care beds; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the President and the Congress be urged to pledge their full support to the State Veterans' Home Program as a cost-effective supplement to the VA health care system; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Association of State Veterans' Homes and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs be urged to support mutual planning efforts and enhanced sharing agreements between VA medical facilities and State Veterans' Homes.

Resolution No. 217: The American Legion Policy on VA Tobacco-Related Disability Claims

Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, For the last 78 years, The American Legion has fought to ensure that disabled veterans receive benefits and medical care for injuries and diseases related to their period of military service; and

WHEREAS, This would include certain diseases which develop after service which could be related to smoking during service; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, agencies of the Federal Government, most notably, the Armed Services and VA, took little or no action to discourage the use of tobacco products by making them readily accessible and affordable (in some instances they were free) to military personnel and veterans, including patients in military and VA hospitals; and

WHEREAS, DOD has only recently established physical fitness policies to discourage tobacco use by active duty and reserve personnel; and

WHEREAS, Although the Federal Government has required a health warning on cigarette packages since the late 1960s, claims for disability and death due to smoking were generally denied by the courts and the VA due to the lack of scientific evidence of a relationship between tobacco use and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, Within the last several years, there has been increasing scientific data establishing a causal link between smoking and an increased prevalence of certain diseases among those who used tobacco products; and

WHEREAS, There have been ongoing revelations in the course of recent litigation against the tobacco companies about the addictive effects of nicotine and its consequences; and

WHEREAS, In 1993 the VA General Counsel issued a precedent opinion which held that a claim for service connection for a smoking-related disability or death was legally possible; and

WHEREAS, From 1993 until May 1997 smoking-related claims were held in abeyance while VA officials debated the practical and budgetary implications of this change in VA policy; and

WHEREAS, The specific evidence requirements for a smoking-related claim were finally set forth in a May 13, 1997 VA General Counsel precedent opinion:

1. a currently diagnosed medical condition, such as emphysema, chronic obstructive lung disease, lung cancer, etc.; and
2. a medical opinion which states this condition is related to tobacco use; and

3. a medical opinion which also states that the veteran was dependent on nicotine; and
4. the veteran states that he or she smoked during service.

WHEREAS, Providing these requirements are met, VA would grant direct service connection for nicotine dependence and service connection on a secondary basis for a subsequently developing tobacco-related disease; and

WHEREAS, VA has estimated there may be some 2.5 million smoking-related claims filed over the next 10 years which would have a devastating impact on the VA budget, in particular, and the Federal budget, as a whole; and

WHEREAS, To avoid this type of disaster, legislation has been introduced at VA's request to preclude the grant of service connection of any disability or death which is due in whole or in part to tobacco use as well as entitlement to VA medical care for such disability; and

WHEREAS, This bar to benefits and medical care would include those veterans with service-connected psychiatric conditions for whom smoking is an integral part of their disability picture and who may develop a smoking-related disability; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Government has not assumed a leadership role in the current settlement involving the states and the tobacco companies; and

WHEREAS, Any such settlement must also address the issue of compensation and medical care for veterans who were disabled or who died as a result of the use of tobacco products which began during military service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion oppose any legislative or administrative proposal to preclude the grant of service connection for disability or death related to tobacco which began during an individual's period of military service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA and the Congress to undertake a comprehensive settlement with the tobacco companies that will ensure that adequate funds on an ongoing basis are made available to pay compensation and provide medical care for those veterans who develop or die from a tobacco-related disease linked to their period of military service.

Resolution No. 218: Support the Repeal of Section 1555 of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA)

Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, A provision inserted into the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) authorized the General Services Administration to permit state and local entities to purchase drugs at Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) prices; and

WHEREAS, The provision, known as "Cooperative Purchasing," was included in FASA although no hearings were ever held on the provision, nor were any of the affected industries aware of the provision until after passage of the bill; and

WHEREAS, Congress has since passed three moratoriums on the program, and the most recent moratorium ends in December 1997; and

WHEREAS, The Senate Appropriations Committee passed a repeal of Section 1555 in the Fiscal Year 1998 Senate Treasury Postal Appropriations Bill, Section 410 of S. 1023; and

WHEREAS, The House Appropriations Committee has also included a repeal provision in the Fiscal Year 1998 House Treasury Postal Appropriations Bill, Section 413 of H.R. 2378; and

WHEREAS, The Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee has indicated he will strike the approved repeal provisions on the House floor during the FY House/Senate Appropriations Committee Conference; and

WHEREAS, Extending Federal Government pricing to state and local governments will expand the federal bureaucracy, interfere with free market competition, and allow the Federal Government to establish prices for state and local markets; and

WHEREAS, Expanding FSS prices to state and local entities will raise costs for drugs to the Department of Veterans Affairs by an estimated $150 million annually and cause the Department to deny care to approximately 30,000 veterans per year; and

WHEREAS, In a time of decreasing appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs, any expansion of low cost drugs will significantly raise VA drug prices and harm veteran beneficiaries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion oppose any change to the current statutes that permit the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive cash discounts for the purchase of bulk pharmaceuticals; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all increases in drug costs to the Department of Veterans Affairs by the failure to repeal Section 1555 of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) be compensated with increased federal appropriations.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans' Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 36 (NE) 1997 NC: **Insure VA Provide Quality Medical Care Through Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation**

Resolution No. 59 (CA) 1997 NC: **Seek Veterans Cemetery In San Diego, California Area**

Resolution No. 76 (PA) 1997 NC: **Oppose The Method Of Allocation Of Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation Funds**

Resolution No. 81 (IL) 1997 NC: **Eliminate Co-Payment Of Prescription Drugs To Former POWs**

Resolution No. 88 (IL) 1997 NC: **VA - DOD Disability Rating Procedures**

Resolution No. 136 (FL) 1997 NC: **Support A Policy That Would Allow Qualified VAMC Police Officers To Carry Firearms**

Resolution No. 138 (WY) 1997 NC: **Department Service Officers Liability Insurance**

Resolution No. 194 (CA) 1997 NC: **VA Provide A Full Spectrum Of Information To Service Officers**

Resolution No. 195 (CA) 1997 NC: **Department Service Officers Liability Insurance**

Resolution No.196 (IA) 1997 NC: **Department Service Officers Liability Insurance**

Resolution No. 207 (NY) 1997 NC: **Establish National Cemetery In Richmond County, New York**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 11 (MA) 1997 NC: **Restore Burial And Plot Allowance**

Resolution No. 21 (ND) 1997 NC: **American Legion Policy On DVA-NSLI Insurance**

Resolution No. 22 (ND) 1997 NC: **Oppose Centralization Of Claims Processing Centers**
Resolution No. 23 (ND) 1997 NC: **Seek Adequate Funding And Personnel For VA Medical Program**
Resolution No. 26 (CO) 1997 NC: **Access To Care For Non-Insured Veterans**
Resolution No. 65 (MT) 1997 NC: **VA Provide Health Care To All Veterans Without Regard To Income**
Resolution No. 82 (IL) 1997 NC: **Seek Equal Benefits For Filipino Veterans**
Resolution No. 93 (MD) 1997 NC: **Protect Disability Rating After Ten Years**
Resolution No. 94 (MD) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress For Support Of State Veterans Homes**
Resolution No. 96 (MD) 1997 NC: **Enhanced Educational And Training Readjustment Program For Service Persons (G.I. Bill)**
Resolution No. 120 (MD) 1997 NC: **Provide Dependent Children Of Veterans In Nursing Homes Greater Pension For Incidental Expenses**
Resolution No. 125 (TX) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress To Support State Veterans' Homes Pension For Incidental Purposes**
Resolution No. 133 (PI) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress To Recognize The Equal Status Of Filipinos As Veterans**
Resolution No. 148 (MN) 1997 NC: **Support Equitable Access To Veterans Through Managed Care Program**
Resolution No. 149 (MN) 1997 NC: **Support Full Funding For VA Medical Care Programs**
Resolution No. 155 (KS) 1997 NC: **Support Fourth Mission Of VA**
Resolution No. 162 (KS) 1997 NC: **Expand Burial And Plot Allowance For Certain Veterans**
Resolution No. 164 (NH) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress To Support State Veterans Homes**
Resolution No. 169 (VA) 1997 NC: **Contingency Funding For The Department of Veterans Affairs**
Resolution No. 175 (ID) 1997 NC: **Urge Congress To Support State Veterans Homes**
Resolution No. 200 (NY) 1997 NC: **Allow Third-Party Reimbursement From Medicare Funds For VA Services**

Rejected

Resolution No. 75 (PA) 1997 NC: **Oppose The Dismissal Of Dr. Leisure From Lebanon, PA VAMC**
Resolution No. 126 (TX) 1997 NC: **Rename VAMCs To Include Medical Centers' Research Mission (VAM&RC)**
Resolution No. 146 (OH) 1997 NC: **Merchant Marine Fairness Act**
Resolution No. 154 (NJ) 1997 NC: **VA Provide Bronze Gravemarkers For Veterans**
Resolution No. 197 (TN) 1997 NC: **Provide For The Placement Of A VA Marker On A Marked Or Unmarked Grave**

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN STELLAR: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the Department of Ohio, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

...Motion seconded.

Is there any discussion? All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. Ayes have it. Thank you. The Report of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted. Thank you, Chet.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: With the adoption of the Veterans Affairs and 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 who best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 1996-1997 program year, the trophy is awarded to the Department of Florida.

Commander Bill. It gives me great pleasure and honor to present to you this award, and let me read it. The award is presented to Florida.

"This certificate is symbolic of the trophy awarded annually to the department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, September 3, 1997."

Congratulations, my friend.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Chair recognizes Herman Harrington of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Section on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II
(of Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs)
Herman G. Harrington, Chairman

Forty-five members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, considered twenty-four resolutions, twenty-three of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and one which was created by the Committee. Of these, one was approved, one was approved as amended, two were consolidated and approved, three were consolidated into one which was amended and approved, ten were referred, four were received and recorded, and three were rejected.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 215: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Credentials and Internal Affairs
Submitted by: Credentials and Internal Affairs

WHEREAS, The 79th National Convention has been held in Orlando, Florida, September 2-4, 1997; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Orlando, Florida, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of Orlando, Florida; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2-4, 1997, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of

Florida, Governor Lawton Chiles; Mayor Glenda Hood; the city officials of Orlando, including the Fire Department; Police/Sheriffs Department; Florida Highway Patrol; and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 1997 National Convention Corporation of Florida, to local citizens and Legionnaires and especially to the National Convention Corporation Officers, Robert J. Proctor, President; Alan P. Hall, Vice President; Dyke Shannon, Secretary/Adjutant; Michael Speck, Treasurer; Robert L. Hamilton, General Counsel; Ray Weaver, Department Commander; and General members of the Board, Billy Anderson, Thomas Wiley, Helen Gardner, Kim Virgil, Larry Leudenburg, George Derrick, Roy Mahoney, Harry McDowell, Dennis Boland, Frank Reese, Leonard Pompilio, Norman Gorman, Fred L. Rich, Chuck Moreland, Larry Sheets, Joseph Hanratty, Thomas Kennan, Larry Strainge, Wayne Gray, Lieutenant Charles D. Williams (FHP), and Kevin Beary. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable Convention.

Resolution No. 163: Award Medal of Freedom to Harry W. Colmery
Origin: KS
Submitted by: Credentials and Internal Affairs
As Amended

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the "G. I. Bill" was written in long hand by Harry W. Colmery, the act had long been recognized as one of the most influential laws enacted in this century; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of this great nation owe a deep and lasting debt of gratitude to Harry W. Colmery for his ability to set down on paper a document which truly transformed their lives and gave them an opportunity to advance their status in life; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is fully aware of Harry W. Colmery's contribution as well as the fact that he has not had the recognition he so richly deserves for this meaningful service to all servicemen and women; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the President of the United States of America be asked to take such action as necessary that will ensure the posthumous award of the Medal of Freedom to Harry W. Colmery, Past National Commander of The American Legion and author of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the "G. I. Bill"; in recognition of his role in one of the most significant single pieces of legislation in the history of the United States.

Resolution No. 204: Audie Murphy Postal Stamp
Origin: NY
Submitted by: Credentials and Internal Affairs
Consolidated with No. 60 (CA)

WHEREAS, Audie Murphy was the most decorated soldier of World War II; and

WHEREAS, He was the recipient of thirty-two (32) awards; and

WHEREAS, He was wounded three times for which he received three Purple Heart awards; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States presented him with the country's highest award, the Medal of Honor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That it strongly urge the United States Postal Service to issue a commemorative stamp honoring the late Audie Murphy.

Resolution No. 147: American Legion Gender Neutral Usage
Origin: MN
As amended and consolidated with No. 4 (AK) and No. 66 (WI)

WHEREAS, Many women have served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Women veterans constitute a solid membership in The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, Women have held and hold office in The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That all references in American Legion literature, manuals, etc., as new editions are updated and printed, reflect The American Legion as a gender neutral organization.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 144 (OH) 1997 NC: **World War II Memorial**
Resolution No. 151 (NJ) 1997 NC: **World War II Memorial**
Resolution No. 191 (VT) 1997 NC: **Candidate Robert A. Bergeron for Office of National Vice Commander**
Resolution No. 192 (VT) 1997 NC: **Candidate Joseph F. Murphy for Office of National Vice Commander**

Referred to Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 80 (IL) 1997 NC: **Donations by Posts of the Medal of Honor Book**
Resolution No. 85 (IL) 1997 NC: **General Douglas MacArthur Statue**
Resolution No. 89 (IL) 1997 NC: **Eligibility Requirements for Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary**

Referred to Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 171 (VA) 1997 NC: **American Battle Monuments Commission Funding**
Resolution No. 202 (NY) 1997 NC: **POW/MIA Memorial Highways**

Referred to Standing Commission on National Convention

Resolution No. 25 (CO) 1997 NC: **Bid for Host of 2003 National Convention Be Denver, Colorado**

Referred to Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 190 (NC) 1997 NC: **Memorials for Veterans Whose Remains Were Not Recovered**

Referred to Standing Commission on Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee

Resolution No. 87 (IL) 1997 NC: **Clarification of the Empty Chair POW/MIA Ceremony**
Resolution No. 170 (VA) 1997 NC: **POW/MIA and Pledge of Allegiance Ceremonies**
Resolution No. 209 (FR) 1997 NC: **American Legion Service Cap—Ireland**

Rejected

Resolution No. 39 (UT) 1997 NC: **Enola Gay**
Resolution No. 73 (PA) 1997 NC: **Relations with Forty and Eight**
Resolution No. 210 (FR) 1997 NC: **Relations with Forty and Eight**

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried 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 Committee Chairman and 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).

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered delegate from the Department of New York, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

...Motion seconded.

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign. All opposed. I declare the motion carried, and the Report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs is adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Chairman Harrington, I understand you have a special report on the National Emergency Fund. I would like you to make that report at this time.

Special Report: National Emergency Fund
Herman G. Harrington (NY)

To date in 1997 over 1400 applications for grants for relief from disasters have been received by the National Emergency Fund. We have approved to date six times more grants than all of 1996. And the total dollars granted in this year, the eight months of this year total 1.4 million dollars.

In July, 1997, the National Emergency Fund was totally depleted. National Commander Joe Frank took action and secured a bridge funding in the amount of $400,000. Currently we have drawn $114,000 from this special funding.

Our number one priority is replenishment of the NEF to care for the needs of our members and our families and Posts. The video you are about to see shows how your money helps care for people during and after a natural disaster. Listen and watch what you are doing to help. Please run the tape.

...At this time the delegation viewed a video tape.

I think you have been shown very vividly what this American Legion family can do when one of its family members is put in harm's way.

But ladies and gentlemen, we have indeed a steep hill to climb to rebuild the National Emergency Fund.

Commander Frank, at this time I know of several special presentations to be made to the National Emergency Fund, and at this point I would like Mrs. Pat Reno and the representatives of the Southern Caucus, representatives of North Carolina and Pennsylvania and New York and Ohio to please come forward.

If there are any departments or individuals that I haven't mentioned, we invite you to come forward as well and make a contribution.

MRS. PAT RENO: In sorrow there is gratitude. Gratitude to Reno Raider Commanders for determining to deplete their treasury to share Dale's thoughts in caring for others. Herb O'Dell, present that check.

...At this time a check was presented to Commander Frank.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: As Pat said, this presentation was made on behalf of the Reno Raiders, and we are certainly happy to have her come to the podium to do this.

I need to look and see who's next, North Carolina or the Southern Caucus. Who's here from the Southern Caucus? George Derrick, very seldom is he second in line so I'm surprised I couldn't see you. George.

MR. GEORGE DERRICK, Florida: Commander, first, the Florida Convention Corporation held a little golf tournament Thursday morning. We didn't have the turnout we had hoped, but I have $500 from that for you.

And this morning at the Southern Block Breakfast, our Chairman, Mr. Stone, managed to encourage, without coercion, the members of the Southern Block to contribute around fifty-one hundred, and added four hundred out of the Southern Block Treasury, to make a donation of $5500.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: We next have a contribution from North Carolina.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER WALTER STANCIL, North Carolina: Ladies and gentlemen, I bring you greetings from the great state of North Carolina. We are proud to be part of the Southern Block. We are also proud to present this check of $5,000 from the great citizens of North Carolina, to help our brothers and sisters in need. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: From the Department of New York, the Department Commander Bob Neville and the Chairman of the Delegation, Ron Bertram, have a presentation to make.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ROBERT NEVILLE, New York: The men and women of the Department of New York thank you, Commander Frank, and the National Organization for opening up our wallets and helping those people in need during the recent disasters.

At this time it's my honor to present to you from the Department of New York, a check in the amount of $20,000.

MR. RON BERTRAM, New York: Commander, on top of that $20,000 you received from New York, I have another check here for $2,000, and this is money that was left over from my campaign running for Commander of New York.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: From the Department of Ohio, Darrell Bishop, Past Commander

PAST DEPARTMENT COMMANDER DARRELL BISHOP, Ohio: Commander Frank, distinguished ladies and gentlemen at the podium, Legionnaires and guests.

Earlier this year, Ohio was devastated by the rising flood waters of the Ohio River. The veterans of that area were stunned. With the help of the National Organization, and the National Emergency Fund, those veterans and families received over $108,000.

On behalf of those veterans and families, and on behalf of the one hundred and fifty-eight thousand plus members of the Department of Ohio, I would like to present you this check for $20,000.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: These presentations are coming great and beyond our expectations, and I would like to ask the representatives of the Department of Pennsylvania to come forward now. Louise Chase, Department Commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER LOUISE CHASE, Pennsylvania: National Commander Frank, the caring veterans and Legionnaires from the great Department of Pennsylvania have given me the privilege of contributing to the National Emergency Fund, $12,553.00.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: From the great Department of Washington, Roy Taylor, Department Commander.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER ROY TAYLOR, Washington: Thank you. Commander, as General Brady said earlier, for love to be continued it must be expressed. As you recall at our Membership Conference in Indianapolis, we presented you with a check for $10,000 for the National Emergency Fund.

Today the delegates here from the State of Washington, made personal contributions in their name, members of Department Washington, for the Citizens Flag Alliance. Cash money. I don't know how much is there

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: From the Department of Oklahoma, Bill Finch.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER WILLIAM FINCH, Oklahoma: Thank you. Commander, on behalf of the Department of Oklahoma, I would like to present you a check for $5,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: From the Department of Puerto Rico, please bear with me on this, 'Paco' Santiago and Juan Cintron have a presentation to make.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER FRANCISCO SANTIAGO, Puerto Rico: Mr. Commander, when I came here for the Membership Conference, I made a pledge to you, and I said that today, my two months that I been Commander of Puerto Rico I said I was going to bring some money here.

On behalf of our Department, our delegation, from the shiny sands of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, I present you with a check for $2,000 and next year it will be triple.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: Last and certainly not least, an appropriately named Legionnaire from Idaho, Cash Arrasmith.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER CASH ARRASMITH, Idaho: Mr. Commander, on behalf the State of Idaho, we were recipients of some of that money in the winter. It isn't much, but it's a start. I want to give you a check for $500. More to come.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: And you're right, I thought we were completed, but from the Department of Alaska, Stan Nelson.

MR. STANLEY NELSON, Alaska: You take cash, Commander?

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I'll take anything you got.

MR. NELSON, Alaska: We took up a collection in our small delegation here, and here's $300.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: I think we have one more. Our National Adjutant has something in his hands. I'm not sure what it is.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, this is a donation from the Department of California from a gentleman Legionnaire and his wife, and they wish to remain anonymous, and it's for the Citizens Flag Alliance in the amount of $500.

CHAIRMAN HARRINGTON: Mr. Commander, I think that concludes the presentations.

And just as a point of personal privilege, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to have served with you this year.

You certainly have been an inspiration to me personally, and I'm sure to all of you here. Thank you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you very much. Thank you, Herman.

Thanks for those donations. I trust that every department will continue to stress the need to keep the National Emergency Fund strong. It is another way to take care of our own.

And our National Adjutant just handed me the total from today. Wow, a whopping $73,483.09. Isn't that great? Maybe by close of business tomorrow we can hit 100,000. What do you think?

The Chair recognizes Elmer Fuhrhup of Ohio, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children & Youth, for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Elmer Fuhrhop (OH), Chairman

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 31, 1997, in Plaza H, Convention Level of the Peabody Orlando. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio as Chairman and delegate Herbert Petit Jr. of Louisiana as Secretary. There were 51 members of the Committee present.

There were no resolutions to be considered by the Convention Committee on Children and Youth.

Our new alliance with the Children's Miracle Network underscores The American Legion's mission and reputation as a caretaker of America's children—its children. This dedication to our nation's young people parallels the Children's Miracle Network's own mission. I encourage Legionnaires to support CMN affiliated hospitals in their efforts to provide quality health care for all children. This is not only the right thing to do, it also fosters goodwill toward The American Legion. Support of the Children's Miracle Network provides members of The American Legion another way to showcase our service to America.

The American Legion has enjoyed a long and fruitful working relationship with the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Their Disabled Youth Leadership Forums are now ready for replication across the nation. Our Departments are beginning to work with their respective State Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities to assist in the establishment of Youth Leadership Forums within their states. I urge local Posts to encourage and sponsor disabled young people from their respective communities to participate in these Disabled Youth Leadership Forums. By doing so these young people will enhance their natural leadership skills, learn that people with specific disabilities are engaged in careers that they would not have thought possible and learn to appreciate and understand other disabilities.

As you are aware, The American Legion participated in the Presidents' Summit for America's Future earlier this year. The Legion believes all children deserve a home, health, education and opportunity. Toward that end, The American Legion's Commitment to Action stated that we will establish over 10,000 Safe Kids Communities in our nation's towns and cities within the next seven years. One of the best and easiest ways for that to occur is to provide child identification and personal safety awareness to our country's young people. I urge you and the members of your Posts to take advantage of this noble effort to protect children from crime. Obtain and distribute the special American Legion Edition of the McGruff Safe Kids I.D. Kit in your community.

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.

As a duly elected and authorized delegate from the Department of Ohio, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign.

All opposed?

I declare the motion carried and the report of Children and Youth adopted.

In addition to the National Emergency Fund, donations and Citizens Flag Alliance donations have accumulated to 27,524.04 which does not include the booth donations. Isn't that great?

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation is a tremendous asset to local posts and the veterans we serve. One of the active Legionnaires who brought the Child Welfare Foundation to life was Garland Murphy.

Now it's time to present the award named in his honor. The Garland Murphy award is presented to the Department that has the most participation in the Foundation during the past year. This year the winning Department raised $34,054 to help The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation in its work. And the winning Department is...the Department of Florida.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure for me to present this special plaque to Department Commander Bill Seemann, Department of Florida Child Welfare Chair Dennis Boland and Department Adjutant Dyke Shannon. And the plaque reads: "The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. award presented by the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Florida for the program year 1996-1997. 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 the spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants."

It is signed by Udie Grant, the president of the Child Welfare Foundation, and by Terry Woodburn, the Foundation's executive secretary. Congratulations.

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER BILL SEEMANN, Florida: Commander Joe, we thank you for this presentation and on behalf of Dennis Boland and all the many people in the great Department of Florida we consider this an honor and a privilege, thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: You're welcome.

At this time I will recognize Udie Grant from the Department of Kansas.

MR. UDIE GRANT, Kansas: Thank you, Commander Joe Frank, national officers, delegates to the Convention. The American Child Welfare Foundation has had an extremely good year this year. In fact we've had a first. It's the first time that the three major contributors to the foundation have reached a plateau. A plateau of $100,000 each. The American Legion has reached a plateau of $114,000. The American Legion Auxiliary has reached a plateau of $138,000. The Sons of The American Legion have reached a plateau of $148,000.

Now, we are wanting to honor any and all organizations who reach a plateau of $100,000. So we have a special presentation that we want to make to the Commander of The American Legion, Joe Frank, at this time. It's a diamond pin of the Child Welfare Foundation. It's our new pin. And at this time, Commander Joe, I would like to present to you this pin.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you very much. You'd die for that kind of gift.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Chair now recognizes Alan Lance of Idaho, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Foreign Relations for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Commission on Foreign Relations
Alan G. Lance,Sr. (ID), Chairman

At 8:30 a.m., Sunday, August 31, 1997, forty-seven Delegates and Alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in Plaza C, Convention Level of The Peabody Orlando Hotel in Orlando, Florida. Mr. Alan G. Lance, Sr. (Idaho) was elected Chairman and Mr. Melvin Simon (Vermont) was appointed Secretary. The Chairman and the Secretary were authorized to sign and deliver the report on the Committee's behalf.

Following this initial meeting, five Ad Hoc Administrative Convention Subcommittees met in separate locations to consider the resolutions which had been assigned to them. The following were appointed Chairmen:

General Foreign Policy:	Chairman A. J. Forestiere (Arkansas)
European Affairs:	Chairman David A. Korth (Wisconsin)
Far Eastern Affairs:	Chairman John Mullen (North Dakota)
Inter-American Affairs:	Chairman George D. Triplett (Mexico)
MiddleEastern & African Affairs:	Chairman Vinton R. Guy (Colorado)

At 10:30 a.m. Sunday, August 31, 1997, 47 Delegates and Alternates met in the Plaza C room for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. 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. Reports of all Convention Ad Hoc Administrative Subcommittees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 21 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations and no resolutions were originated by the Committee.

The following Ad Hoc Subcommittee reports contain resolutions which will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide an effective and viable foreign relations program of The American Legion. That 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.

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on General Foreign Policy
A.J. Forestiere (AR), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 201: Flying the POW/MIA Flag
Origin: NY
Submitted by: Foreign Relations
As Amended

WHEREAS, The United States has fought in many wars and thousands of Americans who served in those wars were captured by the enemy or became listed as missing in action; and

WHEREAS, Many of these Americans are still missing and unaccounted for, and the uncertainty surrounding their fates has caused their families to suffer tragic and continuing hardships; and

WHEREAS, As a symbol of this nation's concern and commitment to accounting as fully as possible for all Americans still prisoner, missing or unaccounted for, Congress has officially recognized the National League of Families POW/MIA flag and seeks further to honor those Americans who, in future wars, may be captured or listed as missing or unaccounted for; and

WHEREAS, The American people observe and honor with appropriate ceremony and activity the third Friday of September each year as National POW/MIA recognition day; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion does hereby adopt this resolution to fully support bipartisan legislation permitting and authorizing the flying of the POW/MIA flag at Federal facilities and installations, including U.S. Post Offices.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 98 (MD) 1997 NC: **America's Future**
Resolution No. 99 (MD) 1997 NC: **Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy**
Resolution No. 100 (MD) 1997 NC: **Priority POW/MIA Actions**
Resolution No. 203 (NY) 1997 NC: **Missing Service Personnel**
Resolution No. 205 (NY) 1997 NC: **Missing Service Personnel**

Rejected

Resolution No. 34 (CO) 1997 NC: **Korean War POWs**

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on European Affairs
David A. Korth (WI), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 102: Policy on NATO Expansion
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized that European security and preservation of the NATO Alliance are critical to America's vital national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization of 1949 anticipated the addition of member states which has included Greece and Turkey in 1952, the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion wholeheartedly supported the 1994 U.S.-sponsored initiative known as the Partnership for Peace (PFP) Program, including the concept of extending membership in NATO to Central and Eastern European nations on a case by case basis consistent with their commitments and participation in the PFP; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that expanding NATO will: 1) make a stronger alliance; 2) protect against another European war; 3) defend against old European ethnic and border disputes; and 4) help to build an undivided Europe; and

WHEREAS, On April 22, 1997, the Senate created a bipartisan NATO Observer Group to work cooperatively with the Administration throughout the NATO Enlargement process; and

WHEREAS, Russia will be consulted on NATO Alliance issues but will have no veto authority or ability to delay entry into the Alliance for any country; and

WHEREAS, On May 27, 1997 NATO and Russia signed a "Founding Act" to create a more constructive relationship between the alliance and its former adversary; and

WHEREAS, At the Madrid NATO Summit meeting in July 1997, the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization extended invitations to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to join the Alliance and formal accession talks are now underway with those states; and

WHEREAS, The first nations which received invitations to join NATO will not be the last and the Partnership For Peace Program will be enhanced for those nations not initially invited into the Alliance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges the President to continue to consult fully with the Congress throughout the process of NATO Expansion; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Senate to conduct full and thorough hearings on the proposals to expand NATO with the entry of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic and at a later time other invited nations, and to resolve the issues and concerns which will address the implications of expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in a bipartisan manner; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That following this public debate, The American Legion urges the United States Senate to provide its advice and consent to the addition of these states to the NATO Alliance in a prompt and timely manner.

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Far Eastern Affairs
John Mullen (ND), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 97: Policy on North Korea
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Foreign Relations
As Amended

WHEREAS, United States Military Forces during the early 1950s fought alongside other United Nations forces to repel the invasion of South Korea by North Korean forces; and

WHEREAS, At the conclusion of the aforesaid hostilities, an armistice was executed to establish a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) which was not to be occupied by either North or South Korea; and

WHEREAS, North Korea has publicly announced it will not honor the armistice, and in fact, has moved its troops in and out of the DMZ without regard to United Nations forces; and

WHEREAS, North Korea has been seeking humanitarian aid from the United States and in response to its requests, the United States, Japan, South Korea and other nations have extended considerable food aid to alleviate the mass hunger and starvation in that nation; and

WHEREAS, The United States and North Korea, beginning in 1996, have engaged in four rounds of bilateral discussions regarding North Korea's public pledges to cooperate in a humanitarian spirit on finding the remains of U.S. servicemen killed during the Korean War; and

WHEREAS, These talks have most recently centered on discussion of: 1) reports of live Americans living in North Korea, 2) resumption of military joint recovery operations to locate and identify American MIAs, and 3) initiation of joint archival reviews to obtain information about U.S. POWs and MIAs and some hoped for progress has now been made; and

WHEREAS, Recently, agreement was reached to conduct three joint recovery operations in 1997 and the DPRK has also granted the United States access to its military archives; and

WHEREAS, The Administration has authorized the shipment of two light-water nuclear reactors, fuel oil, and other supplies and equipment in the amount of some $35 billion with additional aid to follow, as part of the agreement to de-nuclearize the Korean Peninsula; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion believes that the actions of North Korea in abrogating the armistice establishing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea should continue to be universally condemned; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes the U.S. Government should continue to make it clear to North Korea that cooperation on the recovery of missing American servicemembers from the Korean War must continue until all missing Americans from that war are accounted for; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion is not opposed to the furnishing of humanitarian food aid to North Korea unless that government reverts to flaunting established agreements or unless it fails to cooperate fully on accounting for missing American servicemembers from the Korean War.

Resolution No. 103: Policy on the People's Republic of China
Origin: MD
Submitted by: Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The protection of the vital national interests of the United States depends on maintaining our security alliances and a balance of power in East Asia; and

WHEREAS, China is developing large and capable military forces with its long-term goal of becoming the leading power in East Asia; and

WHEREAS, China has applied for membership in the World Trade Organization which will greatly benefit its ambition to become a great power; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has become increasingly concerned about the U.S. trade deficit with China and the Chinese military build-up resulting from these trade profits; and

WHEREAS, The United States has important areas of common interest with China as well as several areas of concern, including nonproliferation of nuclear weapons technology, free and open trade, protection of human rights and treatment of Chinese citizens, preservation of civil liberties during the reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese control, autonomy for Tibet, prevention of war on the Korean peninsula, and the security of Taiwan; and

WHEREAS, The communist government of the Peoples Republic of China has serious reasons to be concerned about reports of illegal political campaign contributions during the 1996 U.S. elections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges both the President and the Congress to strongly urge the leaders of the People's Republic of China to define their interests in responsible ways which: 1) do not threaten the balance of power in Asia, 2) which prevent the spread of technology for producing weapons of mass destruction, and 3) which are compatible with our interests; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the President and the U.S. Congress to cooperate fully with each other on the ongoing campaign finance investigations to determine if China attempted to illegally influence U.S. foreign policy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the President personally and forcefully tell the Chinese leadership that China's continued suppression of their citizens' rights, particularly now with regard to the citizens of Hong Kong during the turnover of that city to Chinese control in the summer of 1997, will result in withdrawal of Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status with the United States.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Foreign Relations

Resolution No. 61 (MT) 1997 NC: **Policy on the People's Republic of China**

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 3 (AK) 1997 NC: **Relations with the Republic of China**

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs
George D. Triplett (MX), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 178: Panama Canal
Origin: MX
Submitted by: Foreign Relations
As Amended

WHEREAS, American ingenuity and funds coupled with hard work by thousands of Panamanians and citizens of the Caribbean Islands built the Panama Canal; and

WHEREAS, The Panama Canal is, and will remain, a vital seaway for U.S. commerce and naval operations; and

WHEREAS, The concession of the operation of the Ports of Colon and Bilbao by the Republic of Panama to an entity of the People's Republic of China has created a situation which is inconsistent with U.S. national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The Panama Canal Treaties, signed on September 7, 1977 by the United States and Panama, provide for a gradual transition of the Panama Canal to Panamanian control in the year 2000 and permanent neutrality of the canal with the United States retaining freedom of action to maintain the canal's neutrality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion believes:

1. The United States should take any necessary actions to ensure Panama will be able to operate the Panama Canal efficiently after Panama assumes control in the year 2000.
2. The United States should take any necessary actions to ensure that the Panama Canal is operated efficiently and in a manner consistent with U.S. national security interests.
3. Construction of a new canal or major improvements in the existing Panama Canal should be consistent with U.S. national security interests.
4. The United States should seek agreement with Panama to continue stationing U.S. forces in Panama after the year 2000 to protect the Panama Canal as well as evolving democratic nations in the region.
5. The United States should encourage democratic evolution in Panama to help provide stability and a better, freer life for Panamanians.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 176 (MX) 1997 NC: **Enterprise for the Americas Initiative**
Resolution No. 177 (MX) 1997 NC: **Policy on Central America**
Resolution No. 179 (MX) 1997 NC: **War on Drugs in Latin America**
Resolution No. 180 (MX) 1997 NC: **Policy on Mexico**
Resolution No. 181 (MX) 1997 NC: **Panama Canal Treaties**
Resolution No. 182 (MX) 1997 NC: **Policy on Cuba**

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Middle Eastern and African Affairs
Vinton R. Guy (CO), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 27: Policy on Africa
Origin: CO
Submitted by: Foreign Relations
Consolidated with No. 101 (MD)

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe economic problems, internal conflicts, and in many cases great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today many African nations have huge natural resources, are beginning to economically develop, and are making determined efforts to put the continent on a more solid and democratic course with multi-party democracies and other significant changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade, disease prevention and population control in African countries are in the national interests of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has become increasingly concerned about the U.S. military interventions in troubled African states; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion calls upon the President and the Congress to develop a comprehensive bipartisan U.S. policy which identifies the areas where the United States can make a difference in Africa, such as investment to spur economic growth and promote trade, helping combat environmental damage, leading efforts to halt the proliferation of landmines and weapons of mass destruction, assistance in helping to reduce the flow of narcotics, sponsoring multilateral efforts which seek conflict resolution, and assistance for building African capabilities to deal with their own peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no illusions about quick progress in many African states and therefore, The American Legion supports the extension of U.S. economic assistance and humanitarian aid only on a case by case and step by step basis, conditional on progress in economic growth oriented policies, as well as progress on human rights, political freedom, and the rule of law; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that U.S. policies toward authoritarian nations such as Libya, Sudan and others which are state sponsors of terrorism should be oriented exclusively on limiting the influence and isolating these nations both economically and diplomatically; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion would support U.S. military intervention in African nations only when U.S. vital interests or the safety and protection of U.S. citizens are at stake.

CHAIRMAN LANCE: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate from the Department of Idaho, I move the adoption of the report of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you. I declare the motion carried and the report accepted on Foreign Relations.

Presentation: 1997 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The American Legion since 1919 has been a strong advocate for law and order in our nation. As we gather in Orlando for our 79th National Convention we present a new national award.

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is an honor bestowed on an individual for setting the example in community service as a law enforcement officer.

The man we honor with this award today takes community service and involvement to a very high level. He belongs to three professional organizations and eight civic organizations, including the Frank P. Hommon Post 24 of The American Legion. Over the years he has held more than a dozen offices in these organizations.

He has earned Gold Brigade status in The American Legion six times. He was the 1987 Department of Pennsylvania Membership Recruiter of the Year; and the District Post Commander of the Year in 1988.

As he approaches the end of his law enforcement career, he simply wants to be remembered as a good police officer who worked very hard to make his hometown a better, safer place to live, work and play.

It is indeed an honor to present the 1997 American Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War, Corporal William Rhodes of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

The award reads: "America's Finest, National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award presented to Corporal William T. Rhodes, Huntingdon Borough Police Department, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. 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 who represents America's Finest"

Bill, The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in your career. I've known this guy a long time, he's a great person.

CORPORAL WILLIAM RHODES: National Commander Joe Frank, National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, national officers, distinguished guests, delegates to the 79th National Convention. It is indeed an honor and a privilege to receive this award today. I wish to thank the National Security Division and its Chairman Alan Titus in Indiana, and also the Department of North Carolina for making the Law Officer of the Year Award a reality.

Thanks to my chief, Dan Vonnon, who took the time to present the packet and send it to the Department of Pennsylvania for consideration. To the Department of Pennsylvania for naming me as their Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. To the 15 other Departments who submitted packets and recognized law officers for their commitment to communities. To the countless number of police officers who spend time serving their communities not only on duty but when the uniform's in the locker.

A special thanks goes to my lovely wife who encouraged me to get involved and supported my efforts to make my community, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania a better and safer place to live, work and play.

I again thank you for this high honor. There are a great number of law enforcement officers who spend their time off-duty working to make their communities safer to live in and giving our children a chance for a brighter future. With every department participating in the recognition of Law Enforcement Officer of the Year what better way to thank them

for their commitments to their communities. That is the greatest recognition a police officer can receive. Thank you, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Chair now recognizes Judge Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Vincent M. Gaughan (IL), Chairman

To the Seventy-Ninth Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Orlando, Florida, September 2,3 and 4, 1997.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 31, 1997 at The Peabody Hotel, Orlando 1, Convention Level. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 42 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was agreed upon by the members and submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by National Judge Advocate 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 John A. Barnaba (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 made by Lloyd Wagener (WI), and duly seconded by John O'Boyle (NJ) that all members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting 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, 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 that Resolutions No. 174 (ID), No. 137 (FL), No. 143 (IN), No. 95 (MD) and No. 172 (VA) were out of order and that these resolutions would not be considered by the Convention Committee.

The meeting then proceeded to consider Resolution No. 1 (NEC) and Resolution No. 2 (AK). These resolutions being similar were considered at the same time.

These resolutions sought to admit those men and women who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam Era with a beginning date of February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 for membership in The American Legion, retaining all other dates as presently exist for membership in The American Legion.

The United States Congress enacted and the President of the United States approved the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1996 on October 9, 1996 which enlarged the Vietnam service dates to begin on February 28, 1961 for the granting of veterans benefits.

Paul Morin (MA) made a motion, seconded by Carl Nordberg (MT) that Resolution No. 2 (AK) be consolidated with Resolution No. 1 (NEC) and that Resolution No. 1 will be the master. The motion was passed.

Paul Morin (MA) made a motion, seconded by Lydia Pickup (WA) that Resolution No. 1 be presented to the Convention for action and adoption by the Convention. Motion passed by more than two-thirds vote and unanimously adopted.

Resolution No. 35 was in proper form as a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment. This resolution seeks to change the eligibility for membership in The American Legion to "Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time since April 6, 1917..."

This resolution would permit members of the Armed Forces who served during incursions of peace-keeping actions and not wartime engagements as members of The American Legion. This resolution could change the character of The American Legion as an organization of veterans who served during wartime.

This resolution could result in The American Legion losing the deductibility of contributions to it and its Departments and Posts under Federal income tax law. This resolution would permit a two-class membership in The American Legion, those entitled to veterans benefits due to service during wartime and those not entitled to benefits due to service during peacetime. This change from a wartime veterans organization to one including peacetime servicemen would present a real problem in arguing before Congress for benefits for services during wartime.

In more detail, it was noted, the Legion's Federal income tax position could be jeopardized. Money and materials contributed to the organization as a charitable contribution can presently be deducted from one's individual tax liability. Gifts to Legion Posts can be treated as gift tax deductions on individual tax returns. This was reaffirmed by an IRS ruling and the ruling was almost exclusively based upon a "war veterans" identification. In fact, the ruling clarified these tax considerations by requiring at least 90% of the members of the group receiving the contribution/gift must be "war veterans."

The change as requested in Resolution No. 35 could easily bring the membership in The American Legion below the 90% "war veterans" membership as required by the IRS for tax exemption.

Motion was made by Paul Morin (MA) and seconded by Bill Avery (KS) to reject Resolution No. 35. The motion was passed unanimously.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 1: Change In Eligibility Of Membership In The American Legion
Origin: NY
Submitted by: Constitutional Amendments
Consolidated with No. 2 (NE)
With Attachment

WHEREAS, The eligibility dates for membership in The American Legion are determined by the Congress of the United States of America by the establishment of specific dates during which the United States of America was involved in war, declared or undeclared, or other armed hostilities; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress enacted and the President of the United States approved the Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 1996, October 9, 1996, which redefined the "Vietnam Era" to begin on February 28, 1961; and

WHEREAS, The definition of a period of war for the purposes of receiving wartime benefits does not in and of itself provide justification for a change in the dates of eligibility

for membership in The American Legion, the reasons for this change also support a change in the eligibility dates for The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee has recommended such change to the National Convention; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Convention of The American Legion, in regular meeting assembled, in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That the National Legislative Commission be and it is hereby authorized and directed to petition the Congress of the United States to further amend Section 5 of the Act entitled "An Act to Incorporate The American Legion," Public Law No. 47, 66th Congress, approved September 16, 1919, (c. 59, Sec. 5, 41 Stat. 285; October 29, 1942, c. 633, Sec. 2, 56 Stat. 1012; July 9, 1946, c. 546, 60 Stat. 524; December 28, 1950, c. 1177, 64 Stat. 1122; July 26, 1955, c. 386, Sec. 2, 69 Stat. 380; September 1, 1966, Public Law 89-550, Sec. 2, 80 Stat. 372; December 27, 1974, Public Law 93-557, 88 Stat. 1792; August 17, 1978, Public Law 95-346, 92 Stat. 485; December 21, 1979, Public Law 96-155, 93 Stat. 1165; October 30, 1990, Public Law, 101-478, 104 Stat. 1157; December 2, 1991, Public Law 102-179, 105 Stat. 1229; Title 36 U.S.C. Sec. 45, as amended) to read when amended as follows:

"Section 5. No person shall be a member of this corporation unless such person has served in the naval or military services of the United States at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the United States Government, all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of entry therein, served in the military or naval service of any governments associated with the United States during said wars or hostilities; *Provided, however,* That such person shall have an honorable discharge or separation from such service or continues to serve honorably after any of the aforesaid terminal dates."; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That when and if the Congress of the United States enacts the above amendment, and the President of the United States shall have approved the same and it becomes law, then the National Constitution of The American Legion shall be deemed amended in conformance therewith, but subject to all consistent limitations and restrictions in the Constitution contained, all as provided for under Article XVII thereof, so that Article IV, Section 1 and Article XIII, Section 2 of the aforesaid National Constitution of The American Legion, shall read as follows:

"Article IV
Eligibility

"Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States, all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods; provided, however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods;

provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service."

"Article XIII
Auxiliaries

"Section 2. Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandmothers of members of The American Legion, and to the mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters and grandmothers of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States, all dates inclusive, or who, being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods, and died in line of duty or after honorable discharge; and to those women who or their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion."

Rejected

Resolution No. 35 (NE) 1997 NC: **American Legion Eligibility**

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 Committee. Charles John (OK) made the motion, and it was seconded by Ronald Aldrich (VT). The motion carried.

Roy Pressley made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by John Titus (PA). 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.

Commander, this is a report requiring a constitutional amendment, a two/thirds vote is required. Commander Joe, as being a delegate from the Department of Illinois, I make a motion that this report be adopted.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The aye's have it. I declare the motion carried, the report adopted. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: This is your last reminder, friends, to stop by the National Emergency Fund booth in the Exhibit Hall and enter to win the 1998 Buick LeSabre—again a commercial. Buick has donated this car and no strings are attached to help The American Legion raise money for the National Emergency Fund. All we ask is that you donate one dollar per ticket. You can find extra tickets by the booth.

It's a beautiful car if you haven't seen it. The National Emergency Fund is a program that provides grants, not loans, to Legion family members who have been devastated by a natural disaster.

The NEF has been there time and time again this year. To continue that service we need donations. So please don't delay. Tomorrow morning at 9:10 a.m. it will be too late to get your tickets to put in the barrel. So do it now.

At this time, I'll call on our National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for some announcements.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Post 351 the Department of Ohio has donated $250 to the National Emergency Fund. Just a reminder, as I announced this morning from the chair that the Department Adjutants or the Delegation Secretaries have a meeting in this room, 230D, regarding housing contracts for the 1998 National Convention in New Orleans, and that meeting will be on recess of this session of the National Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Bob. Thank you, Ohio. Delegates please join me in a salute to the flag of the United States. One, two.

The convention will stand in recess until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

...At 4:10 p.m., the Convention recessed to convene the following day, Thursday, September 4, 1997, at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, September 4, 1997

...At 8:30 a.m., the Delegates listened to the Prelude.

...At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the third day of the 79th Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The convention will come to order and the delegates will stand. We will render a right-hand salute and respect the flag of the United States of America. One ... Two.

...The Delegates stood and saluted the Colors.

For the invocation, I would like now to call on your National Chaplain, Reverend Charles H. Richmond of Oklahoma.

Invocation
Dr. Charles H. Richmond
National Chaplain

Before we pray, we are grieved at the loss of Walter Ballard, who was the Commander of the Department of D.C., 1996 and 1997. We were informed that he passed away of cancer since the start of this meeting. It is appropriate that we pause for a moment of silent prayer and meditation in his remembrance, and in a prayer for his family. Let us pause.

...Moment of silence.

Let us continue to pray. We pause in prayer for our minds and hearts to become in harmony with the will of Almighty God. He created the heavens and earth with its inhabitants in accordance with the laws of nature. He has given us the responsibility of preservation, dominion, leadership and control. He is the giver of all authority and responsibility.

In our service to God and Country we are attempting to carry out some of these responsibilities. We have met these days not only to review, but to regroup, and plan future activities. We pray for Your continued guidance.

We are thankful for the privilege and responsibility of citizenship, and living in America. Democracy has provided for us one nation under God with liberty and justice for all. This is based upon living in the path of righteousness and following Your moral precepts.

Our way of life has been purchased by many who have fought and died and many who have lived and dedicated their lives in the service to God, our country and fellow man. You have blessed us in the past. May we think and act, that we may feel Your presence and receive Your blessings today and in the future. Amen.

...The Delegates responded with a chorus of "Amen".

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States.

...The Delegates stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Please be seated. The convention is now in session. It is now 9:04. It's time to draw the name of the Legion family member who will

soon be driving a brand new 1998 Buick LeSabre. The winner of the 1998 Buick LeSabre is Karen Plunk of Springfield, Illinois.

I'd like to thank everyone who took part in this effort to raise the much needed money for the National Emergency Fund. Because of the generosity of Buick and the contributions from each and every individual, I am confident the fund will continue to help our American Legion family members when national disaster strikes.

We are honored this morning to have one of America's most influential voices on defense and international security issues with us. He served in the United States Senate for nearly two decades and was the Senate sponsor of the GI Bill of 1984, and the enhancements that have been made to that bill. His efforts led to the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force which developed into the Central Command and the Maritime Preparation Program, both of which were key to the success of the Gulf War. He also voted for the Flag Amendment. Please welcome to Orlando, Secretary of Defense and our friend, William Cohen.

Address: The Honorable William Cohen
Secretary of Defense

I took out into the darkness and can't see many of you, but I wanted to express my deep and sincere appreciation for your comments, and also for your service for this past year, and well beyond that in the past. You are truly a hero of the American people and I wanted to express the Department of Defense congratulations and appreciation to you.

SECRETARY COHEN: Yesterday you paid tribute to Senator Bob Dole. You also had the benefit of hearing from Speaker Newt Gingrich. You also heard from Sgt. Major Shalikashvili.

And in view of that distinguished company, of course, I feel like the traditional Missouri mule who is entered into the Kentucky Derby. No one expected him to win, but they all knew he'd benefit from the association. And I hope to benefit from the association of being with you here today.

I also would like to express my personal appreciation to Bill Rogers. Also Tony Jordan, who I understand is running for something, and to the entire Maine delegation. And I'd like to say here today that without the support of The American Legion, the delegates who are here from Maine today, I could not possibly have served for 24 years on Capitol Hill. It was through the strong and loyal support of The American Legion in the State of Maine that I was able to win so many elections, and to speak on behalf of the veterans in our military in the halls of Congress. So I wanted to thank you personally here today.

Whenever I speak to a new audience, I like to talk about the story of Henry Ford, who, after having made all of his millions in this country decided he wanted to go back to his fatherland in County Cork, Ireland. And of course his reputation for wealth had long preceded his arrival. When he finally stepped off the plane there was a group of local town officials who were waiting for him. They wanted a contribution for the construction of a local hospital. And, of course, he was quite accustomed to being touched in that fashion. He pulled out his checkbook and made a check out for $5,000.

The next day in bold print in the local paper, it said Ford contributes $50,000 for the construction of local hospital. And the town officials were terribly embarrassed. They came rushing to Mr. Ford. They said. "Mr. Ford, we are really sorry, this was not our fault. It must have been a typographical error. And we'll be happy to see to it that a retraction is printed in tomorrow's paper."

He said, "Wait a minute, I think I've got a better idea. If you give me one wish I'll give you the balance of $45,000.' It was one of those offers they couldn't refuse. He pulled out his checkbook and wrote out a check for $45.000. He said, "The only thing I want is for you to allow me to pick an inscription that will be over that building when it's finally completed from a source of my choice." And so he gave them the check.

The hospital was built. It is there today, and it has a plaque over the entranceway with a quote taken from the Book of Matthew which says, "I came to you as a stranger and you took me in." I'd like you to take me in, but not in that fashion, I want to talk about a different type of taking in today. And that is the taking in of new members into NATO.

This summer the United States and the NATO allies took a very historic step in inviting three former communist countries in eastern Europe to join NATO. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. All of which are now thriving democracies. Before they can join NATO, the United States Senate and all of the NATO parliaments have to vote to ratify their membership. And this is a very serious and momentous decision for our country because, ultimately, it means committing our most precious resources, the lives of our men and women, to defend these new nations in Europe. And we're already witnessing this great debate taking place in the halls of Congress, in the newspapers, over the airways, in the living rooms, indeed, in halls such as this.

And so, I come to you because when The American Legion stands for NATO, and supports NATO enlargement, as it did yesterday, by its strong and overwhelming vote, it carries great moral and I would say political weight. Because when The American Legion speaks, I can assure you those in Congress listen. Because you, more than any other Americans, know that NATO enlargement is in the national security interest of the United States. That knowledge is born of personal experience and the central lesson of this century. America cannot be at peace if Europe is at war. And to prevent war in Europe, America must stay engaged on the continent. And as veterans you know the cost of isolation because you've paid the greatest price for having to preserve the freedom of others.

Our veterans in the First World War witnessed how even the vast Atlantic Ocean couldn't protect us from being drawn into the fiery hatreds of the old world. And those veterans went over singing "We won't be back until it's over over there." But too many failed to make it back when the fighting stopped on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, which we mark as Veterans Day. From muddy trenches that served as graves for too many, the Lost Generation gave us a chance for a safer world for the next generation.

But to our lasting regret when the guns of November fell silent, America ignored the embers of hatred and we missed the opportunity to prevent another war. We were not struck, if I can paraphrase a poet, by the sudden illumination that we had the experience but we missed the meaning.

Our World War II veterans paid for this missed meaning and missed opportunity. And they witnessed how Hitler had stoked the embers of hate until they ignited into the deadliest war in human history. Sons returned to the very same terrain their fathers had died defending and they plunged into the crashing surf and braved the hail of hot steel to free an entire continent.

There was a reporter for the *Stars and Stripes* who was there, and he wrote the following words. He said, "There have been only a handful of days since the beginning of time on which the direction the world was taking has been changed for the better in one 24-hour period by an act of man. June 6th, 1944 was one of them."

What the Americans, the British and the Canadians were trying to do was get back an entire continent that had been taken from it's rightful owners, whose citizens had been taken captive. It was one of the most monumentally unselfish things that one group of people ever

did for another. That D-Day observer, by the way, is today's Andy Rooney of *60 Minutes* fame. That generation won the Second World War and gave us a second chance to build a safer world.

And as President Truman told The American Legion convention here in Florida 49 years ago, our purpose from the end of the war to the present has never changed. It's been to create a political and economic framework in which lasting peace can be constructed. And Truman, of course, was talking about the Marshall Plan. It was a plan to help the people of Europe rebuild their economics and societies on the foundation of democracy and peace. And it was also a strategy to silence once and for all the voices of the twisted and the mad by building a new Europe that was healed and whole and free. Western Europe embraced the Marshall Plan, and they built strong democracies and economies and a strong alliance which we call NATO.

But the other half of Europe was denied the Marshall Plan when Joseph Stalin slammed down the Iron Curtain on the fingers of America's helping hand. But still America did not turn its back. Through the long winter of the Cold War we stood again with the free people of Europe. And today, having emerged victorious from that long twilight struggle, we have an historic opportunity and a very silver challenge. And that's the opportunity to complete George Marshall's vision: the challenge to secure a lasting peace in Europe and to insure that Americans never again have to fight and die on Europe's battlefields.

We owe this to the veterans of World War II and to the veterans of the Cold War who earned us yet another chance to build a safer Europe for the next generation. And building that safer Europe and a more secure America really is at the heart of this entire debate about NATO enlargement. There are a number of people who question whether making NATO larger is going to make NATO weaker and, therefore, weaken America. I would argue to the contrary. A larger NATO means a wider allegiance to our values.

Those of you who have served shoulder-to-shoulder with our allies in the World Wars know the power of military alliances in defeating a common enemy. Those of you who served during the 50 winters of the Cold War have seen the power of alliances to deter aggression. It was the creation of NATO in 1949 that halted the Soviet designs on western Europe. It was the enlargement of NATO with Greece and Turkey in 1952; the enlargement with West Germany in 1955; and the enlargement with Spain in 1982. All of that helped to strengthen the wall of democracy. And thanks to NATO, no American blood has been shed fighting another war in Europe for more than 50 years.

So enlarging NATO with Poland and Hungary, and the Czech Republic, is going to carry that promise into the next century. The same reasons that were used and argued for enlarging NATO with West Germany 42 years ago, I think apply completely today as well.

Wisconsin Senator Alexander Wiley, said once more the heart of the West is reaching out. The German people will return to the place where they rightfully belong, to the place of equality and partnership with the western world. They share our ideals, they made the greatest recovery in Europe. They are a vital and vigorous and dynamic people. We need them and they need us. The Poles, the Hungarians, the Czechs, also are a vital and vigorous and dynamic people. They share our ideals, they are making a remarkable recovery from decades of domination and now they want to return to their rightful place as equal partners in the European family of free nations. We need them and they need us. But you're going to hear a number of arguments that would reject enlargement, that these countries really aren't ready to bear the burdens of membership.

I recently visited many of those countries, and I want to assure you that the Poles, the Hungarians and the Czechs want to be contributors, not simply consumers of security. They are ready to share the costs and responsibilities of NATO membership. In fact they are

already contributing to the security of Europe by modernizing their militaries to operate with NATO, by serving with our soldiers in Bosnia, to quell the worst conflict in Europe since World War II; by helping to make a success of the Partnership for Peace program that we have. We can thank you, The American Legion, for the strong support of this, like you provided for NATO. These nations are building stable democracies with free societies and free markets and modern militaries that are serving under civilian leadership. History demonstrates that stability and security attract investment. And investment generates prosperity. And prosperity strengthens stability, and security, and democracy. And so it's a virtuous cycle that is changing this face of Europe and much of the world. Enlarging NATO simply expands this virtuous cycle.

I've also heard it argued that by enlarging NATO we're going to be creating new lines of division in Europe. But I think those who make this claim fail to appreciate the new dynamic that is underway in Europe that is rapidly erasing these old lines and avoiding these new divisions. Over the past few years the mere prospect of having NATO membership has unleashed a powerful impetus for peace in that continent. Old rivals have settled their historic disputes and they have struck these new accords and arrangements. Look at Poland and Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, Hungary and Romania, Italy and Slovenia, Germany and the Czech Republic. All of them have healed border disputes and other kinds of controversies that in the past have erupted into war and resulted in American troops being sent to Europe to fight and die.

More than that, these old rivals are sealing these new ties by working together in conference rooms and the training fields of the Partnership for Peace program. In June I traveled to the PFP center in NATO headquarters, and there I met with NATO supreme allied commander, General George Joulwan, who recently retired and with General Shetsov, the Russian general. General Joulwan was presenting him with a medal. It was a unique experience because the medal happened to be dipped into a large glass of vodka. General Shetsov had to drink the vodka before he'd get the medal. The ceremony started at 8:00 o'clock in the morning. He got through it very well. But I must say it was a truly memorable experience for me to see this very proud and decorated Russian general standing side by side with our SAC men, and they were toasting and embracing each other in the cause of peace.

In July, I traveled to Ukraine where I saw what was once the Soviet Union's largest military training field in Europe. I saw the forces of the United States, Ukraine, and a number of other NATO and former Soviet Bloc countries. And what were they doing? They were exercising together. Soldiers who had once trained to fight one another, to kill one another were training together in the name of peace. And it was an inspiring sight that came just a few days after NATO had signed the historic charter with Ukraine, replacing the dividing line that once partitioned Europe with a new partnership that now unites Europe.

There are some who insist that enlarging NATO is going to create new tensions and divisions in Russia and jeopardize Russia's move to democracy in its cooperation with the West. But let me say that we should not permit those fears to overwhelm the facts. Because in numerous actions, large and small, NATO and Russia are erasing these old divisions and dividing lines every day. Russian and American peace-keepers are erasing these dividing lines when they patrol side by side in Bosnia.

I was in Bosnia back in February. I sat down and had lunch with all of our American forces. A Russian soldier came up to me and gave me his hat as a gesture of peace, saying how proud he was to be serving side by side with his American counterparts. I never would have believed this after having spent 24 years, nearly a quarter of a century on Capitol Hill, I never would have thought that the day would come when we would have Russian and American soldiers standing side by side in the cause of peace.

So U.S. and Russian Air Forces are erasing these dividing lines when they make their authorized observation flights over each other's territory, as we recently began to do. We were acting decisively to erase these dividing lines when we signed the historic Founding Act this spring that launched a new era of camaraderie and cooperation.

Finally, those who oppose NATO enlargement claim it's going to cost too much. This argument ignores the fact alliances save money, because they promote cooperation, inter-operability and reduce redundancy. Simply put, it costs America less to defend our interests in Europe if Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are in alliance with us, just as it costs them less to defend their interest by joining hands in the Alliance itself. We estimate that the cost to the United States each year over the next decade will be less than one-tenth of one percent of our defense budget. The costs of enlarging NATO are meager when weighed against the cost of rejection which would be measured not just in dollars, but potentially in lives if we fail to expand this circle of security and risk setting the stage for future instability or aggression. So in the final analysis, we can't afford not to enlarge, since it would squander an opportunity that comes once in a generation.

We can listen to the voices of the 1920s that led us to retreat from Europe and allowed the seeds of war to take root. Or we can heed the voices of George Marshall and his colleagues, and our World War II veterans, and the succeeding post-war generations that rejected isolationism and it reaped the fruits of peace and freedom. Marshall once said that the cost of war is "spread before us, written neatly in the ledger whose volumes are gravestones." Well, today there are more than 70,000 such volumes written across Europe. These are the gravestones of Americans who rest there when they fell liberating a continent. And so their sacrifices echos down to us through the decades from the hillsides in Florence, from a sloping green in Luxemburg, from the dignified rose on a cliff overlooking the Normandy shore. They did not serve and they did not sacrifice, they did not die for us so that we could walk away from the lands that they freed. So it's their voices that we have to heed. In the words of the English poet, Lawrence Binyon, "they shall not grow old as we will have to grow old. Ages shall not weary them or years condemn. At the going down of the sun or in the morning we shall I remember them."

But we have to do more than simply remember them. We have to complete their work. And there's no greater way to honor them than by doing what The American Legion has done, and that is to go on record in favor of enlarging this circle of security. The American Legion serves as a living memorial to your fallen comrades. Their voices echo through you. When you speak out in support of preserving the peace by enlarging the alliance, the Legion and each one of you personally can play a critical role by carrying this message back to your communities, your local Legion halls, your places of work, the churches, synagogues, your local news media. Together I believe we can raise the lamplight of history so we won't stumble on the footpath to the future.

I'd like to offer just a final word to all of you who are here. I've spoken about the veterans of World War II and their contribution to liberating Europe from the Nazi war machine. The World War I, World War II veterans, those of Korea, Vietnam, Beirut, Granada, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia. I want to thank you for who you are, for what you have given, for what we have received, and for what we owe. General Shalikashvili told you that we have the finest fighting force in the world today. And we do. We are the envy of the world. But if we're going to maintain that greatness, then we have to continue to recruit and to retain the very best and the brightest in our society. And we have to care for them when they leave the service.

It's not the weapons that we have, the most powerful weapons in the world, the most sophisticated weapons in the world. It's not the weapons that make us a super power. It's

not the satellites, it's not the computers, it's not that total technological edge that we have that gives us the dominance of the battlefield that makes us the world's super power. It's the people who are willing to give life and limb for the benefit of all that makes us the most powerful and most envied nation on earth. We are all familiar with the axiom that if we take care of whose who serve us, those who serve us will take care of us.

Let me conclude with a quote from Churchill. Winston Churchill had a meeting with one of our most distinguished journalists by the name of Stuart Alsop. They were spending the day together and indulging in the libations that Winston Churchill was so famous for consuming. They had dinner one evening with several bottles of wine and a toast of champagne. Churchill finally turned to Alsop and said, "America, America, a great and strong country, like a horse pulling the rest of the world up out of the sloth of despond." And he looked then very directly and coldly into Alsop's eyes and said, "but will it stay the course?"

Fifty years later we can answer his question. America has stayed the course because that's our history. America will stay the course because that's our destiny. And it's our destiny by virtue of the fact that we have men and women such as you, The American Legion, who have continued to support the American ideals, and indeed, continued to support the men and women who are prepared to risk life and limb for the benefit of all American citizens.

Thank you once again and let me reassure you we indeed intend to stay the course.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. That was an inspiring speech and we appreciate you being here at our convention.

The winner of the 1998 Buick LeSabre is in the house. Karen Plunk is from Springfield, Illinois. Congratulations. She doesn't live far from where I live in Missouri. I don't have a car here, Karen. My wife and I may need a ride later.

MBNA America Bank is one of our corporate partners, as you know, and through the activities of many of you Legionnaires who use The American Legion charge-card, MBNA since 1978 has contributed 50 million dollars for our great Legion programs. MBNA has also donated $35,000 to the National Emergency Fund and pledged $50,000 in matching funds for Legion charge-card donations for the Citizens Flag Alliance. You may also be interested to know that Legionnaires have over two million dollars on deposit at MBNA in CDs and Money Market accounts to the above average interest rates that are paid on those deposits. This is another benefit of The American Legion membership.

With us today is Joanne Sheldon, a member of Auxiliary Unit 205 in Franklin, Indiana, to determine the winners of the three $1,000 CDs.

Presentation: MBNA Certificates of Deposits Joanne Sheldon (IN)

First, I would like to make some donations to The American Legion National Emergency Fund, one on behalf of MBNA America in the amount of $5,000. In addition, to the milestone of the 200 million mark being reached this year we'd also like to make a $1,000 donation to The American Legion National Emergency Fund on behalf of Robert Rousch from San Antonio, Texas, whose deposit on June 26 brought the Legionnaire's deposits to over two hundred million dollars.

MS. SHELDON: We'd also like Commander Frank to draw the names of the three winners for the thousand dollar CDs at this time. The first winner is Peggy Shief from Leesburg, Florida, Robert Rossignal from Van Buren, Maine, Frank Casdue from Bonita

Springs, Florida. We'll be contacting each of you in the next few days in reference to receiving the CDs.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Tim-Cor Financial is one of our corporate partners who offer a tax deferred annuity through Indianapolis Life Annuity Company. The current first year interest is 10.6 percent. Legionnaires have invested four million dollars in annuities to date. This is another example of the benefit of American Legion membership. With us today is Jim Luther, president of Tim-Cor Financial and a member of SAL Squadron No. 155 in Carmel, Indiana, who will conduct the drawing of a television set.

Presentation: Television Set
Jim Luther, Tim-Cor Financial

On behalf of Indianapolis Life, and Indianapolis Life Annuity Company, I want to thank Commander Frank for having me here this year. Thanks also to National Adjutant Bob Spanogle, Webber LaGrange, the National Treasurer who works a lot behind the scenes to make sure that the products that we develop and present to all the members are as good a quality as we can find throughout the country, and lastly to all of the people who stopped by the booth. God bless all of you, and I thank you for all your help and everything that you do.

... Commander Frank draws a card.

The winner is W.G. Davis. We will call you in a few days and ship the television to you.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Joseph J. Frank (MO)
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Each year The American Legion invites members of the news media to enter the Fourth Estate Award contest. This is a contest that seeks out the best in journalistic efforts from all media. The judges always have a difficult time selecting just one winner from radio, television, newspaper, and other publications. This year the selection process was extremely difficult. In the end the judges were unanimous. The award goes to the *Tribune Chronicle* of Warren, Ohio.

The staff of the paper waged a three-year battle with the city police department. After exhausting every avenue to open public department records, the newspaper filed suit. The case went all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court, and the court found in favor of the paper. The result was a 52-page book format story, *Disorderly Conduct.* Accepting the award are the two key reporters who devoted countless hours in pursuit of a free press and ended with a spell-binding story. Welcome reporters Alyssa Lenhoff and Ed Simpson of Warren, Ohio.

MR. SIMPSON: My name is Ed Simpson, and I'm a reporter with the *Tribune Chronicle* in Warren, Ohio. This is Aiyssa, who was my partner on the project. We are very honored to be here today. We looked over the list of entries for this award, and I know that you probably didn't read them, but you're looking at *Time Magazine, Wall Street Journal,* Hearst newspapers, and then the *Tribune Chronicle.* We think it has a certain ring to it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Who has the chicken? Bring the chicken up here. I'd like the Department Commander, Adjutant, NEC and Past National Commander Comer from Massachusetts to come up here. The Department 50th place in membership gets this rubber chicken. I love everybody in Massachusetts, believe me, but you know what I

have to do. And I'm going to put you in charge of Comrade Chicken. Okay? You know how to get rid of the chicken?

COMMANDER COMER (MA): I sure do.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: If anyone has any donations please come forward.

DELEGATE FROM NORTH DAKOTA: Commander Joe, on behalf of the North Dakota American Legion family, the place where we found Noah's Ark, I believe. There was lots of water there, lots of devastation. However, my project this year is for the NEF and this is my first installment of 1,000 dollars.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you very much.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Commander, the Department of Ohio collected $750 from the delegates attending the national convention for the CFA, and they have turned that money in to the National Treasurer.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I do want to thank all of those who have contributed to these wonderful causes. Remember that you can also mail checks in.

The chair now will recognize Alan Titus, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Security
Allen L. Titus (IN), Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 31, 1997, 247 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in Plaza F & G of The Peabody Orlando in Orlando, Florida. At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and his 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. The Convention Committee also approved a motion to authorize the Chairman and Secretary to sign and deliver the report on the Committee's behalf. Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) was elected Chairman and Mr. Norman Schlemmer (Indiana) was appointed Secretary.

The six authorized Convention Subcommittees (Aerospace, Defense Civil Preparedness, Law and Order, Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, and Naval Affairs) met in separate meeting rooms. An additional Ad Hoc Subcommittee was appointed for General Security resolutions which required special attention. In compliance with Fall 1989 NEC Resolution No. 18, a Subcommittee on Conservation of Natural Resources was appointed. The following were elected Chairmen and Secretaries of the Convention Security Subcommittees:

Aerospace
- Robert C. Gabrielson (SD), Chairman
- Ted G. Demicchi (WI), Secretary

Defense-Civil Preparedness
- Frank J. D'Amico (NY), Chairman
- John Schurrer (WI), Secretary

Law and Order
- W. Dudley Robbins (NC), Chairman
- Clyde I. Siler (VA), Secretary

Military Affairs
- Norbert G. Harmeyer (IA), Chairman
- Dale D. Chapman (VA), Chairman

Naval Affairs
- Robert L. Klipstine (OH), Chairman
- Gerard W. Cheffer (IL), Secretary

General Security Ad Hoc
- John M. Tyson (AL), Chairman
- George E. Harvey (MI), Secretary

Merchant Marine
Charles F. Moreland (FL), Chairman
Charles P. Powell, Jr. (VA), Secretary

Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke (SD), Chairman
Billy L. Jones (MO), Secretary

On Sunday afternoon, August 31, 1997, the delegates again assembled in Plaza F & G of The Peabody Orlando 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 26 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.

General Security Ad Hoc Subcommittee
John M. Tyson (AL), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 106: Red Chinese Initiatives in the United States
Origin: MD
Submitted by: National Security Committee
Consolidated with No. 67 (WI) and 156 (KS)

WHEREAS, The Peoples' Republic of China—Communist China—has established its first commercial beachhead at the former United States Naval Station at Long Beach, California; and

WHEREAS, This abandoned Navy base, one of several closed in California, was leased by the City of Long Beach to the China Ocean Shipping Company (Cosco), China's state-owned merchant fleet reportedly for $14 million annually; and

WHEREAS, The Long Beach Navy Yard is situated amidst a cluster of sensitive Navy installations including a missile test center, a naval weapons station and the Navy's Anti-submarine Warfare School; and

WHEREAS, The presence of the Red Chinese in the midst of these sensitive military installations can facilitate potential espionage and other illegal activities to include trade irregularities; and

WHEREAS, This revelation is one of several separate decisions that have recently benefited Cosco: Last year, the United States quietly agreed to end the Cold War requirement that Chinese ships provide four days' notification when entering our ports, and Cosco also won a U.S-backed $138 million loan guarantee to have four container ships built in Alabama shipyards; and

WHEREAS, These disclosures come at a time when foreign Asian sources are suspected of funneling campaign funding during the 1996 Presidential elections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion strongly urges the United States Congress to exercise its oversight responsibilities and to vigorously and thoroughly investigate recent Red Chinese initiatives, to include the leasing of the former United States Naval Station at Long Beach, California, so as to determine whether the short or long-term national security interests of the United States might have been compromised or jeopardized; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress enforce United States Maritime Cabotage laws and exercise its authority to invalidate any leasing arrangements involving foreign commercial interests which do not serve the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States Government continue to exercise its vigilance and surveillance of Communist Chinese activities in the United States.

Resolution No. 113: Quadrennial Defense Review
Origin: MD
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, The Congress in the Fiscal Year 1997 Defense Authorization Act specified a two-part National Security Review consisting of a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), conducted by the Secretary of Defense, and an independent civilian National Defense Panel (NDP); and

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

WHEREAS, In addition to critiquing the results of the QDR, the NDP is directed to develop and assess possible alternative force structures with the first budget changes being reflected in the FY 1999 defense budget; and

WHEREAS, The recommendations of the Quadrennial Defense Review are as follows: The two-war "nearly simultaneously" scenario of the Bottom-Up Review would be retained while active endstrengths would be further reduced by another 60,000. The Reserve Components would be cut by 55,000 and Defense civilian strengths would be downsized by another 80,000. The Armed Forces endstrength would be reduced from 1.42 million to about 1.36 million within five years: The active Army would retain 10 combat divisions; the Navy would retain 12 aircraft carriers; and total active and reserve Air Force fighter wings would decline to 20. Fewer F-22 fighters and F/A-18 E/F aircraft will be ordered, and two more rounds of base closings have been proposed; and

WHEREAS, As the fighting strength of the American military has shrunk by nearly 40 percent of its Cold War peak, The American Legion has been warning of the double mismatch in strategy: U.S. national security strategy is far too ambitious for the forces available; the inadequate force structure is underfunded yet strategic requirements remain high—military forces have been dispatched on some 50-plus peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations since 1993 which is overstraining the Armed Forces and its diminished capabilities. The average soldier today deploys abroad at four times the rate of his Cold War predecessor; and

WHEREAS, It appears that the first QDR has delivered the same inadequate force structure, questionable strategy and unbalanced modernization program driven by a $250 billion spending ceiling predetermined by the Office of Management and Budget; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges the Congress to more adequately recognize the national defense requirements of the United States by significantly increasing defense budgets, force structures and military end strengths over those recommended by the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 107 (MD) 1997 NC: **The Honorable Nature of Military Service**
Resolution No. 112 (MD) 1997 NC: **National Security Principles**

Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke (SD), Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted resolutions and reaffirmed their relevance.

Aerospace Committee
Robert C. Gabrielson (SD), Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted resolutions and reaffirmed their relevance.

Defense Civil Preparedness Committee
John Schurrer (MA), Secretary

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 17 (MA) 1997 NC: **Blood Donations for Emergencies**

Law and Order Committee
W. Dudley Robbins (NC), Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted resolutions and reaffirmed their relevance.

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland (FL), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 108: Preserving American Mercantile Interests
Origin: MD
Submitted by: National Security
As amended

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized the urgent need to restore the U.S. privately owned and operated merchant marine to its former premier position in world trade and national security; and

WHEREAS, Our maritime industry now ranks last among the 16 major fleets of the world, while the Commonwealth of Independent States ranks second; and

WHEREAS, There are currently 393 ocean-going cargo vessels in the active United States flag fleet. Today there are about half that many carrying less than 4% of our total

foreign trade, and without bold governmental action, the U.S. foreign trade merchant marine fleet could be virtually extinct by the year 2000; and

WHEREAS, Since 1978, over 60 shipyards have ceased operations. A total of approximately 60,000 workers in the U.S. have lost their jobs, and at least 14 ship building companies are operating under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Act. The last commercial tanker built in the United States was in 1985; and

WHEREAS, American ship builders are at a disadvantage as they cannot compete with foreign yards with cheaper labor and government subsidies; and

WHEREAS, The Persian Gulf War demonstrated the lack of available shipping to supply our troops in a timely manner, requiring several months to build up our forces. We cannot always rely on the luxury of advanced lead times for us to establish offensive forces in overseas areas; and

WHEREAS, Foreign interests, to include the Peoples Republic of China, appear to be expanding mercantile operations within the United States to include gaining a beachhead at Long Beach, California; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges the U.S. Government in cooperation with maritime management and labor, to rebuild the United States merchant marine to its former position as second to none in the world under the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, as amended; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges action to enforce the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, as amended, to promote the U.S. flagging of U.S.-owned ships now under foreign registry; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to strictly enforce the Maritime Cabotage Laws of the United States so as to preclude attempts by foreign shipping interests to gain inroads into American domestic shipping routes in inland waterways, rivers and the coasts of the United States and its possessions.

Military Affairs Committee
Norbert G. Harmeyer (IA), Chairman

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 69: Salute to General John M. Shalikashvili, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Origin: WI

Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, General John M. Shalikashvili, United States Army, has served the United States with great distinction as an Army leader and as The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and

WHEREAS, General Shalikashvili, after commissioning through Officer Candidate School, rose through the ranks to become the senior military advisor to the Secretary of Defense and President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, General Shalikashvili was appointed by President William Clinton to serve as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is to retire from his current position on September 30, 1997; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2,3,4, 1997, That The American Legion hereby extends its profound

appreciation to General Shalikashvili and commends him for his outstanding contributions and service to America.

Resolution No. 86: Purple Hearts for DoD Civilians
Origin: IL
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, Many Legionnaires have received numerous awards and decorations for their devotion to duty, valor and tenacity in the defense of our Nation and our vital interests; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires won these awards and decorations while serving as members of the armed forces of our Nation and we believe that such awards and decorations must be accorded only to members of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, President John F. Kennedy extended eligibility (for the Purple Heart) on April 25, 1962, to "any civilian national of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with an armed force..., has been or may hereafter be wounded, may be awarded the Purple Heart;" and

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan, on February 23, 1984, amended President Kennedy's order, to include those wounded or killed as the result of "an international terrorist attack" may be awarded the Purple Heart; and

WHEREAS, We believe the Purple Heart awarded to Roland Blow, a GS-12 civilian, who received minor cuts from flying glass fragments during a terrorist attack at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on June 25, 1996, (during which 19 members of the armed services were killed and 450 members were wounded), is an outrage and belittles and negates Purple Hearts awarded to members of the armed forces who earned them in combat; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2,3,4, 1997, That The American Legion expend all efforts to rescind the Executive Orders of April 25, 1962 and February 23, 1984 which allow the Purple Heart (or other military awards) to be awarded to civilians.

Resolution No. 109: Quality of Life Features
Origin: MD
Submitted by: 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, The United States Government has the inherent and moral responsibility for providing for the well-being of members of the active and reserve components and their dependents and military retirees and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, Military pay must be reasonably comparable to compensation in the private sector if the Armed Forces aspire to compete for quality volunteers and retain an experienced military force for the long term; 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, Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, 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.
2. Adequate medical and dental services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities.
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.
6. Amending Public Law 99-145 as to eliminate the automatic age 62 offset of Survivors' Benefits Plan benefits with Social Security benefits particularly for those survivors who have earned Social Security benefits in their own right. Also, terminating SBP premiums after paying a minimum number of annual premiums; SBP annuities for "forgotten widows;" and authorizing full SBP coverage for survivors of servicemembers who die on active duty.
7. Adequate health care treatment for military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans.
8. Non-taxation of military allowances to include moving allowances.
9. Congressional re-enactment of Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents.
10. Adequately safeguarding American troops from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions.
11. Urging the Congress to extend additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves so as to more closely approximate those of the active force.
12. Military health care should be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, to the same degree as active duty members who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty.

Resolution No. 110: Transitional Assistance Programs
Origin: MD
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, The Defense Appropriations Act of 1996 directed that the Department of Defense report on plans and residual funding to phase out the transitional assistance program; and

WHEREAS, Although it was believed that the military drawdown was nearly over, the Department of Defense in the Quadrennial Defense Review has proposed cutting active endstrengths by 60,000 and the reserve components by 55,000; and

WHEREAS, If discharging servicemembers are left without adequate transitional assistance benefits, to include counseling by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Labor, such treatment of veterans who have honorably served their country is likely to adversely affect military recruiting efforts; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who receive such transitional services before being discharged have found employment, on the average, three to seven weeks earlier than those who have not attended these transitional assistance programs; and

WHEREAS, The cost savings of these programs to the Department of Defense amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars saved by not paying unemployment compensation which is significantly more than the costs of such programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense to continue to provide the necessary funding to retain transitional assistance programs at least until the downsizing of the military has been completed.

Resolution No. 111: Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
Origin: MD
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, The Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) was adopted by Congress in 1982 in order to protect divorced spouses of military members particularly in those states which had no provisions for alimony; and

WHEREAS, Prior to passage of this law, military spouses always had the full range of remedies in divorce courts as any other spouse in America; and

WHEREAS, Since the passage of the law (P.L. 97-252), divorce courts have been awarding up to 50 percent of disposable military retirement pay to former spouses based on the guidelines in the Federal Law; and among the many inequities in the law are the continuance of lifetime annuities to former spouses whether they remarry or not, and military retirees are the only federal retirees to whom this provision applies; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of the USFSPA were made retroactive so as to be effective one day before the Supreme Court ruling (*McCarthy vs McCarthy*) which reaffirmed that military pay could not be divided as property. As a result of this action, divorces settled over 25 years ago were reopened by former spouses; and

WHEREAS, Since the USFSPA was enacted, Congress has enacted 23 amendments to that law virtually all of which were adopted without hearings and 18 of which favored former spouses; and

WHEREAS, The USFSPA threatens grave harm to the goals of the Military Retirement System which serves as the major incentive to the long-term maintenance of a competent and professional military force; and

WHEREAS, As well-intentioned as it was meant to be, the law has created an even larger class of victims than the former spouses it was designed to assist, namely, the

remarried active duty service member and military retiree and his or her new family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges Congressional hearings on the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act and supports the principle that spouses of military personnel have the right to adequate support, that military pay should only be included in judicial determinations of appropriate support on a case-by-case basis; and that the Federal Law (P.L. 97-252) to distribute military retired pay as property between service members or military retirees and former spouses should be changed as follows:

1. Currently, former military spouses receive payments for life even when they remarry. Military retired pay should be treated as income, rather than property, and state divorce courts should apportion retired pay as alimony and child support in accordance with state domestic laws and regulations.
2. The period of time following separation or divorce should be limited to two years within which an ex-spouse can assert claims for a portion of military retired pay for alimony or child support.
3. Currently, military retired pay which is waived in order to receive disability compensation may be reapportioned in divorce cases. That section of the USFSPA which makes disability pay unavailable for apportionment should be reaffirmed in separation or divorce proceedings. This would require amending 42 United States Code Section 659 to eliminate the inconsistency between that Code and the USFSPA.

Resolution No. 167: Mixed Gender Policies in the Military
Origin: VA
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, The witchhunt throughout the 1990's that devastated the U.S. Navy because of the Tailhook incident is now spreading within the Army contributing to the wreckage of careers, marriages and lives, with many good men and women leaving the military services; and

WHEREAS, The Army's proud heritage is also being maligned and impacted by militarily inexperienced politicians and the press, as was the Navy's; and

WHEREAS, The basic and overriding cause of these problems, as well as the outrageous and reprehensible problems of sexual harassment, rapes and improper relationships, are social engineering experiments forced on the military leadership by the Congress and the Executive Branch to train women side by side with men to fight our country's wars; and

WHEREAS, These peacetime projects are failing because of biological differences between men and women, and when they are thrown together in forced intimate and hierarchical situations, and despite the severest Army and Navy regulations and punishments, there will always be either a strong distraction or attraction to each other which undermines discipline; and

WHEREAS, The program to include women on Navy combatant ships with its same forced, intimate and hierarchical situations has resulted in pregnancies and broken marriages, destroying the morale of both the crews at sea and the families at home and potentially impacting on readiness; and

WHEREAS, To have young Army women training for combat with all it entails, side by side with young male warriors and male superiors, is as ill-conceived as the Navy shipboard scenario causing fraternization and worse; and

WHEREAS, The military leadership, by not acknowledging and facing squarely the cause of the existing sexual turmoil, has not demanded the reevaluation of these policies; and

WHEREAS, Women soldiers and sailors are excellent workers and are often smarter and more innovative than their male military counterparts; and

WHEREAS, Women's roles in the military should be an enhancement rather than a detriment to National Security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported the noncombatant roles of women in the Armed Forces; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That military basic training should be separated by gender as it has been throughout our military history until the past few years; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That each service chief should honestly and fairly reevaluate the extent to which mixed gender practices are damaging traditional standards of command, discipline, fairness and cohesion, changing policies where damage is being done, and enhancing policies where gender mixing does work; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That if the service chiefs, for whatever reason, do not take such action, then the Congress should take the necessary steps to begin the process of change for the purpose of preserving national security as well as military traditions, values and readiness rather than subjecting them to external agendas.

Resolution No. 211: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation

Origin: National Security
Submitted by: National Security
Consolidated with No. 19 (ND) and No. 105 (MD)

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, prohibit the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Disabled military retirees are entitled to receive disability compensation only by "waiving that portion of retired pay as is equal in amount to such compensation," so that disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation which is not subject to taxation; and

WHEREAS, Federal civil service employees, as well as other Federal government workers, may concurrently receive retirement pay for longevity and disability payments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that it is inequitable and unfair to authorize one group to receive federal retirement pay and disability payments while prohibiting disabled military retirees from receiving both; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, the rationale for this disparity is that "VA disability compensation is (meant) for disabled veterans who have left the service before completing a career and before qualifying for retired pay...disabled military retirees did not experience a reduction in earning potential during their military career"; and

WHEREAS, Such rationale defies both logic and the facts: There are approximately 140,000 disabled military retirees who qualified for military retirement yet, during their careers, sustained non-career-ending injuries, combat wounds, and other ailments which subsequently impacted adversely on their post-retirement earning potential and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Military retirement pay and VA disability compensation were earned and awarded for entirely different purposes: Veterans disability compensation is not awarded for being "in-service" but for becoming disabled as a result of military service; and the fact that a veteran who served in the military for 20 or more years and successfully completed his or her career despite serving with service-connected ailments should be rewarded rather than penalized for not being medically retired; and

WHEREAS, Veterans rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs at 30 percent or more disabled are also entitled to receive a dependents' allowance (38 USC Section 1115) which is also denied unless a portion of military retirement pay is waived in order to receive veterans tax-free disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion realizes that cost is a major obstacle to changing the offset requirement but that the 100 percent offset requirement is an inordinate penalty, especially for those retirees who are most severely disabled and whose service-incurred disabilities have precluded them from pursuing the same kinds of post-service career opportunities as their nondisabled counterparts; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported and will continue to support Congressional action to amend Title 38, United States Code, so as to authorize the full funding of concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees, regardless of the degree of their disability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion strongly urges Congressional action to fully fund the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay for longevity and disability compensation with dependents' allowance, but that it also supports efforts that would make progress toward achieving partial concurrent receipt particularly for more severely disabled retirees.

Resolution No. 212: Cohesion Within the Army's Active and Reserve Components
Origin: National Security
Submitted by: National Security

WHEREAS, America's Army to include its Active, Guard, Reserve and civilian components have honorably served together during most conflicts from the Revolutionary War through the Persian Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, The Army components were divided by the Vietnam experience yet were realigned by former Army Chief of Staff Creighton Abram's call for a revitalized and inclusive Total Force in the 1970's which validated his vision of cohesion of all the Army components and which realized its first major test during Operation Desert Storm; and

WHEREAS, Our Army components, recognized as the most technically and tactically effective in the world, are being severely challenged to remain globally engaged while having their budgets and respective force structures annually reduced; and

WHEREAS, The relationship among the components of the Army appear to be severely strained in meeting these challenges rather than bonded together as they have been in the past; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion urges all components of the United States Army, including the Active, Guard, Reserves and civilian components to bond together in the spirit of the Total Army and to seek mutual resolutions to the downsizing of their respective components.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 63 (MT) 1997 NC: **Military Voting Rights**
Resolution No. 78 (IL) 1997 NC: **Military Honors for Military Retirees**
Resolution No. 160 (KS) 1997 NC: **Military Voting Rights**

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 24 (CO) 1997 NC: **Class Action Lawsuit for Military Retiree Health Care**
Resolution No. 64 (MT) 1997 NC: **The Military Coalition**
Resolution No. 41 (UT) 1997 NC: **Expand Eligibility Dates for Vietnam Service Medal**

Rejected

Resolution No. 124 (TX) 1997 NC: **National Defense Service Medal for Service During Lebanon/Grenada and Panama**
Resolution No. 141 (IN) 1997 NC: **Expand Eligibility Dates for Vietnam Service Medal**

Naval Affairs Committee
Robert L. Klipstine (OH), Chairman

No new resolutions were received. The Committee conducted a review of previously adopted positions and reaffirmed their relevance.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: 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.

Category I - Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post participation - Department of Florida
Individual Participation - Department of Minnesota

Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post participation - Department of Maryland
Individual Participation - Department of Wisconsin

Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Nebraska

Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Maine

Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Rhode Island

Category VI - less than 10,000 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Hawaii

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Over fifty Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of over 7,500 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 1996-1997 are the Departments of Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Vermont which speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Mr. Commander, this completes the report of the National Security Commission Committee. As a delegate to this Convention from the Department of Indiana, I move the adoption of this report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? Is there discussion?

Microphone No. 1?

Friend, could you please give me your name?

MR. BYRON LEWIS, Utah: Duly elected Delegate Byron Lewis from the Department of Utah. I'd like to bring up the issue on Resolution 41 from the Department of Utah. In checking things out, it was in a sense rather vague and the intent did not reach the Committee as intended, and ask you reconsider, that it go back to standing committee.

The intent was that in visiting the Vietnam Memorial this spring in Washington D.C. the 75 names that are from '73 to '75 were put on there due to much research by myself and other people. They were evidently put on there by mistake, but they are there.

The issue with this is not money, it is not anything but the fact it affects the people on the wall and approximately 7,500 people who were there, including the gentleman we had at our state convention from the 9th Marines who too part in operation Baby Saver that went into 'Nam. This involves people that went into Cambodia, Laos, and such that were on the clandestine missions or our government didn't want to admit it.

The fact is we're talking about 8,000 people, especially the people who have deceased sons and daughters on the wall saying, "Do we say thank you, you did a job but we're not going to recognize you?" To those who are still alive, do we thank you? Let them be allowed to wear the medal. It is only for those who were in Southeast Asia, nowhere else. They had to be on duty in that area during that time. We had a ship captured during that time. We had casualties, a helicopter went down.

We're not talking a membership date change. We're just talking recognition to people who served. Instead of saying thank you, my friend, for serving, instead of saying, thanks, but I don't know who the hell you are, I ask that your consideration be given to these 8,000 people, to 75 of whom we're posthumously saying, "Thank you for being there after we walked out." After we were forced by our Senate, not the military, to leave Vietnam and leave our prisoners behind. And we still don't know where they're at. Think of these veterans, say thank you. Don't turn your back on them.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Sir, are you a delegate?

MR. LEWIS: Yes, I am.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Would you like to make a motion that this be set aside?

DELEGATE FROM UTAH: I very proudly move that that be set aside for consideration. Please remember these folks. They cared, do we?

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: We have a motion on the floor, Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: There's been a motion made and as a courtesy, to set this particular Resolution Number—

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Resolution 41.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: To set Resolution 41 aside for reconsideration. Has it been seconded? It's been seconded. Discussion? All in favor say aye. Opposed? Aye's have it.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: Now you take a vote on the report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We will continue with the vote on the report. It's been seconded. Discussion?

All in favor so indicate by the usual sign of aye. All opposed? The aye's have it.

And I declare the motion of the report of the National Security adopted with exception of Resolution No. 41.

Mr. Chairman, would you read Resolution No. 41, please?

Resolution No. 41: Expanding Eligibility Dates for Vietnam Service Medal
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Security

WHEREAS, Our government sent troops into Vietnam after 29 March, 1973 to 31 May, 1975; and

WHEREAS, These troops came under enemy fire with some losing their lives, as well as missing; and

WHEREAS, American troops serving in Vietnam after 29 March, 1973 to 31 May, 1975 are not considered Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, Anyone who serves as members of our armed forces should be recognized for the service they rendered; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Orlando, Florida, September 2, 3, 4, 1997, That The American Legion supports Legislation which will expand the dates to include the above dates where our involvement with troops in hostile situations in Indochina be included as part of the Vietnam War; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all veterans who served in Indochina during time of these hostile situations be classified as Vietnam veterans and be awarded the Vietnam Service Medal.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: The Committee moves for the rejection of this resolution.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Committee moves for the rejection of this resolution. Is there a second? Is there discussion? All in favor will signify by saying aye. All opposed? Nays have it. The motion will be set aside.

We call on our National Judge Advocate for an explanation.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: The motion has been overruled. We will either have to have a motion to refer, or reject.

CHAIRMAN TITUS: Okay, as a Delegate from Indiana, I make the motion to refer it to this Standing Committee on National Security. Resolution 41.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: You heard the motion. It's been seconded. Is there a discussion? All in favor say aye. All opposed no. The aye's have it.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: National Vice Commander Bowen, would you please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business, please.

... National Vice Commander Bowen assumed the Chair.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: I'm honored to preside over the next order of business during the 79th National Convention. This is the time when we present to

our National Commander, Joe Frank of Missouri, a plaque and the Colors of his year in office. I now call on E. Roy Stone, Jr. of South Carolina to present the Plaque.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
E. Roy Stone, Jr.
Past National Commander

It is a high privilege that I have to present the Plaque to our Commander. In the field of rehabilitation, one of the things that is necessary for that person to be rehabilitated is to have patience and to persevere. Our Commander, as a result of his wounds, has rehabilitated himself and has had patience and has persevered.

A year ago, we elected him our National Commander, and we went forth with his lovely wife, Barbara, to carry out the will of The American Legion. We armed him with our mandates and our program. He has carried that program throughout all Legiondom, and he has carried it to the Congress and even to the White House itself.

His courage has been a part of his career. His courage and his will has rubbed off on many Legionnaires, to such an extent that when we were frustrated or when we needed help, we were able to call upon him and his courage. I hope that we would all rededicate ourselves to the high principles of The American Legion.

Now, he has come home. He has come back to this Convention and given us a report. All of you have witnessed what has gone on here and what went on in the field when he was traveling around. It is with high privilege and honor that I have, on behalf of the delegates of this Convention and on behalf of the Legionnaires throughout this country, to present him a Plaque which will signify that he has served us as National Commander The American Legion for the year 1996 through 1997.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: At this time I call on John Geiger of Illinois to present the Colors.

Colors
John H. Geiger
Past National Commander

Please rise and join with me in presenting his official set of National Colors to our retiring Commander of The American Legion. Color Guard, present the Commander's Colors to his station. Hand salute. You may be seated.

National Commander Joe Frank, you are approaching your final hour of your year of dedicated service to The American Legion. Past National Commander E. Roy Stone has warmly expressed our thoughts and our thanks to you. Your record of national achievements this past year are a source of pride to you, for your family, for the loyal Legionnaires of Missouri, and for each of us.

One year ago in Salt Lake City, these National Colors, the honored Flag of The United States, and the proud crimson banner of the National Commander, were presented to you in trust that they would be honored and protected. Your personal commitment, your leadership and accomplishments have truly demonstrated that our trust has been fully respected. On behalf of every member of The American Legion, it is my honor to present to you, National Commander Joe Frank, your own national standards to be proudly displayed in your home or office as a testimony of our love and respect for you and Barbara.

Color Guard, please present the Commander's Colors. The audience will please rise and give us a hand salute.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, John Geiger, Past National Commander. It is, indeed, a privilege and an honor. I would be remiss if I didn't thank my family for the great support that they have given me. If it wasn't for them and you, I wouldn't be here. It has been the experience of my lifetime, as I mentioned earlier, and I will never forget it as long as I live. I will go back to the blue cap and work 10 times as hard.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Color Guard, please retire the Colors of the National Commander. That was the National Championship Color Guard of Speedway Post 500 of Indiana.

... National Commander Frank resumes the Chair.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Mr. Adjutant, do you have any communications to bring to this Convention.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Yes, I do, Mr. Commander. On the letterhead of the Secretary of State, Washington, D.C., August the 18th, 1997:

> Let me extend my warm greetings to the members of The American Legion as you gather in Orlando for your 1997 Annual Convention.
>
> As veterans of the United States armed forces, you have shown the utmost patriotism through your military service to the country, and your support for those who continue to serve around the world today. You know that nothing is more fundamental to America's national security than the quality and readiness of America's men and women in uniform. As Secretary of State, I also recognize that our ability to exert political influence and act as a constructive force for peace abroad depends, in part, on the strength of our defenses and at times on the credible threat of force to back up our diplomacy.
>
> I command the members of The American Legion for the legacy of strength and leadership you have contributed to our nation throughout your almost 80 years of service. Your support for veterans and their families, and your efforts to assist families of personnel deployed in Bosnia, in the Persian Gulf region, and elsewhere, benefit not only your members but also all Americans.
>
> I salute The American Legion for its 1996 resolution in support of NATO enlargement. As the largest veterans organization in the world, your strong and early leadership in support of this policy has been invaluable. I was proud to be present at the White House in early July when your National Commander, Joseph Frank and President Clinton spoke so eloquently of the importance of NATO enlargement.
>
> It is my understanding that this year your convention will consider a resolution specifically endorsing the addition of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Your resolution will help to stress to the American public that NATO enlargement benefits our national interest, will strengthen the Alliance itself, and can help prevent another European war of the kind that claimed so many American lives in this century. The American Legion's continuing support for this historic initiative would be an essential contribution toward the success of enlargement and a new era of peace in Europe.
>
> I applaud your dedication to protecting America's national security, and I extend my best wishes for an enjoyable convention and every future success.
>
> Signed,
>
> —Madeleine K. Albright,
> Secretary of State

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: On the letterhead of The Governor of the State of Florida dated September 1, 1997:

> Dear Fellow Legionnaires: As a member of the Florida American Legion, I bring you greetings for the National Convention.
>
> The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans organization consisting of approximately 3.1 million men and women who continue to serve our nation as volunteers in a variety of worthy efforts. This devoted serve to our community continues to benefit a diverse public through programs including American Legion Boys State, baseball- and scholarship awards. Members of The American Legion are to be commended for their volunteerism, community spirit, and dedication as outstanding examples of commitment to their county..
>
> My best wishes are sent for an enjoyable convention and a pleasant stay in Orlando.
>
> With kind regards, I am, Sincerely,
>
> —Lawton Chiles, Governor
> of the State of Florida.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: At this time I would like to give each National Vice Commander and our National historian an opportunity to give a brief report to the delegates of this Convention, the highlights of their year. These men and one woman served with diligence, with honor, and with dedication in the highest tradition of leaders of our great veterans' operation.

Wilson Timmons of Florida, as many of you know, is recovering from surgery. I have talked with his wife, Julie, and she and Wilson want to say 'thank you' for all of the cards and all of the letters that he has received. They are especially thankful for many prayers. We all wish Wilson a full recovery and return to an active Legion life. He has done a good job this year as National Vice Commander.

I'll now call on National Historian Bobbe Stuvengen.

NATIONAL HISTORIAN STUVENGEN: When a person speaks of having a dream come true, it's often only a repetition of a cliché. May I assure you, however, that this past year has been truly a dream come true for me.

I cannot express my appreciation strongly enough to Commander Frank for awarding me the honor of serving as his and your National Historian. Thanks to the Headquarters Staff, especially those in the library, and to the members of the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion. Thank you, also, to the members of the Department of Wisconsin for the encouragement and support which led to this appointment. I will treasure these memories for the remainder of my life.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I now call on O.T. Taylor of Hawaii.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER TAYLOR: It has been an honor and a privilege to be a National Vice Commander under Commander Frank. Now, I want to thank the Western Departments for giving me the distinct honor of representing them and being number one of the regions. You guys did a terrific job. I didn't have to give a speech anywhere. I don't know if you were saving money for The American Legion or trying to keep me off the stage, but you guys did a terrific job, and I hope you do it again this coming year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I call on National Vice Commander Roger Wild, Nebraska.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER WILD: I want to thank the ten states that I covered this year. It has been a very rewarding experience. And you from Wisconsin, I will wear that Green Bay Packer sweatshirt. For Minnesota, I will display that aviation pin that you gave me on that weekend. It was very rewarding. I had an opportunity that weekend to visit my brother from Minneapolis. Thank you very much for your hospitality. North Dakota, I will display your buffalo up along with my, rabbit or something like that, that came from Wyoming. Thank you, Past Department Commander from Wyoming for making 100 percent membership this year. Keep up the good work. Montana, I had an opportunity to visit with you at the Regional Workshop in Great Falls, and I too appreciate very much what you have done for The American Legion. I know that you are not usually in our Midwest Caucus, but keep up the good work. I enjoyed your hospitality in working with your Legionnaires.

To the Missouri Commander, I had a great visit down there at the Mid-Year Conference, and also at the Truman dedication. I said down there that I don't know what Harry Truman would think about it today if he was alive about our constitutional amendment to our Flag. I know what he would say, the buck doesn't stop here, and he'd give 'em hell. To South Dakota, our neighboring state, we worked with you a lot and I want to thank Glen Green for giving me some guidance to the National Organization. Thank you for the pheasant belt buckle which I wear with pride. I hate to wear it through the detectors in the airports, but I always try to do that anyway. Iowa is my home state originally but I will never forget you nor the 40 visits that we made in eight days to your Department. Also to Kansas, twenty-seven in seven days.

One thing I learned from those visits was that we visited posts with 15, 20, 25 memberships. Some of those Posts had never seen a red cap in their Post or in their community a white cap, but they enjoyed the visits very much. I think that's something we have to do, to go back and show the Post members that we do care about them and we are concerned about them. They may not bring in a lot of memberships, but that Post will stay alive as long as we show interest in them.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: As donations come forward to the stage, I will stop what I am doing to acknowledge them.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Commander, you have received a $400 contribution to The American Legion National Emergency Disaster Relief Fund from Post 29 in Russellville, Kentucky.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Thank you, Kentucky. I now call now on National Vice Commander Al Robotti of New Jersey.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER ROBOTTI: I really appreciated the opportunity to serve with you, Mr. Commander. No matter where we ever went in my area, the National Commander was there joining us. He really brought the people's attention to what this great organization is all about.

For you who are in my district, the New England States—New Jersey New York and Pennsylvania—you did a wonderful job for us to continue our programs in the state organization of The American Legion.

No one climbs the ranks in a great organization without any help. I want to sincerely thank all of those people who were responsible for me serving this great organization this year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I call on National Vice Commander Bob Bowen of Virginia.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: I thank the Legionnaires of Virginia and the Southern Caucus for placing my name in nomination last year in Salt Lake City, and for the delegates gathered there who elected me to serve as National Vice Commander during these past 12 months. To paraphrase Charles Dickens, it has been the best of times and the worst of times. The worst of times was when I attended memorial services and/or funerals for four of Virginia's Past Department Commanders in a nine month period: Jimmy Draper; 'Hoppy' Bowman, Noland Cutler and L. Eldon James who also served as the National Vice Commander. Just two days ago one of the Department Commanders who served in the Central Region this year, Walter Ballard of the Department of the District of Columbia passed away. May they rest in peace.

It was the best of times in that I truly believe that under Commander Joe's leadership, our team has made a difference this year. Our membership is on the upswing. We are halfway through another, and I hope, successful effort to win the passage of a constitutional amendment to protect our Flag from physical desecration. Also, we are poised to introduce legislation for enactment of The American Legion's GI Bill of Health. We've taken a bold step and publicly announced our support for NATO expansion, and Commander Joe made that announcement in a White House East Room ceremony with the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs in attendance. And that event alone said volumes to me about the respect that our nation's leaders have for our great organization.

We have continued to push for the fullest possible accounting of our POW/MIAs, not only in Vietnam and Laos, but in Korea and Russia as well. We have added our voice to the effort to secure final approval for a World War II Memorial honoring those men and women who saved the world 50 years ago, many of whom are here today. And we have demonstrated once again that Legionnaires have big hearts, especially when it comes to aiding other members of the greater Legion family. More than 1.4 million dollars in emergency grants were given to Legion, Auxiliary and SAL members and posts in the first six months of 1997.The bulk of those grants was caused by flooding along the Ohio, Mississippi and Red Rivers.

I consider myself fortunate to have been on board such an eventful year in our Legion's history. I am appreciative of the many courtesies extended to my wife and me as we traveled throughout the Central Region, and to members of the National Staff who were quick to respond to any and all requests for assistance.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: And now, if Commander Frank would join with the Vice Commanders, Historian, our Chaplain, our Sergeant-At-Arms and Bob Boxdorfer up on the center stage. I have a confession to make. We have been plotting behind your back all year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Well, what's new?

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: That's the good news. The bad news is that your wife helped us.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Not so new.

NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER BOWEN: We asked Barbara what in the world we could get for a retiring National Commander of The American Legion that he would appreciate in the coming years. She said that a display case would be nice, because he's picked up so many trinkets along the way. So we got him a display case, and figured that it

really wasn't big enough, so we have a picture of a curio cabinet. We have a check with which you can buy a large curio, a couple small ones or many curios for your memorabilia. On one of those curios we would appreciate it if you would affix this brass plaque, "Presented to Joseph J. Frank, National Commander of The American Legion by National Vice Commanders Robert L. 'Bob' Bowen; Albert M. Robotti; Orland H. Taylor; Wilson R. Timmons; Roger L. Wild; National Chaplain Charles H. Richmond; National Historian Barbara Stuvengen; National Sergeant-At-Arms Robert Horenkamp; National Commander's Aide Robert L. Boxdorfer. Thanks For The Memories. 79th National Convention, Orlando, Florida, August 29 - September 4, 1997".

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Oh, that's so nice. I thank each and every one of you. Outstanding job, all of them, the National Vice Commanders, our Historian and the next gentleman I'm about to call on. He served for God and Country, and I will now call for a brief response to this Convention from our National Chaplain, Charles Richmond of Oklahoma.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN RICHMOND: I would like to state my appreciation for serving as your chaplain during this past year, especially for the support of the many chaplains that we have, and not only the chaplains, but that the motto "Service to God and Country."

It has been my privilege to serve you in many capacities, including my visit to the U.S. Senate where I was able to give the prayer, wearing The American Legion cap, showing our Service to God and Country, and to work with the chaplains in the many other areas.

If you wondered what my purpose has been in this organization? There is a statement: "Give 'em hell, Harry. I remember a little story I heard years ago that I think fits the chaplains of this organization. A young man was filling the pulpit of a new church where he had been called as pastor. He didn't have much experience. It was a large church, and in his first day he filled the pulpit of that church. But the retiring minister had been there that morning to hear him. The new pastor walked up to the pulpit, and found a card left by the past minister. And this would be my word to you and my word to the other chaplains: It did not say give them hell, it said give them heaven. That's Service to God and Country.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: National Adjutant?

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: There were some prizes being drawn at the patriotic parade booth. Thank you for visiting their booth during the National Convention and registering for prizes. The first prize of a patriotic jacket was won by Mary Hall from Euless, Texas. The second prize was won by Ruth E. Lamb of East Haven, Connecticut. Third prize, which is a patriotic CD, was won by Richard Conigilaro of Penfield, Pennsylvania.

I would like the Executive Directors to join me here. First John Sommer who is Executive Director of our Washington Office. Next is Dan Wheeler who is Executive Director of your Indianapolis Office. Here is Ron Brooks, who is a Director of our Marketing Services Group located in Park 100, Indianapolis.

Mr. Commander, we of your staff wish to thank you for your leadership, your incredible vision, your outstanding motivation, your always positive outlook, and your encouragement of the National Staff. You have always given us a quest for tomorrow and not looking back. So you have taken our vision always forward. You are not only our National Commander, you are a valued, deep personal friend. I think the word that our World War I founders termed—comrade— really says it all.

We understand that you have a cottage or a lake house down in the Ozarks and that you like to fish up there. But for the last three years, since your candidacy and term as National Commander, you haven't had the opportunities to go fishing. We understand that's what you are going to do when you get back home, so on behalf of your staff, we want to outfit you with the best. You get a fishing pole, graphite, one of the best spinning reels, and a 'bazooka.'

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Bob, John, Dan, and Ron, before I open this, I must say something. All of the staff, Bob Spanogle in particular, and John Sommer, that I have never worked with anyone in my life, ever, with so much professionalism. I have known these guys for years. We came aboard around the same time as 'blue cappers.' I just can't say enough about all of the staff. They are so great, it is outstanding, and they deserve a round of applause.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers
National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We will now move to special order of business. The election of National Officers. The National Judge Advocate, Philip Onderdonk, of Maryland, will read the Rules of Convention governing nomination and election of officers.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE ONDERDONK: The rules for election of 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 the 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 or candidates receiving the majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot should 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.

That completes the reading of the rules for election of National Officers.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: As Chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as Judge of the Election, L. Carey Bankhead of Missouri, and as his Tellers of the Election, William 'Chick' Ciciotte of Maine, Cornelius T. O'Neill of Virginia, and H. Melvin Napier of Idaho. Will the Judge and Tellers of the election please come forward?

National Adjutant Bob Spanogic will now call the roll of departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Turn on all mikes for the purpose of the roll call that will start with Alabama.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLARENCE JACOBS, Alabama: Clarence Jacobs, Delegation Chairman from the land of sunny beaches, the base of space technology, home of great football and land of surprises. Alabama proudly yields to the State of Maine.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Alabama yields to Maine

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KENNETH SERCERCHI, Maine: Kenneth Sercerchi, Delegate Chair of the great Department of Maine, yields the floor.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Does Maine wish to have anyone recognized?

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN KENNETH SERCERCHI, Maine: At this time, the great State of Maine would yield the floor for the purpose of nomination to Past Department Commander, Past NEC, Clifford L. Quinney.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The floor recognizes your request.

DELEGATE CLIFFORD L. QUINNEY, Maine: It is with great pride and a high honor, with a sense of satisfaction as a fellow Legionnaire, that I nominate a very dear friend and a most dedicated Legionnaire for the office of National Commander 1997-1998.

On a personal note, we first met when I was a Department Vice Commander and was invited to install a young Vietnam veteran as Post Commander from Wiscasset, Maine. Having had the extreme pleasure of nominating and installing this Maine Legionnaire in all his elected offices, one could never imagine that one day we, from Maine, would have the honor and privilege of nominating a second National Commander to the greatest veterans organization in the world.

This Legionnaire, from his very inception into our great organization, has given untiring leadership and deep devotion in any position he has held, whether elected or appointed. We, who have had the privilege of knowing and working with this Vietnam veteran, believe that he reflects the very image for which our great organization was found.

Our candidate Anthony G. Jordan has served your American Legion with dignity, discipline, honor and integrity. Ready to accept any new challenge, our candidate believes strongly we must ready ourselves for any changes than may confront us. Always a man of great ambition and expectations, he will strive for an All Time High in membership. A charter member of the Flag Amendment campaign, he will help win our effort to protect our national symbol, this candidate declares. He questions the fate of our senior veteran members. They gave us a legacy: taking care of the veteran, widow, and orphan child. This must and will be carried on to the highest degree in the halls of Congress. We will not falter.

Where are our women veterans? Let's bring them into the fold on a team effort. Which direction is our younger generation going? We shall be the leader with our many youth programs and the guiding light for our future America. There is always a tomorrow, this candidate states, with team work to be done in every phase of our Legion programs. We must rebuild the National Emergency Fund; train Legionnaires through The American Legion Extension Course.

Anthony G. Jordan is a 32-year and Life Member of The American Legion Post No. 54, Wiscasset, Maine. He served his home Department as well as Post, County, District Vice Commander and Commander. He was elected National Executive Committeeman for eight years.

Our candidate has served actively on numerous National Commissions and Committees, including Foreign Relations Council Chairman. He served as President of the National Past Department Commander's Club. This candidate is a member of the Forty and Eight, the Elks Lodge No. 964, and ANAVICUS. Our candidate serves on the Governor's Board of Registration for Professional Engineers for the State of Maine. Anthony G. Jordan, a devoted family man, and his lovely wife, Claudette, reside in Augusta, Maine, and are the parents of six adult children.

Delegates to the 79th American Legion National Convention, we believe Anthony G. Jordan has won your respect by his dedication and devotion to The American Legion, with his close adherence to the principles set forth in the Preamble to our Constitution. It shall be noted that he is well-schooled in the history of The American Legion, it's aims and purposes. With much emotion, I say to you, words alone can never express how proud we from the great State of Maine are, as I place the name of Anthony G. Jordan in nomination for election to the office of National Commander, 1997-1998.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Mr. Adjutant will continue the roll.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Alaska.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DEAN C. HILL, Alaska: The beautiful State of Alaska, the great land and place where friendships are born but never end, proudly yield for the purpose of seconding to the great State of Georgia.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Georgia.

DELEGATE ROBERT CAMPBELL, Georgia: I am the delegate from the great State of Georgia. We have a man on the platform for the purpose of a second, Roger Tingler.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Roger Tingler is recognized for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE ROGER TINGLER, Georgia: It is indeed a pleasure to be given this opportunity to share my comments on the dedicated Legionnaire who is a man who has exercised undying commitment to the service of veterans and family and community, which is the proud traditional fashion of The American Legion. I am referring to my candidate and yours, Anthony G. 'Tony' Jordan.

Tony Jordan is an attentive and a loving family man. He and his wife, Claudette, reside in Augusta, Maine and are proud parents of six grown children. Now retired, he was a senior technical buyer at the Maine Yankee Power Plant for over 25 years. This candidate is an active participant in community activities. Some of these activities include membership in the Forty and Eight, the local Elks Lodge 964 of Augusta, Maine, and a member of the Army, Navy, Air Force Veterans in Canada and United States. In addition, he is currently serving an appointment by the Governor's Board of Registration for Professional Engineers for the State of Maine.

Parallel to his dedication and devotion to The American Legion, I had the distinct pleasure of serving with Tony during his chairmanship of the Membership & Post Activities Committee from 1991 to 1993. During that period, Tony provided the inspiration and the motivation through the design of The American Legion membership and its programs.

It gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of Anthony G. Jordan for the high office of National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Mr. Adjutant, would you continue the roll.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Arizona.

ACTING DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIAM BINGHAM, Arizona: Bill Bingham, NEC and Acting Chairman of the great State of Arizona delegation, the great Grand Canyon State, yields to the great State of Idaho.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Idaho.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN THOMAS A. MOORE, Idaho: I am Delegate Moore, Delegation Chairman from the Gem State, great Department of Idaho, and I yield to Alan Lance who is on stage for the purpose of a second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We recognize Al Lance for the purpose of second.

DELEGATE ALAN LANCE, Idaho: The delegates and Legionnaires from the great Department of Idaho are proud to second the nomination of our great friend, Tony Jordan, from the Department of Maine. While it is generally recognized that Maine potatoes are inferior to those produced in the great State of Idaho, Maine's Legionnaires are uniformly first rate, and Tony Jordan is a first rate Legionnaire, and will be a first rate National Commander.

Our candidate earned his eligibility in The American Legion by virtue of his service to our nation in the United States Army, 1963-1965, which culminated in his discharge, which was honorable. Tony was honored to be the first Vietnam veteran to serve his Post as Post Commander where he achieved an All-Time high in membership for his Post for two consecutive years. Tony was also the first Vietnam veteran to serve the Department of Maine as its Department Commander. In 1984, Tony was selected to be one of ten Vietnam veterans to represent The American Legion at Arlington National Cemetery for the entombment of the Unknown Soldier From the Vietnam War.

Fellow Legionnaires and fellow delegates, the Legionnaires from the Department of Idaho are proud to second the nomination of my friend, Tony Jordan for the office of National Commander of The American Legion. We urge your support for this great American.

...At this time a demonstration ensued in support of the nomination of Anthony G. 'Tony' Jordan as National Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Convention will come to order. The Adjutant will continue the roll.

...The National Adjutant Spanogle calls upon each Department in turn.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLAUDE CARPENTER, Arkansas: I am Claude Carpenter, NECman and Chairman of the Arkansas delegation. Arkansas proudly seconds and supports the nomination of our friend, Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: California, 147,000 strong, proudly seconds the motion for Tony Jordan, next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JACK TARPEY, Colorado: Jack Tarpev, Delegate Chairman of the State of Colorado, Colorado seconds and supports the endorsement of our dear friend and next Commander of The American Legion, Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Connecticut seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Delaware seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: District of Columbia seconds the nomination of Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The Department of Florida, proud host of the 79th National Convention, is honored to second the nomination of our friend, Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ARNIE MATANKY, France: Arnie Matanky, Delegation Chairman of the Department of France, birthplace of The American Legion, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN WILLIAM W. DAVES, Hawaii: Aloha. Bill Daves, Delegate Chairman, seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE RICHARD E. SNODGRASS, Illinois: Dick Snodgrass, the great Department of Illinois proudly and honorably seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Indiana proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CARROLL E. WEGNER, Iowa: Carroll Wegner, Department Chairman of the Department of Iowa, proudly seconds the nomination.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Kansas proudly endorses the candidacy of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE RANDALL COFFMAN, Kentucky: Randall Coffman, Alternate NEC from the great Department of Kentucky, home of the greatest two minutes of sports, the first Saturday in May every year at the twin spires at Churchill Downs, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ASA E. STEWART, JR., Louisiana: Asa Stewart, Chairman of the Department of Louisiana, wishes all of you to come and party next year at the National Convention, and we proudly second the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE WILLIAM B. PROCTOR, JR., Maryland: Bill Proctor, Department Commander of the great Department of Maryland, home of succulent blue crab, and the soon to be world champion Baltimore Orioles, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan as National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN LESLIE J. MCKITTRICK, JR., Massachusetts: Leslie J. McKittrick, Jr., Delegation Chairman of the great Bay State, home of past National Commander 'Jake' Comer, and now the new home of 'Comrade Chicken,' proudly seconds the nomination of our fellow New Englander, Anthony 'Tony' Jordan, for the high office of National Commander.

DELEGATE H. DEAN GEDDES, Mexico: Dean Geddes, the NEC from the Department of Mexico, the home of the two newest Posts in The American Legion, chartered this week, and the home of the National Commander's Fishing Derby, started by Commander Dan Ludwig who thought he caught the biggest fish until Joe Frank caught a bigger one this year. Dan Ludwig will not believe the pictures I show him, but we hope next year Tony Jordan can do a little better. We second the nomination of our new Commander, Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RANDOLPH J. BROWNE, Michigan: Randy Browne, Delegate Chairman of the State of Michigan, home of the National Hockey League World Champion Stanley Cup holders, the Detroit Redwings; the Detroit Lions tied for first place in the Central Division of the National Football League; and the Detroit Tigers hoping for a first-round draft in baseball for next year, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Minnesota proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Mississippi proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JOEL M. HAUCK, Missouri: Joel Hauck, Chairman of the Delegation for the great State of Missouri, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN MAURICE DEVERILL, Montana: Maurice Deverill, Chairman of the Delegation from the great State of Montana, home of the Big Sky Country, happily seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE GARY ALBERS, Nebraska: Gary Albers, Department Commander from the great State of Nebraska, home of the National Vice Commander Roger Wild, and the Big Red football. Myself and all the delegates are honored to second the nomination of Anthony 'Tony' Jordan of Maine for the high office of National Commander of The American Legion.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Nevada, the Silver State, home of bright lights, one-armed bandits and a few red lights, seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE ANTONIO RABBIA. New Hampshire: Tony Rabbia, Commander of New Hampshire, we proudly endorses and seconds our neighbor to the east of us, Maine, Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: New Jersey, the home of the nobody Jets, is very proud to endorse Tony Jordan for National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: New Mexico seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN RONALD C. BERTRAND, New York: Ron Bertrand, Delegation Chairman of the Department of New York, is proud to second the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE JERRY L. HEDRICK, North Carolina: Jerry Hedrick, NEC North Carolina, we proudly second the nomination of our friend, Tony Jordan, for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JIM CLIFFORD, North Dakota: Jim Clifford, Delegate Chairman from the Department of North Dakota, home of three Past National Commanders, and the only living Past National Adjutant, and the state which for nearly 40 years has led the nation, with over 50 percent of veterans enrolled in The American Legion, proudly seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN DARELL BISHOP, Ohio: Darell Bishop, Delegate Chairman of the Department of Ohio, Big Twelve winner of the state that never quits, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for our next National Commander of our great organization.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The Sooner State of Oklahoma, proudly seconds the nomination of A. G. 'Tony' Jordan.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN ROBERT LIEBENOW, Oregon: Rob Liebenow, Delegation Chairman for the State of Oregon, where our rain goes into our tall fir trees, not into our swimming pools, give full support to Tony Jordan, our next National Commander.

DELEGATE LOUISE CHASE, Pennsylvania: Louise Chase, Commander of the largest state, Pennsylvania, where the cradle of liberty was founded, most proudly endorses the candidacy of Anthony Jordan for National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The Philippine delegation, traveling from several thousand islands in the Philippine Archipelago, has flown 15,000 miles, to second the nomination of Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The Department of Puerto Rico, the shining star of the Caribbean, our delegation seconds proudly the nomination of Mr. Anthony G. 'Tony' Jordan for the high office of National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN NOEL PETISCE, Rhode Island: Noel Petisce, Delegate Chairman from the biggest little state in the union, Rhode Island, proudly seconds the nomination from a Legionnaire from the New England State of Maine, Anthony G. 'Tony' Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The great State of South Carolina proudly endorses Tony Jordan for National Commander, 1997-1998.

DELEGATE DONAVAN R. MASON, South Dakota: Don Mason from the great State of South Dakota, birthplace of American Legion Baseball, are very proud to second the nomination of Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE JENNINGS B. LORING, Tennessee: J.B. Loring, Department Commander of Tennessee, and soon to have the number one football team of the nation, the Tennessee Volunteers, proudly endorses Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The great Lone Star State of Texas proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Utah, number one in the nation. Now that we are rid of our rubber chicken, now we are going to send all of our soaring eagles for Tony Jordan.

DELEGATE JOSEPH N. COREY, Vermont: Delegate Joe Corey, Vermont, home of the Green Mountain Boys, proudly seconds the nomination of our friend, Anthony Tony Jordan for the high office of National Commander.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JIM LASHURE, Virginia: Jim LaShure, Department Commander from the great Commonwealth of Virginia, and Delegate Chairman. Today, I rise from the home of Presidents Washington and Jefferson, and Butch Miller, our candidate for National Commander for New Orleans, to give solid unanimous support from the Commonwealth, for our good friend Tony Jordan from the frozen of the Northeast.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN GORDON RICHMOND, Washington: Gordon Richmond, Delegation Chairman from the Evergreen State and the home of the next Super Bowl Champions, the Seattle Seahawks, proudly endorses and seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan for National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The great State of West Virginia, proudly seconds the nomination for Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Wisconsin, the home of the Super Bowl Champion Green Bay Packers, proudly seconds the nomination of Tony Jordan.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: The great hunting state of the world famous jackatopes, where the pavement ends and the West begins, and one of your 100 percent membership states, proudly seconds the nomination for Anthony Jordan.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We'll now call on Microphone No. 2.

DELEGATE MARTIN F. CONATSER. Illinois: Martin Conatser, delegate to this Convention. 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 nominations, and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that Tony Jordan be elected National Commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move we suspend the rules of the 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 for National Vice Commanders.

...The motion was seconded.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders.

The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor of the motion signify by saying Aye. Opposed Nay. The Ayes have it.

Microphone No. 3 is recognized.

DELEGATE DAN DELLINGER, Virginia: Dan Dellinger, Department of Virginia Delegate. I move the nominations for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Is there a second?

...Motion seconded.

Motion to close nominations is a non-debatable motion and requires a two thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saving Aye. Those opposed Nay. The Ayes have it.

I recognize Microphone No. 4.

DELEGATE PAUL A. MORIN, Massachusetts: Paul A. Morin, Delegate of the Department of Massachusetts. I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention. and that Anthony G. 'Tony' Jordan be elected National Commander by acclamation, and I so move.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Is there a second.

... Motion seconded.

Hearing a second, there is a motion before us that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegation strength of this Convention, and that Tony Jordan of Maine be elected National Commander by acclamation. All those in favor signify by saying Aye. Those opposed signify by saying Nay. The Ayes have it.

Mr. Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Tony Jordan of Maine, as the National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I now declare Tony Jordan of Maine the next National Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Chair now recognizes Past National Commander John Geiger 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

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER GEIGER: Officers, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen of this wonderful National Convention. American Legion member Anthony D. Jordan of Maine, you've been nominated and elected the National Commander of the American Legion for 1997 to 1998. Congratulations to you, your family, and the very proud Legionnaires of the Department of Maine.

The delegates to this convention are well aware of your many responsibilities and achievements in The American Legion that have brought you to this day. Your dedication, loyalty, leadership skills and obvious enthusiasm must now be directed to strengthening and enhancing our organization throughout the country. The vital missions of your year of leadership will be defined by this National Convention and developing events in the entire world. The officers of The American Legion, the national staff, and every member of the Legion and Auxiliary are alerted for your calls to action. Each of us must also pledge to actively help you in this exciting opportunity to serve our God and country.

Tony Jordan, if you're ready to assume this high office, please stand forward, raise your right hand and give your full name.

...National Commander-elect Anthony D. Jordan repeated the oath of office following the lead of Past National Commander Geiger:

NATIONAL COMMANDER-ELECT ANTHONY D. JORDAN: I, Anthony Jordan, do solemnly pledge to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office of the

National Commander of The American Legion. And I further pledge, that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the National Constitution and Bylaws of The American Legion. And I do not subscribe to the principles of any group opposed to our form of government. So help me God.

PAST NATIONAL. COMMANDER GEIGER: Congratulations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The 1997-98 National Commander of the American Legion, Anthony 'Tony' Jordan.

Acceptance Speech by Newly Elected National Commander Anthony G. Jordan

Thank you so very much for this special day, Commander Frank, national officers, Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons of The American Legion, ladies and gentlemen. I am deeply honored to accept the nomination and election to the high office of National Commander of The American Legion. My sincere appreciation and thanks goes out to each and every one of you. On behalf of my wife, Claudette, I want to personally thank Commander Joe Frank and his lovely wife, Barbara, for their help and guidance. We wish you the best, and will always consider you our friends.

Thanks very much to John Geiger for administering the oath of office. Clifford Quinney, thanks for an excellent nomination speech. Thanks to those making the seconding nominations.

I would like now to formally introduce to you a lady many of you have already known. This lady you're going to learn to love as the family and I do. She will always have a smile for you, the First Lady of The American Legion, my wife, Claudette Jordan.

Thank you to Post 54, the Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons for supporting and being so understanding during this campaign. To the campaign committee, thank you. You work so hard, you ask for nothing. I would like also to say a special thank you to Chairman Walter Miete, to Ernest Paradis, to Nate Cobb, to Jim McMahn, to Charles Michaud and Ken Sercerchi and Bud Colby and the headquarters staff. All the Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and the Sons of The American Legion who served on the committee. My wife and I want to thank all the Legionnaires and Auxiliary members and the Sons of The American Legion of the Department of Maine and throughout the nation for your friendship and your support.

To Past National Commander Bill Rogers, you have been a good friend and so helpful. A personal thank you to past National Commander E. Roy Stone and John Geiger for their counsel, support and advice and encouragement.

I would like to take a special moment to introduce some very important people in our lives and then our family. To Walter and Jo Micte, thanks. You were there when I needed you. Walter will be serving as my aide. To Past National Commander 'Jake' Comer and his lovely wife Eileen, thanks for being by our side, supporting us through this campaign, but more than that, for your continued friendship, love and affection you have shown.

My brother Bob and his wife Harlean, thanks for just being family and sharing this great moment. And most of all for being my brother.

Now I'd like to introduce our children who are with us today. First, we have Mark, Kevin and his lady friend, Suzy; Stephanie and her escort, Nate; Renee; Kimberly and Kimberly's husband who is unable to be with us as he is serving Uncle Sam in the United States Navy.

Simple words of thank you can never repay the debt of gratitude I owe to these people. And the countless others who have supported me in my campaign. I pledge to represent America's veterans to the very best of my ability. For those of you who have known me over

the years, and those who have met me along the way during the campaign, you've heard me use a word over and over again. I want to explain today why that word is so critical to what we do as members of The American Legion family. The word is change.

Ronald Reagan once said: "The very key to our success has been our ability foremost among nations to preserve our lasting values by making change work for us rather than against us." Change is inevitable. And since all things change, we must change. What we must change is the way we do business. Change is good when it's successful, because everybody wants to get on the bandwagon.

Take a good look at your post programs. When was the last time you did something for your community? And I don't mean patriotic observances. They're great. But when did you do something to truly help your community?

For many in 1997 the answer was simple. There was a national disaster hit and the Legionnaires were there to help. That's great. But everyone should be helping in times such as that. Our National Emergency Fund provided help for our comrades. More than one million dollars was given to help Legionnaires begin that long task of rebuilding their homes as well as their lives.

But today, when I speak of being active in your community, I'm talking about community involvement. Involvement that makes your neighborhoods better. We must get outside of our post and into our communities. For many that will be a change. Yet, if you think about it, change is not something new to The American Legion. It is not something to be afraid of. After all, where would our country and millions of veterans be if The American Legion did not advocate change in how the government met the health care needs of our veterans. That change brought VA health care services to our comrades.

Didn't the GI Bill mean a tremendous change for the veterans of World War II and the nation? And I don't need to remind you that change was made because veterans of World War I were not only there, but they didn't want that new generation of veterans to face problems readjusting to civilian life. It was a positive change, made possible from the real life experiences of our comrades. It was also change that brought about help for atomic veterans, asbestos exposure, Agent Orange, and today it's The American Legion pushing for change in how our Gulf War veterans are diagnosed and treated.

All of these are examples of positive change that our great American Legion has championed over the years. Change is also what we expect with the new GI Bill of Health. We already see some changes in the Department of Veterans Affairs thinking. They are testing some of the concepts that are proposed in our GI Bill of Health. But testing a few concepts, and implementing the package are two different things. The role of the Legion members on these issues is simple: write your congressional delegation. Tell them about the real need for a GI Bill of Health. Start urging them now to support the measure. We must make the GI Bill of Health something our elected leaders see on their radar screens.

Change is also what we seek with our campaign to protect the American Flag from physical desecration. That's right, our campaign is all about change. A change in our nation's moral direction. A change that will return to the people the right to protect the American Flag. The muddled-thinking decision of the Supreme Court subverted the will of the people by declaring something the founders of our great country had never considered. Freedom of expression as part of freedom of speech. That's nonsense.

Each of you know the history of our battle and the formation of the Citizens Flag Alliance. You know that 80 percent of Americans believe the Constitution should be amended to protect our Flag. You know that we have once again cleared that hurdle in the House of Representatives. The campaign is moving to the Senate. We need our supporters in the upper House if we are to be successful. I want every member of The American Legion

family to return home and fire up a letter-writing campaign. Thank those Senators who were with us last time and ask those Senators who voted "no" in 1995 to reconsider their position. Your letter just might be the one that produces the winning vote. Together, we can convince the United States Senate to send the measure to the states for ratification. I know that you agree that change is needed. It will have a positive effect on the nation's leaders of tomorrow.

I'll admit, making a change of that magnitude is not easy. But making changes in your backyard can have as much impact, and they are not nearly as difficult to bring about. I believe Legionnaires in every American Legion post should work their programs and their activities in the best interest of the community in which they serve. Don't try to take on all the programs The American Legion has to offer. Simply conduct the programs that you can handle and do it with good public relations.

Outside the walls of your post home is where you'll find prospective new members for The American Legion. New members that share our values. New members you can mentor, and new members who will continue our service to God and country. This is going to be a great year for membership in The American Legion. Together, we will encourage membership teams from coast to coast to find non-member veterans. You do this with that personal touch. You do it with that hands-on approach. All you have to do is ask. And that's just what we will do.

I want you to think of a beautiful rose garden for a moment. You just don't plant roses and walk away from them just to see what happens. You nurture them, you tend to their needs, and you enjoy the reward that comes from their growth. That's how you're going to have to look and think of prospective new members. Amid that garden of millions are the men and women who will become Legion leaders of the future. They deserve our commitment and encouragement. If that means a change in thinking in your post, then I ask you to make that change. Your American Legion post should be the center of attraction for the younger veterans as well as the older veterans. Open your post up more to the community.

We all know that there are many demands on people's time today. We are in a very competitive world. An American economist once said: "A competitive world has two possibilities for you. You can lose, or if you want to win you can change." We want to win. We will win with positive changes.

Maybe your post can become a day care center. Maybe it's needed for senior citizen activities. Whatever your community needs, let your American Legion family meet the need. For when we join forces with members of the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion, I know anything is possible. I am proud of the members The American Legion family. They often work in the shadows of The American Legion name, but you and I know those people consistently make a difference, a difference that always spells success for veterans, families, and children of America.

It was just a few years ago the membership of The American Legion was 3.1 million and growing. Today membership is 2.9 million and slowly shrinking. Think about that for a moment. If we continue to chase the elusive membership targets in that same old way, we will continue in the same direction. Change, driven from the post level is what is needed. In the past few years, keeping newer members seems to be a challenge. To meet that challenge we must all seek to involve these members in community service projects.

After all, I'm the kid who joined The American Legion to go bowling. Legion posts have things like that. They have good things and projects that they enjoy. It's the post that focuses on these strengths and what is needed in the community that is successful. Reflect back on what you have learned about the founders of this great organization. Remember that

they were committed to service, service to their comrades, their families, and children of America.

Remember that women veterans have a big part in The American Legion since our founding. Today, they play an increasing role in the leadership of our organization. We need all veterans to work together in The American Legion. Today, there is an entire generation of military men and women eligible to join our ranks. Trust me, they share our values. They share our concern for the future. They don't think love of God and country are old fashioned. I've met these young men and women over the past two years as I have campaigned. Some were still in the military. Some have just hung up the uniform. But they share something in common. They were proud to be veterans and proud to belong to The American Legion. They were anxious to assume more responsibility. Don't you think it's time that we all took advantage of such enthusiasm? I do.

I want each of you to carry home with you the idea that the Paid-Up-For-Life membership is a good tool. Once someone applies for a PUFL, and makes the final payment, they will never pay dues again. What a motivator. What a concept. What a gift. What a change in thinking. Since they have paid up for life, these men and women are more likely to stay active.

Therefore, today, I'm announcing a competition to promote paid-up-for-life memberships. The details will be available through your Department headquarters. Get involved in the competition, and you'll make a difference where it counts. At all levels, at the post, county, district and department.

Yes, change. That is what The American Legion has been all about since 1919. And when I look at the major challenges we face together in the months ahead, I realize it will take the power of every member to effect these changes. We learn from the past, we do well today, but we must look to the future. And what a future we must prepare for. Look at the challenges ahead:

1. Achieve constitutional protection for the American flag.
2. Bring about a GI Bill of Health.
3. Rebuild our Emergency Fund.
4. We need to train our Legionnaires with The American Legion Extension Course.
5. To maintain The American Legion legacy of service to America's young people.
6. Achieve compassionate health care for the veterans of the gulf war who left the service in excellent shape and returned home with nagging problems.
7. To maintain a strong national defense.
8. Increase our membership to 3.8 million

These are realistic challenges. I'm confident every one of you will join me in shaping the changes necessary to achieve our success. When I reflect on these challenges and the changes that we do face, I think of three words: Volunteerism, commitment, and dedication. Then I realized that everything is possible for Legionnaires supported by the Legion family. Because we are volunteers, we are committed, and we are dedicated.

Thank you for electing me as your National Commander. Let's leave this hall today with a renewed spirit of dedication to our comrades, our country, and to Almighty God. Take to heart the philosophy of Jim Valvano, former NC State basketball coach, a man who created winners in college basketball and proved himself a winner in life as he fought cancer to the very end. In talking about the problems life had dealt him, Coach Valvano said: "We

must laugh, think, and cry each day, in spite of all our problems. But never give up. Never give up."

Election of National Officers

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I recognize microphone No. 4.

DELEGATE RAY WATERS, Minnesota: Ray Waters, a delegate from the great Department of Minnesota. Since the rules of this convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? It has been seconded. Those in favor will say Aye. Opposed Nay. Ayes have it.

Microphone No. 4

DELEGATE DAVID SMITH. Connecticut: David Smith, Chairman of the Delegation from Connecticut, respectfully request the chair recognize Richard Anderson, our NEC, for purpose of the nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We will recognize Richard Anderson.

NECMAN RICHARD ANDERSON, Connecticut: I'd like to open by offering my own personal congratulations of the Connecticut delegation to our newly elected National Commander Tony Jordan, and offer our support to him in the coming year.

One of our duties as delegates is to elect qualified and capable candidates to lead us into a next year. I am honored this afternoon to have this opportunity to address and offer to you for your consideration the name of a Legionnaire who, over his 20 years of service to The American Legion has achieved the qualifications and high standards that the office of National Vice Commander requires.

Erwin L. 'Gus' Williams attained American Legion eligibility from his Korean era service in the United States Army where he was tank gunner on the company commander's tank. Gus is a life member of the John H. Collins Post No. 24, in Derby, Connecticut, where he served in many offices. He was a 100 percent Commander twice. His abilities and leadership qualities were quickly recognized as he rose through the chairs of his district and became District Commander in 1988. Four years following, the Connecticut Department Convention elected him Senior Vice Commander, where he attained 103 percent membership. He became Department Commander then in 1993.

Gus has been Boys State counselor for eight years and is presently on the Law and Order Committee. He also serves his community on a numerous amount of boards and committees. Gus is a recipient of the GI Bill and is retired after 38 years of employment at Sikorsky Helicopter. He resides in Derby, Connecticut, with his wife Barbara, who is active in the American Legion Auxiliary. They are the proud parents of three children, four grandchildren and a great granddaughter. We in the Department of Connecticut are proud of his service to The American Legion and know that he will be a great asset to Commander Jordan and his leadership team as we face the challenges of another year in service to God and country.

Therefore, I ask that you, as the elective body of this convention, join your comrades in Connecticut in electing and supporting Erwin L. 'Gus' Williams as National Vice Commander for the 1997-1998 term of office. I thank you for your attentiveness and the honor of offering this nomination to you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The chair recognizes microphone No. 3.

DELEGATE TOM MOORE. Idaho: Tom Moore, Delegate Chairman from the state of Idaho. I request my time be given to Marion P. Johnson for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE MARION JOHNSON, Idaho: I'm privileged to use a minute or two to tell you about Idaho's candidate for the office of National Vice Commander. Our candidate is a 52-year member of The American Legion. He earned his eligibility for membership by service in World War II, part of which was in the Europe theater of operations. He has served his post, his district, and our department in many capacities, finally reaching the high office of Department Commander followed by service on the National Executive Committee. He also has been privileged to serve on various national committees and commissions. He is from a small town in the northern part of our state by the name of Cordelane. He's a member of Cordelane Post No. 14. Cordelane is some 400 miles north of Boise where I live, and I like to speak of it as being in the hinterland. But it's a beautiful city, a beautiful part of our state. Cordelane has a lake with the same name, with a golf course on the shores, which has the only floating green in the country. And I can guarantee that if Lake Cordelane doesn't have more golf balls on the bottom now, it will in another couple of years.

At this time it's an honor and a privilege for me to officially place in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander the name of Conrad A. Chisholm.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I'm going to ask for a second on Edwin L. Williams, and a second on Conrad A. Chisholm, both. Do I hear a second? I've heard a second.

I will now recognize microphone No. 4.

DELEGATE JOEL HAWK, Missouri: Joel Hawk, Chairman Delegate, requests the use of the lectern for the National Committeeman Jim Bertyshot for the purpose of nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Jim Bertyshot.

NECMAN BERRYSHOT, Missouri: Point of personal privilege, if I may, sir. At this time a year ago, myself and our entire delegation were very happy because we knew we were going to have a National Commander from the State of Missouri. Today, we are still happy, we are not sad in our hearts, because we know you're coming back home to us. Thank you for being my friend. Tony, the newly elected Commander, congratulations, we wish you all the best in the coming year.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the delegates of the 79th National Convention here in Florida.

My fellow delegates, it is my honor to place in nomination a delegate from the Department of Missouri for the high office of National Vice Commander. In any business or organization the success of that business or organization depends on having qualified people in the right place. We feel that we have that qualified candidate. He gained his eligibility in The American Legion by serving in the United States Air Force from 1952 to 1956, during the Korean conflict, when he received his honorable discharge. Our candidate first joined The American Legion with Post No. 10 in the Department of the Philippines in 1953. He presently holds 28 continuous years in Post No. 6 in Moberly, Missouri. He has served as Post Commander, Commander of the Second District for two years, and Commander of the Department of Missouri in 1994 and 1995. He has received the Gold Brigade Award for membership in 1992. On a national level, he is presently serving on The Americanism Council. A product of the GI Bill, he attended Northeast Missouri State College and Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee. He has a B.S. and O.D. degrees. He and his wife Peggy have three children, and three grandchildren. Peggy is just completing her term as President of the Department of Missouri's Auxiliary. So as you can see it is truly a Legion family.

Mr. Commander, it is my honor to place in nomination the name of Dr. Norris W. Preston for the office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? You had the Doc worried there for a minute. We'll now call on microphone No. 2.

DELEGATE DARELL BISHOP, Ohio: Darell Bishop, Delegate Chairman of the great Department of Ohio, would like to have the Chairman recognize National Executive Committeeman Dick Cherry of Ohio for the purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Request is granted.

DELEGATE DICK CHERRY, Ohio: As the National Executive Committeeman from the great Department of Ohio it is indeed an honor and privilege for me today to nominate Gerald L. 'Jerry' Moore, a true friend of mine, an outstanding Legionnaire, and Ohio's favorite son, candidate for the high office of National Vice Commander. Jerry, as we know him in Ohio, is a 43-year continuous member of The American Legion. His home post is the Dingham Whitmore Post 526 in Fairborn, Ohio. A retired Air Force veteran, Jerry served from July of 1952 to July of 1975. His service during the Korean and Vietnam eras earned his eligibility for this great organization.

Jerry has served his post, his county, district, department and yes, the national organization in many capacities. He was an all-time high post, county, district, and Department Commander. As a Department Commander he led Ohio in their first all-time high in membership since 1947. As a Gold Brigade winner, since the inception of that program, Jerry has led the membership efforts in Ohio by his strong example. He's enthusiastic, determined and powerfully pledged to the success of all the programs of The American Legion. He served the Department six years as our National Executive Committeeman and during that time he served the National Organization as a liaison to the Internal Affairs Commission, and a member of the Resolution Subcommittee, as well as numerous other committees and boards.

Jerry is currently serving as Chairman of the Citizens Alliance in the Buckeye State, and was recently elected to President of the Ohio American Legion Boys State Corporation. He is active in his community along with his wife, Ann, in the Fairborn area Chamber of Commerce and the Miami Valley Military Affairs Association, Elks, and other numerous organizations. Jerry has proven himself to be an individual who is dedicated and committed. He has a willingness to serve his comrades and is very knowledgeable, truly understands the ideas, the aims and purposes of The American Legion. Jerry is presently employed by the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, and is the general manager of the Wright-Patterson Inns for the Air Force. He is a devoted family man, proud of his wife, Ann, and their sons, Martin and James, who are members of The American Legion family. Jerry's motto is: "If you get involved, you can and will make a difference." Jerry will serve The American Legion with determination as a National Vice Commander.

It gives me great pleasure to place in nomination Gerald 'Jerry' L. Moore for National Vice Commander for the 1997-98 year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

Microphone number 4.

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN JACK MCCONNELL, West Virginia: I am Jack McConnell, Chairman of the West Virginia delegation. I request permission for Past National Commander Miles Epling to use the podium for purpose of a nomination.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Permission granted.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MILES EPLING, West Virginia: Commander-Elect Tony, West Virginia gives you our support totally. And we give you one of our best, a man who joined The American Legion in 1946. He served the Army Air Corps as an aerial gunner with the 8th Air Force. He then retired back to West Virginia, to Huntington, West Virginia. He joined Huntington Post 16 and very soon started through the chairs of The

American Legion. He became the Commander, the Chairman of the Board. He's now serving that post as their Judge-Advocate. He has served our state, West Virginia, very well. Serving as Department Vice Commander, Department Commander, the NECman, and also the Department Adjutant. He now looks forward to serving you as a National Vice Commander.

Bob has been very busy in his life as he's dealt with automobiles as a dealer in West Virginia. He's had a kennel in West Virginia, and he's served as Department Adjutant of West Virginia. Bob has been a magistrate in West Virginia and served as a juvenile referee in the Wayne County courts. Bob and his wife, Margaret, a retired professor from Marshall University, have two sons, two daughters, two stepsons, 13 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

West Virginia is very proud to offer to you for the office of National Vice Commander, Mr. Robert E. 'Bob' Vass.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second?

Microphone number 1.

DELEGATE JIM DUPONT, New Hampshire: Jim Dupont from the Department of New Hampshire. I move that we close the nominations for the offices of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do I hear a second? This is non-debatable. All in favor signify by saying Aye. Opposed no. The Ayes have it.

Microphone number 2.

DELEGATE ROBERT NEVILLE, New Hampshire: Robert Neville, duly elected delegate from the Department of New York. I move the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention and that Erwin L. Williams, Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm, Idaho; Dr. Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L. Moore, Ohio; Robert E. Vass, Sr., West Virginia, be elected National Vice Commanders by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Do we have a second? All in favor say Aye. All opposed, No. The Ayes have it.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of the convention for Erwin L. Williams, Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm of Idaho; Dr. Norris W. Preston of Missouri; Gerald L. Moore of Ohio; Robert E. Vass, Sr. of West Virginia, for the offices of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: I now declare that the following Legionnaires have been elected National Vice Commanders of The American Legion:

Five (5) National Vice Commanders
Erwin L. Williams, Connecticut
Conrad A. Chisholm of Idaho
Dr. Norris W. Preston of Missouri
Gerald L. Moore of Ohio
Robert E. Vass, Sr. of West Virginia.

Will the new National Vice Commanders come to the platform and be introduced?

Presentation of Colors to Newly Elected National Commander

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Now I call on Past National Commander William 'Bill' Rogers of Maine to present the Colors to our newly elected National Commander.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER WILLIAM ROGERS, Maine: Will you all please rise for the presentation of our National Colors by the National Championship Color Guard to our National Commander, Tony Jordan.

... The Delegates stood and saluted the Colors.

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER ROGERS: You may be seated.

Commander Tony, you'll join me here at the podium, your Colors are in place. And you are ready to begin what I believe will be the most significant year of your life. I'm honored too, that you have allowed me to present you with your Colors. These Colors, which will be with you for the rest of your life, remind me of an old Navy and Marine term, SOPAS, which means Senior Officer Present Aboard Ship. That is exactly what these flags signify. During many functions as you ascend to the platform and your flags are in place, you will feel them saying to you: Go get them, boss.

Leading the world's largest veterans organization this year will be a challenge. But one that you'll accomplish with the same pride and responsibility that will remind everyone of our heritage. A heritage which is as solid as the rock-bound coast of Maine, but gentle as the soft breeze that whispers and sighs through Maine's gentle giant pine trees. I'm sure as you accept these flags and begin your travels throughout the world, that you will continue to demonstrate the determination, inspiration, and leadership that brought you to the lofty position that you now hold. I am also sure that the American Flag will continue to gain respect under your leadership. I will now ask the Speedway Post No. 500 to retire the flag of our new National Commander. Please rise. Hand salute. Two. Congratulations, Tony, as you begin this great year.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: This is a very special time in the business of this convention, the time when we meet the distinguished lady who will lead nearly one million patriotic women in the next year. Madam President, please remain with us for a few moments. I want the delegates to this convention to greet you and our newly elected National Commander. Would you please take the podium?

Presentation of Mrs. Barbara Kranig Newly Elected National President of the American Legion Auxiliary

I wish to offer my congratulations today to Commander Jordan and to all of the newly elected national officers, and to extend my thanks and appreciation to all of you for selecting such a qualified wonderful commander with whom I will be serving in the coming year.

I would first like to introduce to you a man who has shared my life for the last 43 years. Actually today is our wedding anniversary, my husband, Jerome. I wouldn't let him speak today because he stole the show at the Auxiliary convention this morning. Also with me is our newly elected National Vice-President from the Department of Kentucky, Virginia Hobbs. A lady who is so important to our organization, our National Secretary, is Peggy Sappenfield.

Just briefly I wanted to tell you that this year the American Legion Auxiliary will emphasize programs which strengthen the family unit, especially through our Children and Youth and Community Service programs. Whatever the cause of family dysfunction, there is no doubt that it is responsible in large part for many social problems, including juvenile crime, drug and alcohol abuse, school dropouts, teen suicide, child abuse and gang violence. Every effort will be made to maximize our programs which support families in trouble.

This year the American Legion Auxiliary is going to the Super Bowl. We are going to have a fund-raising project for the hungry people in this country and we'll be making that

presentation at the Super Bowl of 1998. We feel this is an opportunity for us not only to help a very worthy endeavor, but also to gain some recognition in new areas for the organization.

We will urge potential members to jump on the bandwagon. Our membership theme will spotlight the circus, which we feel will generate enthusiasm and positive response to our efforts. A short while ago this morning, I made a commitment to our Auxiliary members that my personal efforts will be directed to maintaining our role as supportive productive members of The American Legion family. I look forward to working with all of you and to a most exciting and successful year for both of our organizations.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: We'll now call upon our National Adjutant for a few announcements.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: Pursuant to National Constitutional Bylaws of The American Legion, specifically the Bylaw Section 2 dealing with the National Executive Committee, the National Executive Committee must meet in the convention city 24 hours after the adjournment of the convention. The meeting of the National Executive Committee is called for the Orange County Convention Center immediately following the adjournment of the National Convention in Room 230A.

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: Is there any further business to come before this convention? Please rise, and uncover as the outgoing National Chaplain, Dr. Charles Richmond of Oklahoma, offers the Benediction.

Benediction

To the God of all times, past, present and future, we give thanks for a successful and profitable convention. We look to the past with pride and the accomplishments and successes from the inception of The American Legion through the past year. We look to the future under the leadership of the newly selected officers with their enthusiasm and ability. We have great hope and anticipation.

We look forward to the success of some uncompleted tasks, such as the Flag Protection Amendment, and the GI Bill of Health. The permanent programs will continue and all, as need arises, new programs will be envisioned. Give us each a safe journey home, may we continue to serve and live that we may receive Your blessings. Amen.

... The Delegates responded with a chorus of "Amen."

Retirement of Colors

NATIONAL COMMANDER FRANK: The Color Guard will retire the Flag of the United States, and the delegates will remain standing, and render a right-hand salute on my command. Right-hand salute: One. Two.

I now declare the 79th National Convention of The American Legion adjourned *sine die*.

... At 12:51 p.m., the 79th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL AWARDS

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
1997 WINNER: **Honorable Robert J. Dole**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Utah**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Mexico**

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).
1997 WINNERS: **Category I—None**
Category II—None
Category III—None
Category IV—Arizona
Category V—Rhode Island
Category VI—Utah

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.
1997 WINNER: **Utah**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Idaho**

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of three membership size categories (I—1-999 members; II—1,000-2,000 members; III—3,000 members 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.
1996 WINNERS: **(I)—North Carolina**
(II)—Georgia
(III)—Pennsylvania

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.
1997 WINNER: **Maryland**

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.
1997 WINNER: **District of Columbia**

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.
1997 WINNER: **New York**

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.
1997 WINNER: **New Hampshire**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Florida**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Cambell-Lossing Post 53, Sanford, Florida**

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
1997 WINNER: **Brian Fachet, Post 15, Medford, OR**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Nate Philo, Post 15, Medford, OR**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Steve Bechler, Post 15, Medford, OR**

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.
1997 WINNERS: **Head Coach Rod Ferguson, Post 53, Sanford, Florida**
Assistant Coach Jack Diemer, Post 53, Sanford, Florida
Assistant Coach Ken Birch, Post 53, Sanford, Florida

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
1997 WINNER: **Nate Philo, Post 15, Medford, OR**

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: 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.
1997 WINNER: **Nate Philo, Post 15, Medford, OR**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Andy Neufeld, Post 53, Sanford, Florida**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Mo Vaughn, Boston Red Sox**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Oregon**

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
1997 WINNER: **Joliet Legion Band, Post 1284, Joliet, Illinois**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Joliet Legion Band, Post 1284, Joliet, Illinois**

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
1997 WINNER: **No Contest in 1997**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Speedway Post 500 Honor Guard; Speedway, Indiana**

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.
1997 WINNER: **No Contest in 1997**

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.
1997 WINNER: **No Contest in 1997**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Alyssa Lenhoff & Ed Simpson; Tribune Chronicle, Warren, Ohio**

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
1997 WINNER: **Tom Brokaw**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Florida**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Cadet Matthew A. DeLoia**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Midshipman Christopher J. Mandernach**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Cadet Christian Anthony Lee**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Cadet James E. Smith**

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.
1997 WINNER: **Midshipman Justin A. Dowd**

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.

1997 WINNERS: **Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Vermont**

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.

1997 WINNERS: **Department of Maine (One-Year Narrative History)**
Department of West Virginia (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.

1997 WINNERS: **Clinton Post 259, Clinton, MD (One-Year Narrative History)**
Jim Leonard Post 8, Lexington, NC (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.

1997 WINNERS:

Chao, Lt. General Yu (Taiwan) **Chung, Soong Yeal (Korea)**
Garduno, Carlos N. (Mexico) **Kao, Lt. General Frank C. Y. (Taiwan)**
Ma, Dr. Kainan Yusuf (Taiwan)
Rodriguez, General Umberto A. (Philippines)
Song, Colonel Hans H. S. (Taiwan) **Taittinger, Pierre-Christian (France)**

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.

1997 WINNERS: **Jim Allan (Ontario)** **Robert B. Bird (Ontario)**
Emile Corbin (New Brun.) **Edgar P. Cyr (New Brun.)**
Henry Watkins Groves (Seattle Branch)
John R. (Reg) Lovett (BC) **Raymond J. Martin (Ontario)**
George Stanley Riches (BC) **Pete Teichrob (Alberta)**

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.

1997 WINNERS: **Vermont, Florida, North Dakota, and New Mexico**

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.

1996 WINNERS: **Category I—Comcar Industries Inc., Auburndale, FL**
Category II—D&H Transport, Yuba City, CA
Category III—Ted's Western Applicance Service, Livingston, MT

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.

1996 WINNERS:
LVER of the Year: **John L. Multer; San Angelo, TX**
DVOP of the Year: **Mary O'Connell; Atlanta, GA**
ES Office of the Year: **Monroeville State Employment Service; Monroeville, AL**

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the J. C. Penney Co., to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.

1996 WINNER: **Post 325, Danville, Virginia**

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.

1997 WINNERS: **Category I**—Depts. with 100,000 or more members
Post Participation: **Florida**
Individual Participation: **Minnesota**
Category II—Depts. with 70,000 to 99,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: **Maryland**
Individual Participation: **Wisconsin**
Category III—Depts. with 40,000 to 69,999 mbrs
Post Participation: **None**
Individual Participation: **Nebraska**
Category IV—Depts. with 25,000 to 39,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: **None**
Individual Participation: **Maine**
Category V—Depts. with 10,000 to 24,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: **None**
Individual Participation: **Rhode Island**
Category VI—Depts. with less than 10,000 members
Post Participation: **None**
Individual Participation: **Hawaii**

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.

1997 WINNER: **Corporal William T. Rhodes; Huntingdon, Pennsylvania**

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Joseph J. Frank, St. Louis, Missouri. Membership was strong with more than 2.9 million veterans in more than 14,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of *The American Legion Magazine* are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

ROBERT W. SPANOGLE
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; December 22, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form of class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders, shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to vote only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Past National Commanders

E. Roy Stone, Jr., South Carolina
Erle Cocke, Jr., Maryland
J. Addington Wagner, Michigan
Preston J. Moore, Oklahoma
William R. Burke, California
Hon. Daniel F. Foley, Minnesota
Donald E. Johnson, Virginia
L. Eldon James, Virginia
William E. Galbraith, Arizona
John H. Geiger, Illinois
Joe L. Matthews, Texas
James M. Wagonseller, Ohio
Harry G. Wiles, Kansas
William J. Rogers, Maine
John M. Cary, Florida
Frank I. Hamilton, Indiana
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Jack W. Flynt, Texas
Al Keller, Jr., Illinois
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
James P. Dean, Mississippi
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Hon. H.F. Gierke, North Dakota
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Roger A. Munson, Ohio
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota

National Executive Committeemen

James F. Fraughnaugh, Alabama
William M. Bishop, Alaska
William C. Bingham, Arizona
Claude B. Carpenter, Arkansas
Stan Standard, California
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Donald E. Neil, Delaware
Arnold L. Flottman, Jr., District of Columbia
George L. Derrick, Florida
Merwyn M. Beavers, France
Horace Borders, Georgia
LeRoy P. Pulawa, Hawaii
Donald G. Gunderson., Idaho
Eugene Corum, Illinois
Gilbert E. Sheeks, Indiana
William Rusk, Iowa
U. S. Grant, Kansas
Robert E. Stewart, Kentucky
J. O. Berthelot, Louisiana
Gard W. Enman, Maine
Russell L. Fisher, Maryland
Anthony J. Bicchieri, Massachusetts
H. Dean Geddes, Mexico
James L. Lane, Michigan
Donald R. Schroedl, Minnesota
Hershel O. Ladner, Mississippi
James F. Mareschal, Missouri
Ralph D. Gardner, Montana
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska
Archie Pozzi, Jr., Nevada
George V. West, New Hampshire
Joseph F. Ward, New Jersey
Robert L. Crotzer, New Mexico
William L. Brown, New York
Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Aaron 'Moody' Dalke, North Dakota
Richard J. Cherry, Ohio
Lawrence F. Roy, Oklahoma
T. Les Galloway, Oregon
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
Ernesto P. Golez, Philippines
Andres Rosario Bordonada, Puerto Rico
Andrew R. Vanti, Rhode Island
E. Roy Stone, South Carolina
Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
John W. Emerson, Tennessee
John W.J. Richter, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Joseph F. Murphy, Vermont
Roger N. Messier, Virginia
Robert W. Wesphal, Washington
Jack T. Gribben, West Virginia
Robert K. Zukowski, Wisconsin
Robert P. McCreery, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

Ulas Ray White, Alabama
Thomas W. Streeper, Alaska
Marco A. Valenzuela, Arizona
Hoy M. Haught, Arkansas
Werner E. Wolf., California
Joseph E. Ross, Colorado
Eliott Hank Morris, Connecticut
Edward S. Phillips, Jr., Delaware
Raymond J. Potocki, District of Columbia
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
Frank L. Hoyle, France
Jimmy C. Hartwick, Georgia
Eugene K. B. Won, Hawaii
LeRoy Lebsack, Idaho
Arthur Rawers, Illinois
Ron Stallings, Indiana
Leo Maynard, Iowa
David O. Warnken, Kansas
Joe E. Woods, Kentucky
Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana
Donald Cole, Jr., Maine
Ashby L. Jenkins, Jr., Maryland
Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts
John E. Hayes, Mexico
Alton R. Ford, Michigan
Raymond L. Galazen, Minnesota
Charles E. Langley, Mississippi
Sam Yancey, Missouri
Donald P. Pemberton, Montana
Robert H. Zersen, Nebraska
Ernest E. McAvan, Nevada
Benjamin F. Talford, New Hampshire
Timothy P. Carmody, New Jersey
Taurino J. Trevino, New Mexico
Franklin C. Ward, New York
E. C. Toppin, North Carolina
Harry W. Moore, North Dakota
Samuel Barney, Ohio
Charles R. John, Oklahoma
Richard A. Schenfeld, Oregon
Alfred Pirolli, Pennsylvania
Rene V. Certeza, Philippines
Arturo Diaz Neval, Puerto Rico
Charles J. Zawacki, Rhode Island
Rennie M. Singletary, Jr., South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
James E. Markham, Tennessee
Ronald P. McCluskey, Texas
Duane S. Willis, Utah
Ronald P. Aldrich, Vermont
William R. Bryant, Virginia
Richard D. Smith, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
Ted G. Demicchi, Wisconsin
Carl J. Sundstrom, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

ARTICLE I

National Executive Committee

Commission, Committee, and Employees

Section 6. The National Executive Committee, upon nomination by the National Commander, appoints the following standing commissions: National Americanism Commission, National Commission on Children and Youth, National Convention Commission, National Economic Commission, National Finance Commission, National Foreign Relations Commission, National Internal Affairs Commission, National Legislative Commission, The American Legion Magazine Commission, National Public Relations Commission, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and National Security Commission.

The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Robert L. 'Bob' Bowen, Virginia

I was elected one of five National Vice Commanders of The American Legion for the 1996-97 Legion year during the 78th National Convention in Salt Lake City on September 5, 1996. It was an honor to serve under the leadership of an old friend, National Commander Joseph J. Frank of Missouri.

My area of responsibility included the Departments of Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and France. With the exception of France, I visited each Department on at least one occasion as described below:

September 5, 1996, Salt Lake City, UT, Election, National Vice Commander and initial orientation.

September 7-10, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Brainstorming with Internal Affairs & Membership, and orientation briefings by Americanism, Public Relations, and Children & Youth Divisions.

September 15-18, 1996 , Washington, DC, Legislative Meetings and orientation briefings by Legislative, National Security & Foreign Relations, Economics and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Divisions.

September 19, 1996, Home, Citizens Flag Alliance Conference Call.

September 20-22, 1996, Ocean City, MD, Region 2, National Leadership Workshop.

September 27, 1996, Richmond, VA, CFA Press Conference.

September 28, 1996, Stafford, VA, Post 290's 50th Anniversary.

October 3, 1996, Roanoke, VA, Organization meeting, as member, of State Ad Hoc Committee reviewing Virginia's prior response to the Agent Orange issue.

October 11-13, 1996, St. Louis, MO, Attend National Commander Joseph J. Frank's Homecoming.

October 13-17, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Attend Fall Meetings.

October 15, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Host National Vice Commander's Breakfast for Department Commanders.

October 15, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Attend FODAL Breakfast and Fall Meeting.

October 16, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Attend National Commander's Dinner.

October 25-27, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Speak at Department of Indiana Fall Conference.

November 1-3, 1996, Hampton, VA, Speak at Department of Virginia Fall Conference.

November 7, 1996, South Hill, VA, Speak at Ground Breaking Ceremony for Veterans Memorial.

November 9, 1996, Arlington, VA, Speak at Vietnam Veterans of America National Convention.

November 9, 1996, Woodbridge, VA, Attend Homecoming Celebration arranged for me by my Home Post, Woodbrige Post 364, 'The Friendly Post'.

November 10, 1996, Stafford, VA, Attend Virginia's 16th District Conference at Stafford Post 290.

November 10, 1996, Arlington, VA, Speak at Post 139's Veterans Day Dinner.

November 11, 1996, Washington, DC, & Arlington, VA, Represent National Commander at White House Veterans Day Breakfast and ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

November 15-17, 1996, Marion, IL, Speak at Egyptian Past Commanders Club and tour the Marion VA Medical Center.

November 17-21, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, National Vice Commanders' District Commanders calls.

December 6-8, 1996, Department of Virginia Membership Roundup.

December 17, 1996 , Woodbridge, VA, Attend Post 364's Annual Toys for Tots Program.

December 23, 1996, Newport News, VA, Attend Memorial Services for Past Department Commander of Virginia, James F. Draper.

December 26-27, 1996, Arlington, VA, Attend Memorial and Funeral Services for Past Department Commander of Virginia, Upton J. 'Uppy' Boivin.

January 15, 1997, Richmond, VA, Attend Annual Department of Virginia Legislatve Day on the Hill (visits with State delegates and senators).

January 18, 1997, Richmond, VA, Attend meeting, as Member, of Virginia's American Legion Boys State Board of Directors.

January 20, 1997, Washington, DC, Attend President Clinton's Inauguration and Salute to the Heroes Inaugural Ball.

January 26, 1997, Virginia Beach, VA, Speak at Post 113's Thirteenth Annual Law & Order Day Oyster Roast.

January 31-February 2, 1997, Swartz Creek, MI, Speak at Department of Michigan Membership Workshop.

February 7-9, 1997, Barboursville, WV, Speak at Department of West Virginia's Mid-Winter Conference.

February 10, 1997, Wilmington, DE, Attend Dedication of new $23M Outpatient Care Center at the Elsmere, VAMC.

February 15, 1997, Woodbridge, VA, Department of Virginia Bowling Tournament.

February 22, 1997, Chesapeake Beach, MD, Speak at Department of Maryland's Southern District Membership Meeting.

March 1-2, 1997, Michigan City, IN, Speak at Frank & Edward Skwiat Post 451's 50th Anniversary Dinner.

March 2-5, 1997, Washington, DC, Attend Washington Conference.

March 8, 1997, Arlington, VA, Speak at Post 139's 75th Anniversary Dinner.

March 14-22, 1997, Department of Indiana's Annual National Vice Commander Membership Roundup.

April 2, 1997, Newport News, VA, Attend Memorial and Funeral Services for Past Department Commander of Virginia, Nolen S. Cutler.

April 4-5, 1997, Department of Virginia Membership Roundup.

April 6-8, 1997, Department of Michigan Membership Roundup.

April 11-13, 1997, Columbus, OH, Speak at Department of Ohio's DEC Meeting.

April 20-26, 1997, Department of Illinois Membership Roundup.

April 27-28, 1997, Virginia Beach, VA, Speak at Post 110's Annual Community Awards Program.

April 30, 1997, Washington, DC, Attend House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution's Hearing for HJ Res. 54, aka The Flag Amendment, and visit with assigned congressmen/women.

May 2-3, 1997, Bath, ME, Represent National Commander and present plaque during launching ceremony of DDG-75 Donald Cook.

May 3-8, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Attend Spring Meetings

May 7, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Attend FODAL Breakfast and Spring Meeting.

May 7, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Attend National Commanders Dinner.

May 12, 1997, Hampton, VA, Attend Memorial and Funeral Services for Past Department Commander of Virginia and Past National Commander, L. Eldon James.

May 17-18, 1997, Ocean City, MD, Speak at Dinner honoring Maryland's Department Commander and Department President, and at Maryland,s DEC Meeting, both hosted by Post 166.

May 22, 1997, Annapolis, MD, Represent National Commander and present The American Legion Award during the Naval Academy's Annual Awards Ceremony.

May 24, 1997, Richmond, VA, Attend Annual Veterans Day Picnic at the McGuire VAMC, hosted by Woodbridge Post 364.

May 26, 1997, Washington, DC & Arlington, VA, Represent National Commander at White House Memorial Day Breakfast and lay The American Legion Wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

May 28, 1997, Amelia, VA, Attend Dedication Ceremony for Virginia's first State Veterans Cemetery.

June 6-9, 1997, Bowling Green, OH, Speak at the 60th Session of Ohio's Buckeye Boys State on the Campus of Bowling Green State University.

June 11, 1997, Hampton, VA, Attend City Council Meeting during which the widow of PNC L. Eldon James was presented a Proclamation honoring her late husband.

June 12, 1997, Washington, DC, Visited assigned U. S. Congressmen and witnessed the successful (310-114) House vote on HJ Res. 54, aka, the Flag Amendment.

June 13, 1997, Washington, DC, 'Live' studio interview by NET TV relative to the previous day's House approval of the Flag Amendment.

June 14, 1997, Woodbridge, VA, Officiate at Flag Dispoal Ceremony and attend Installation of New Officers of Post 364.

June 18, 1997, Culpeper, VA, Attend Funeral Service for Past Department Vice Commander of Virginia, Roy Legge.

June 20, 1997, Lynchburg, VA, Attend Board of Director's Meeting and speak at American Legion Night Program during the 55th session of Virginia's American Legion Boys State on the Campus of Liberty University.

July 3, 1997, Washington, DC, Attend White House Briefing by President Clinton concerning his vision of NATO Expansion.

July 4, 1997, Woodbridge, VA, One-on-one conversations about Virginia ratification of Flag Amendment with several candidates for Virginia's offices of governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and state delegate.

July 12, 1997, Washington, DC, Speak at Department of D.C.'s Annual Convention.

July 17-20, Lansing, MI, Speak at Department of Michigan's Annual Convention.

July 31, 1997, Washington, DC, Testify before the Naitonal Capital Planning District concerning The American Legion's support for the World War II Memorial.

August 1-3, 1997, Clarksburg, WV, Speak at Department of West Virginia's Membership Workshop.

August 8-10, 1997, Hampton, VA, Speak at Virginia's American Legion & American Legion Auxiliary College.

August 16, 1997, Alton, IN, Rebuilding Celebration of Post 133.

August 28-September 4, 1997, Orlando, FL, Delegate to the 79th National Convention, The American Legion.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey

I was honored by being elected National Vice Commander on September 5, 1996 at the 78th National Convention of The American Legion held in Salt Lake City, Utah.

It was a privilege and an honor serving the largest veterans' organization, The American Legion, under the outstanding leadership of National Commander Joseph J. Frank.

My area of responsibility was nine states consisting of the Departments of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

I made the following visitations on behalf of The American Legion during the 1996-1997 year:

September 9-11, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Brainstorming Sessions with National Headquarters Groups.

September 16-18, 1996, Washington, DC, Legislative Meetings.

September 20-22, 1996, Ocean City, MD, National Leadership Workshop.

September 24, 1996, Camden, NJ, CFA District Meeting.

September 27-29, 1996, Providence, RI, National Leadership Workshop.

September 30, 1996, Whippany, NJ, CFA District Meeting.

October 1, 1996, Bayonne, NJ, CFA District Meeting.

October 11-12, 1996, St. Louis, MO, National Commander's Homecoming.

October 13-17, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Fall Meetings.

October 15, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Host Department Commanders' Breakfast at Indianapolis Athletic Club.

November 1-3, 1996, Framingham, MA, Membership Promotion.

November 11, 1996, Somerville, NJ, Veterans Day.

November 18-21, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Membership Phone Calling.

December 14, 1996, Trenton, NJ, DEC Meeting.

January 10-12, 1997, Trumbull, CT, Mid-Winter Conference & Membership.

January 18, 1997, Morgantown, PA, Membership Promotion.
January 24-26, 1997, Albany, NY, Mid-Winter Conference & Membership.
January 31-February 1, 1997, Burlington, VT, Mid-Winter Conference Banquet.
February 1, 1997, Lanconia, NH, Mid-Winter Conference-Membership Workshop.
March 2-5, 1997, Washington, DC, Washington Conference.
March 9, 1997, Brooklawn, NJ, County Commander's Testimonial.
March 10-11, 1997, Waterville, ME, American Legion Birthday & Membership Promotion.
April 12, 1997, Department of New Jersey, DEC Meeting & Department President's Testimonial.
April 19-20, 1997, Erie, PA, DEC Meeting & Department Commander's Testimonial.
April 26, 1997, Neptune, NJ, Department Commander's Testimonial.
May 5-8, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Spring Meetings.
May 17-18, 1997, Department of New Jersey, Membership Round-up.
May 19, 1997, New London, CT, USCG Military Award Presentation to Cadet Christian Anthony Lee.
May 30-June 1, 1997, Department of Connecticut, Membership Revitalization & Memorial Day Parade.
June 11-12, 1997, Woburn, MA, Department Convention.
June 13-14, 1997, Wildwood, NJ, Department Convention.
June 19-20, 1997, Keene, NH, Department Convention.
June 20-22, 1997, Portland, ME, Department Convention.
June 28, 1997, Alpha, NJ, County Commander's Testimonial.
July 10-12, 1997, Cromwell, CT, Department Convention.
July 16-19, 1997, Syracuse, NY, American Legion & Auxiliary Department Conventions.
July 26, 1997, Neptune, NJ, County Commander's Testimonial.
July 28, 1997, Pawtucket, RI, DEC Meeting.
August 9, 1997, Moosic, PA, Champions Drum & Bugle Corps Show, Presented Orange Flag to Winner.
August 16, 1997, Trenton, NJ, DEC Meeting.
August 29-September 4, 1997, Orlando, FL, National Convention.

Legionnaires, Auxiliary members and the SAL must continue fighting for the passage of the Flag Protection Amendment and the GI Bill of Health.

Promoting our membership program, I worked at the grassroots level, writing letters, making many one-on-one phone calls to District and County Commanders. Before every target date, I called all Department Adjutants and Membership Chairmen. I also participated in membership round-ups upon request by the Departments.

Many thanks to all of you for your dedication to the cause and especially your friendship. My sincere thanks to Department Commander Noel Petisce and all the Legionnaires from the Department of Rhode Island for reaching over 103% in membership. My personal thanks to Peggy Judd, Secretary to the National Adjutant, National Adjutant Robert Spanogle, Executive Director Daniel Wheeler, Membership Director Lee A. Hardy and Finance Director Paul M. Allen for all their guidance and support. To the members of the National Staff—thank you for your expertise and the support you have given me.

While traveling to all the New England States, Pennsylvania, New York and my own State of New Jersey, I was afforded the honor of meeting so many wonderful dedicated members of The American Legion and the ladies Auxiliary who are working on behalf of our veterans. I shall always remember all the privileges and courtesies extended to me as your National Vice Commander.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Wilson R. Timmons, Florida

Serving as a National Vice Commander has been a signal honor for me since election in Salt Lake City, Utah on September 5, 1996. National Commander Joe Frank has been and is an inspiration for all of us and I am proud to have been able to serve under his leadership. National Adjutant Bob Spanogle and the staff at Headquarters and in the Washington Office have been most supportive and are to be commended for their continuous enthusiasm and guidance. The Southern Area of responsibility this year includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. My schedule this year included the following:

September 9-11, 1996, Brainstorming and Briefing by Headquarters Organization Groups.
September 16-18, 1996, Washington, DC, Legislative Meetings.
September 27-29, 1996, Lafayette, LA., National Leadership Workshop.
October 4-6, 1996, Columbia, SC, National Leadership Workshop.
October 11-12, 1996, St. Louis, MO, National Commander's Homecoming.
October 14-17, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Fall Meetings and Host Department Commanders Breakfast at Indianapolis Athletic Club.
October 19, 1996, Miami, FL, Department of Florida, Southern Area Conference.
October 20, 1996, Port Charlotte, FL., Department of Florida, Southwestern Area Conference.
October 26, 1996, Tallahassee, FL, Department of Florida, Western Area Conference.
November 1-2, 1996, Bartow, FL, Department of Florida, Oratorical Contest Golf Tournament.
November 8-10, 1996, Myrtle Beach, SC, Department Fall Conference.
November 11, 1996, Interlachen, FL, Cemetery Rededication of Medal of Honor Winner, Robert Jenkins, Jr.
November 18-21, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Membership Teleconference.
November 22-24, 1996, Orlando, FL, Department Midwinter Conference.
January 17-19, 1997, Metarie, LA, Department Midwinter Conference.
January 24-26, 1997, Louisville, KY, Department Midwinter Conference.
January 30-February 2, 1997, Biloxi, MS, Department Midwinter Conference.
February 6-9, 1997, Greensboro, NC, Department Midwinter Conference and DEC Meeting.
February 20-23, 1997, Department of Georgia, Membership Enhancement.
March 2-5, 1997, Washington, DC, Washington Conference.
March 22-23, 1997, Winter Haven, FL, Department Commander's Homecoming.
April 5, 1997, Orlando, FL, Department Auxiliary President's Homecoming.
April 18-20, 1997, Ponca City, OK, Post Visitation and Children's Home Banquet and Visit.
May 29-June 1, 1997, Orlando, FL, Department Convention.
June 12-13, 1997, Kings Point, NY, US Merchant Marine Academy Awards Presentation to Midshipman Justin A. Dowd.
July 17-20, 1997, Lubbock, TX, Department Convention.
August 28-September 4, 1997, Orlando, FL, National Convention.

My heartfelt thanks to all the Department's Membership and Leaders for their Hospitality and Friendship.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Orland H. Taylor, Hawaii

I was honored at the 78th Annual Convention of The American Legion, at Salt Lake City, Utah, by being elected National Vice Commander of the Western Area and serve under the leadership of National Commander Joseph J. Frank.

The Western Area, consists of eleven states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The Departments of Mexico and Philippines made a total of thirteen Departments under my jurisdiction.

Membership was the primary goal of all the Departments in the Western Area. Although we did not reach all the expected goals of the National Membership Division, we did get over ninety eight percent of the goal by the end of July. The only Department in the Western Area with less than ninety-six percent of its goal was the Department of the Philippines, which has a retention problem and a very limited source from which to recruit new members. Utah is still number one in the nation followed closely by Mexico, Nevada, Hawaii, Arizona and Idaho, who have all exceeded one hundred percent before our Convention in Orlando, Florida.

My personal thank you to each Department, Post and Legionnaire in the Western Area for the work they have done in our membership drive. A special thank you to the Western Area National Membership representative Billy R. Johnson and the staff at National Headquarters who helped in starting new posts and bringing life back into posts that had their charters suspended.

The staff and support personnel at The American Legion Headquarters in Indianapolis and Washington, DC are second to none. Each is an expert in his area with the knowledge and a willingness to help you solve your problems and make your job a little easier. The support of Past National Commanders and the Department National Executive Committeemen made my visits around the Western Area a pleasure. The "red carpet treatment" afforded me in my travels was greatly appreciated and my memories of the open friendliness that greeted me at each place will never be forgotten.

The following is a list of my authorized travel:

September 9-11, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Brainstorming Sessions with National Headquarters Groups.
September 16-18, 1996, Washington, DC, Legislative Meetings.
September 18-20, 1996, Las Vegas, NV, National Leadership Workshop.
October 11-12, 1996, St. Louis, MO, National Commander's Homecoming.
October 13-17, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Fall Meetings.
October 15, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Membership Phone Calling.
November 15-16, 1996, Boise, ID, Idaho DEC Meeting and Food Convoy for Veterans Home.
November 18-21, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Membership Phone Calling.
November 22-24, 1996, Colorado Springs, CO, Leadership Conference.
December 12-16, 1996, Honolulu, HI, Participated in National Commander's Visit.
January 10-12, 1997, Tempe, AZ, Mid-Winter Conference.
January 29-February 2, 1997, Santa Fe, NM, Mid-Winter Conference.
February 18-22, 1997, Alcapulco-Guadalajara, Mexico, DEC Meeting.
March 2-5, 1997, Washington, DC, Washington Conference.
March 8-9, 1997, Newport Beach, CA, Spring DEC Meeting.
March 13-16, 1997, Post Falls, ID, Membership Promotion.

April 16-21, 1997, Clark Field, Angeles City, Pampanga, Philippines Department Convention.
March 5-8, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Spring Meeting.
May 9-10, 1997, Haines, AK, Department Convention.
May 26, 1997, Colorado Springs, CO, USAF Academy Award Presentation to Cadet James E. Smith.
June 26-27, 1997, Kailua-Kona, HI, Department Convention.
July 18-20, 1997, Hawthorne, NV, Department Convention.
August 29-September 4, 1997, Orlando, FL, 79th Annual National Convention.

It has been a privilege and honor to see so many Legion posts and to meet so many dedicated and hard-working Legionnaires. It has been a pleasure for me to have served The American Legion as National Vice Commander for the 1996-1997 year.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Roger L. Wild, Nebraska

This past year it has been an honor to give service to The American Legion as National Vice Commander. Elected at the close of the 78th National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, on September 5, 1996, it has been a privilege to serve under the leadership of National Commander Joseph Frank.

My responsibilities for membership were the states of Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Wisconsin, Montana, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Each Department had excellent leadership and worked hard to achieve the goals and ideals of The American Legion while "Still Serving America."

My schedule this past year was as follows:

September 5, 1996, Salt Lake City, UT, Election as National Vice Commander.
September 9-11, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Brainstorming Sessions with Internal Affairs Staff.
September 13-15, 1996, Topeka, KS, National Leadership Workshop.
September 16-18, 1996, Washington, DC, Legislative Meetings.
September 20-22, 1996, Milwaukee, WI, National Leadership Workshop.
October 4-6, 1996, Great Falls, MT, National Leadership Workshop.
October 11-12, 1996, St. Louis, MO, National Commander's Homecoming.
October 13-17, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Fall Meetings.
October 15, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Host Department Commanders Breakfast at Indianapolis Athletic Club.
October 19, 1996, Auburn, NE, Department Commander Wayland Den's Homecoming.
October 25-27, 1996, Jefferson City, MO, Department of Missouri Fall Conference.
November 3-9, 1996, Department of KS, Membership Tour.
November 18-21, 1996, Indianapolis, IN, Membership Phone Calling.
December 1-8, 1996, Department of IA, Membership Tour.
January 10-12, 1997, North Platte, NE, Department of Nebraska Mid-Year Conference and "Homecoming" Reception/Dinner.
January 17-19, 1997, Buffalo, WY, Department of Wyoming Mid-Winter Conference.
January 24-26, 1997, Stevens Point, WI, Membership Activities.
January 31-February 2, 1997, Pierre, SD, Department of South Dakota Mid-Winter Conference.
February 4-6, 1997, Department of NE, District 6 Membership Tour.

February 7-9, 1997, Bismarck, ND, Department of North Dakota Winter Conference and Banquet.
February 13-15, 1997, Department of NE, District 8 Membership Tour.
February 27, 1997, Denton, NE, Guest Speaker at Lancaster County Meeting.
March 2-5, 1997, Washington, DC, Washington Conference.
April 12-13, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, National Oratorical Contest.
April 19, 1997, Robbinsdale, MN, Speaker at Aerial Membership Roundup.
May 5-7, 1997, Indianapolis, IN, Spring Meeting.
May 7-8, 1997, Independence, MO, Truman Pilgrimage.
May 26, 1997, Columbus, NE, Speaker at Memorial Day Service.
May 30, 1997, West Point, NY, US Military Academy Award Presentation to Cadet Matthew A. DeLoia.
June 27-29, 1997, Kearney, NE, Department of Nebraska Convention.
June 30, 1997, Gretna, NE, Speaker at World War II Veterans' "Last Man Club" Dinner
July 11-13, 1997, Cedar Rapids, IA, Department of Iowa Convention.
August 5-10, 1997, Colorado Springs, CO, American Legion Air Rifle National Championships.
August 11, 1997, Syracuse, NE, Otoe County Fair, Veterans' Parade.
August 29-September 4, 1997, Orlando, FL, National Convention.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Reverend Doctor Charles H. Richmond, Oklahoma

"For God and Country" are the first words of the Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion. This pledge continuously emphasizes the spiritual foundation of our freedom. Every Legion function begins with and ends with a recognition of Almighty God in prayer and a salute to the American flag. To lead in this service to God we have one national chaplain, 55 department chaplains, 735 district chaplains and 14,908 post chaplains. Not all are ordained ministers but all are dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. The Chaplain not only participates by providing a spiritual presence but in many other ways.

To assist in preparation and guidance of this ministry a national level conference for department chaplains is conducted in Indianapolis under the leadership of the National Chaplain. Area and state leadership workshops are also conducted. A Chaplain's Handbook, Prayer Manual and other materials are provided. During the past year, I have received and answered numerous phone calls and letters from individual Legionnaires and chaplains desiring information and assistance in the areas of chaplain activities and veteran's welfare.

The National Chaplain has participated in many patriotic religious programs. My presence should not point to me as an individual but to the ever present Almighty God and the local church that stands behind each individual Legionnaire. I have assisted in planning the Patriotic Religious Service at the National Convention and delivered the memorial address. A number of patriotic religious newspaper articles have been prepared by me and published. Many public prayers have been given including one as guest chaplain for the U.S. Senate.

The chaplains at all levels are very active in the visitation of the ill at homes and hospitals, Veterans hospitals are visited, spiritual materials and other ministries provided. The American Legion is concerned about the homeless program in general and particularly the plight of the homeless veteran. Many funerals for veterans are conducted in whole or in part. The chaplain may conduct the service, or give assistance in the military honors of the flag folding and presentation or rifle salute and Taps, as well as spiritual and other support to the families.

The American Legion provides many programs to develop moral character and patriotism, in compliance to our commitment for "Service to God and Country." The Boys State and Boys Nation programs greatly influence the lives of their participants. At Oklahoma Boys State, I served as Chaplain, planned the Sunday morning patriotic religious service and delivered the spiritual message, as well as participated in the memorial services and all activities. At Boys Nation I delivered the keynote message at the Sunday morning religious memorial service, participated in the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Solder, invocation prayers and other activities.

The organization of the "Chapel of the Four Chaplains" commemorates the sacrificial act by the Four Chaplains, during W.W.II, who while the torpedoed ship was sinking gave their own life jackets to men who had lost theirs. The message of interfaith cooperation and selfless service is spread by recognizing and encouraging exemplary and sacrificial service to neighbor, community and nation. The American Legion gave support by conducting 1,803 memorial services in their name last year and contributing many thousands of dollars. It was my privilege to visit their facilities.

My theme for the year has been "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition." As war time veterans we no longer fight a shooting war but we and our nation are involved in a continuous war for the hearts and minds of each generation. Civilized and moral values cannot be inherited but must be learned, accepted and taught by each individual. Evil will triumph if good men do nothing.

Our God and Country moral heritage is taught and promoted by the activities already mentioned, as well as American Legion Baseball, the National High School Oratorical Contest and many others. Continued support to the protection of the American Flag and the GI Bill of Health is given.

As National Chaplain it has been my privilege to observe firsthand the spiritual attitude of The American Legion and many of its members. I am proud of what I see and feel. My faith in God and in America has been reinforced by this association. The same God who was with us in the fox hole is with us today and we continue to worship Him.

I would like to express praise and appreciation to our leaders and each individual for their avocation and promotion of "God and County" and for the support of my appointment and endeavors. Especially National Commander Joseph J. Frank, the members of the National Executive Committee, National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle, the national staff and the Department of Oklahoma.

The providence of God has always been recognized by the American people and government. Our heritage and coins say "In God We Trust." May we continue to live and act that He will hear and answer our prayer: "God Bless America."

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN

Barbara 'Bobbe' Stuvengen, Wisconsin

One definition of history reads, "A branch of knowledge that records and explains past events as steps in the sequence of human activities." As I look back on my 33 years as a member of The American Legion, I realize just how much past events became steps in the sequence of activities leading to my appointment as National Historian at the 78th Annual National Convention in Salt Lake City on September 5, 1996, and I shall be forever grateful to National Commander Joseph J. Frank and the members of the National Executive Committee for their trust in me.

I had been an active member of NADHAL (National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion) for 13 years, both as an officer and contest judge, and was therefore somewhat familiar with the duties of the National Historian. Having closely

followed the work of my recent predecessors, I realized how much had been accomplished to increase the visibility and professionalism of the office. The preeminent duties of the National Historian are to encourage and assist Post and Department Historians, to conduct the National Contest, and to provide liaison to NADHAL. Over the past few years, the procedures for judging the four categories of histories have been fine tuned close to perfection; steps were taken to include the rules in the *Officer's Guide,* and only past or present Department or National Historians are used as judges.

My goal this year was to continue where my predecessors left off, first, by encouraging those Departments which have not already done so to provide for a formal, published history of their Department from the beginning, and helping to start or continue a Department Historians Association. Secondly, I maintained close contact with NADHAL, and encouraged all past and present Department and National Historians to keep their membership active. They can be of tremendous assistance to new Historians, as well as reconfirming their belief in the importance of history by keeping the Association alive and well.

It has been a busy, exciting and educational year for me. My first public appearance was at the National Leadership Workshop in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where I listened to portions of each of the individual sessions. Next was the weekend in St. Louis for National Commander Frank's Homecoming, where the Missouri Legionnaires were perfect hosts for a wonderful weekend.

From St. Louis, I traveled straight to Indianapolis for the Fall Meetings, the judging of the History Contests, and my personal indoctrination into the inner workings of the Library and my duties for the coming year. Coordinating the judging is very different from simply judging a single category as I had done for many years. With a great deal of assistance from Past National Historians Roy Mahoney and Delfo Barabani, 12 qualified judges were chosen. After participating in a training session, the judges spent many hours poring over 44 entries, before the winners were finally decided. On Thursday, October 17th , I gave my report and the results of the contest to the National Executive Committee.

In January, I attended the Washington Conference, and took part in the various presentations and receptions, as well as visiting with members of Congress. In May, I attended the Spring Meetings in Indianapolis, working with the Past National Historian and President of NADHAL on plans for the History Booth and Luncheon at the National Convention, as well as preparing a message for the newly-formulated *NADHAL Newsletter.* The theme of the Luncheon this year will be celebrating the bicentennial of the *USS Constitution*, and the speaker will be Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer, who has been very active in the work of the ship's restoration.

In May, I appeared as guest speaker at Post 88, Shenandoah, Iowa. Throughout the year, I made several appearances in my home state of Wisconsin, including Eagle Scout ceremonies, Joint Veterans Salute to the Legislature, and County Youth Government Day, as well as the many Post, County, District and Department regularly scheduled Legion functions. I was the featured speaker at one Veterans Day program, two Memorial Day programs, High School Academic Awards program, and took part in the High School graduation ceremony. I conducted two military funerals, and carried out my duties as a member of Congressman Mark Neumann's Academy Advisory Board and of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Foundation Board.

In addition to my specific duties as National Historian, I have been in continuous contact with members of Congress and the local news media, carrying the message of The American Legion on the necessity of a Constitutional Amendment to prevent desecration of the American Flag.

I look forward to the National Convention in Orlando, representing all Legionnaires. It will be a nostalgic, but nonetheless proud moment when I turn over my duties to my successor, but I hope that I will be remembered as a National Historian who did the job well, and showed the world her pride in the ideals, the goals and the history of The American Legion

I cannot close this report without expressing my sincere thanks again to National Commander Frank, to the staff at National Headquarters, and particularly to Mr. Joseph Hovish and his staff in the Library. We are indeed fortunate to have such knowledgeable and dedicated people to work with.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following sixty-two (62) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

(1) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and California Anaheim in 99 Convention Corporation covering the convocation of the 1999 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Anaheim, State of California have been prepared and forwarded for signature.

(2) Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and 2000 Wisconsin American Legion National Convention Corporation, Inc. covering the convocation of the 2000 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin, have been prepared and forwarded for signature.

(3) Addendum to the Group I Software, Inc. Agreement wherein Group I Software, Inc. will provide updates of the Plus/Mailstream Plus software and maintenance of same.

(4) Confidentiality and Non-Competition Agreement by and between The American Legion and 1st Republic Corporation, to allow initial discussions about a contract.

(5) Agreement by and between The American Legion and International Software Services Consulting Agreement, whereby International Software Services will provide consulting regarding changes and additions to The American Legion scanner.

(6) Agreement by and between The American Legion and University Place Conference Center and Hotel, whereby 100 rooms will be provided for the National High School Oratorical Contest on April 17-20, 1998.

(7) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Marketing Innovators International, Inc. whereby JC Penney Stores Freedom to Choose Gift Certificates are awarded to recruiters of membership. The gift certificates are redeemable for merchandise and/or services at JC Penney Stores or from JC Penney Catalogs.

(8) Statement of Understanding by and between The American Legion and Edtech, Inc., whereby Edtech, Inc. will participate in the development of the content of The American Legion's publication *NEED A LIFT*—47TH Edition.

(9) Agreement Modification #1 of the agreement by and between The American Legion and DynCorp Information & Engineering Technology, Inc., whereby the agreement dated August 28, 1996 is changed extending the termination date from June 30, 1997 to August 20, 1997. DynCorp Information & Engineering Technology, Inc. provided a study of all certain professions for which the military provides training which is not recognized by civilian certification or licensing authorities.

(10) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Michael P. Hagel, whereby Michael P. Hagel will create certain art work on commission which will be:
a) a representation of United States Military involvement in Lebanon and Grenada; and

b) a representation of United States military involvement in the Persian Gulf.

(11) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc., whereby Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. will provide oversight for the direct membership solicitation program of The American Legion.

(12) Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Hoosier Mailing Equipment, Inc., whereby Hoosier Mailing Equipment, Inc. will provide service for the ultra systems singlecut letter opener.

(13) Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Consolidated Communications Telecom Services, Inc., whereby Consolidated Communications Telecom Services, Inc. will install a data line from the Indianapolis National Office to the Washington, D. C. office.

(14) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Collins Elevator Service, Inc., whereby Collins Elevator Service, Inc. will provide specific repairs to the elevator system in the Washington, D. C. office.

(15) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Mayflower Transit, Inc. as services provided under The American Legion's Family Benefit Plan.

(16) Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans' appeal cases.

(17) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Southwest Airlines, whereby Southwest Airlines will provide attendees a discount for flights to the National Convention, Orlando, Florida between the dates of August 26, 1997 and September 7, 1997.

(18) Agreement by and between The American Legion and General Motors Corporation whereby The American Legion is a qualified fleet user of Buick automobiles.

(19) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Buckmaster Publishing whereby Buckmaster Publishing will reproduce *The Source Records of the Great War* at no cost to The American Legion.

(20) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Southeastern Trailways, Inc. whereby Southeastern Trailways, Inc. will provide charter transportation for meetings.

(21) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Cellular One for cellular communication equipment.

(22) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dalton International Incorporation for lease of computer equipment.

(23) Agreement by and between The American Legion and Diamond Baseball Company, Inc. whereby Diamond Baseball Company, Inc. will provide logo baseballs to The American Legion, its regional baseball tournaments and The American Legion Baseball World Series.

(24) Eight (8) Baseball Regional Tournament Contracts and the Contract for The American Legion World Series.

(25) Four (4) List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass-mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

Brick Mills Studios, Inc.
Barton-Cotton-Famous Hospitality, Inc. (Famous Artists Studios, Inc.)

Association Group Insurance Administrators (AGIA)
Kirke Van Orsdel, Inc.

(26) Twenty-seven (27) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

American Association of Retired Persons
American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.
Benefit Consultants
Faris Mailing
Brown & Bigelow
Mailing & Printing Services, Inc.
National Motor Club
Metromail Corporation
Mediamark Research, Inc.
Crell Mail Advertising
MPS Services
Johnson & Hardin
Estate Planning Professionals
United American Insurance Company
Globe Life and Accident Insurance Company
First United American Life Insurance Company
Allianz Life Insurance Company of North America
United Mailing, Inc.
Custom Printing & Mailing, Inc.
Mailing Services of Pittsburgh, Inc.
TotalSource Services, Inc.
Mailroom, Inc. of Des Moines, Iowa
Mail Services LC of Des Moines, Iowa
Times Printing Company
The Westcott Group, Inc.
Vectra, Inc.
Semarca Corporation

LITIGATION

Litigation styled:
TINA V. CASE, Administratrix
of the Estate of Clive Case, Jr.,

LARRY SPEARS and CONNIE SPEARS	)
Plaintiffs	) COMMONWEALTH OF
	) KENTUCKY
	) FLOYD CIRCUIT COURT
vs.	) CIVIL ACTION NO.
	) 92-CI-00622
THE AMERICAN LEGION; THE WAR	)
VETERANS CLUB; ROBERT CONLEY	)
acting on behalf of The War	)
Veterans Club; JOHN B. REYNOLDS	)
POST #283, AMERICAN LEGION	)
DENSIL HALBERT, DELBERT ISON,	)
WARREN WOLFORD, DEMRA TAYLOR	)
AND ROGER TURNER all acting	)
on behalf of John B. Reynolds	)
Post #283, American Legion and	)
The War Veterans Club;	)
FRANK DeROSSETT; LOUISE 'LULA'	)

SPRADLIN and BILL SPRADLIN

This is a wrongful death and negligence suit. Tina Case's husband allegedly was killed by defendant, Frank DeRossett. It is alleged that Frank DeRossett entered American Legion Post 283 in Martin, Kentucky and started shooting a gun in the direction of the band in which Clive Case was a member. Case was shot several times and subsequently died. Larry Spears was also shot and claims permanent injury and disablement. At this point, the matter has been referred to our insurance company, an appearance has been filed and a motion to dismiss has been filed. The Floyd County Circuit Judge overruled our Motion for Summary Judgment and will entertain a Motion to Reserve Entry of his Judgment for Six Months until the plaintiff proves a legal theory against The American Legion. The Court indicated that it will rule on a Motion for a Directed Verdict if the case goes to trial. A hearing has not been set. The case is on hold.

Litigation Styled:

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

THE AMERICAN LEGION Plaintiff	)))	
	)	Civil Action No. 95-C-1253
v.	))	
RICHARD G. MATTHEW Defendant	)	

This is an action for service mark infringement of The American Legion's common law mark and for unfair competition. The American Legion learned that the Defendant was planning to conduct business and to sell products, namely caps, under the name "THE LEGIONAIRE" or Legionaire. A written demand was made to the defendant to discontinue his plans to use the service mark in connection with the sale of merchandise. A case and a motion for preliminary injunction may need to be filed to force discontinuance of marketing or distributing of promotional materials or goods bearing the words The Legionaire or Legionaire and to deliver all materials bearing such words to The American Legion may become necessary. Motions have been filed for productions of testimony and exhibits. A hearing was set by the Patent Office in this matter. The result was a decision of lack of jurisdiction because of an amendment to the petition at the behest of the Patent Office. The entire case started over again and the applicant was granted his mark. The American Legion filed suit in District Court. Discovery is proceeding. The Court has taken the matter under advisement after submission of briefs and exhibits.

Litigation styled:

WILLIAM PAUL BARRON, JR. Plaintiff	THE AMERICAN LEGION Defendant

V.

)
) IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT
) COURT, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
) OHIO, WESTERN DIVISION
)
) Case No. C-1-93-247
) Magistrate Judge Steinberg

IN THE THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OF SALT LAKE COUNTY STATE OF UTAH

WILLIAM PAUL BARRON, Jr.,	)
Plaintiff	)
	)
	) CIVIL No. 940901735
v.	)
	)
DUANE S. WILLIS, CARROLL WILLIAMS,	)
and THE AMERICAN LEGION,	)
Defendants	

Plaintiff sued The American Legion for slander claiming a letter purportedly bearing his signature was not from him. The letter contained threats against VA staffers. Based on the letter, the Department of Utah Service Officer withdrew from representation as did the National Organization.

Since there is no legal duty to represent the plaintiff and since The American Legion did not publish the threat, the case cannot be about slander. A motion to dismiss was filed and granted. Mr. Barron then refiled in Utah (the second case shown). A motion for summary judgment was filed and granted. Mr. Barron filed an appeal in the Utah Court of Appeals which was the wrong court. The Utah Court of Appeals notified him that he must file with the trial court first who would then transmit his Notice of Appeal to the Utah Supreme Court which is the proper court. The Utah Supreme Court transferred the appeal to the Utah Court of Appeals which then dismissed plaintiff's appeal for lack of jurisdiction because he failed to timely file his notice of appeal. The case is closed.

Litigation styled:

CIRCUIT COURT OF JEFFERSON COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

ANNIE VIRGINIA PROCTOR	)	
	)	
vs.	)	Civil Action No. 95-C-175
	)	
THOMAS WILSON, individually	)	
and as the former Commander of	)	
AMERICAN LEGION POST No. 071,	)	
AMERICAN LEGION POST No. 071	)	
and the AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL	)	
HEADQUARTERS	)	

This lawsuit was filed by an employee of American Legion Post No. 071 in Charles Town, West Virginia. Plaintiff is claiming she was verbally and sexually harassed by Thomas Wilson; that she had complained to her supervisor about the actions of Defendant, Thomas Wilson, and that subsequently a meeting was held and Defendant apologized for his actions to Plaintiff. Plaintiff further claims no other disciplinary action was taken against the Defendant, Thomas Wilson, and Plaintiff was barred as a member of The American Legion for three months.

Plaintiff filed a lawsuit, which action is pending, and an answer has been filed. A Motion for Summary Judgment was filed and the Court dismissed the case against The American Legion.

Litigation styled:

No. 120-94

CAROL LITTLE	)	
WILLA BROWN ALBERT and	)	
TERRY ALBERT HARTWELL,	)	In The District Court of
Plaintiff	)	
	)	
	)	Johnson County, Texas
V.	)	
	)	
CATHERINE ELIZABETH SPEARS	)	
DOROTHY MATTSINGER, Truett	)	
Bishop Post No. 426 of the	)	
American Legion Department	)	
of Texas,	)	
THE AMERICAN LEGION	)	
DEPARTMENT OF TEXAS,	)	18th Judicial District
and THE AMERICAN LEGION		

This is a bodily injury lawsuit, whereby Defendant Catherine Elizabeth Spears had been a patron at Truett Bishop Post No. 426 and had been served alcoholic beverages by employee, Dorothy Mattsinger, prior to operating her motor vehicle, which automobile was involved in a collision with the Plaintiffs. A Motion for Summary Judgment has been filed with the Court for dismissal of the Defendant, The American Legion. The National Adjutant was deposed. The Court denied the Motion for Summary Judgment stating words to the effect that the file was so large there must be a fact issue present. The American Legion filed a second Motion for Summary Judgment. The case is over.

Litigation Styled:

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE BEFORE THE TRADEMARK TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF APPLICATION:

Serial No.:	74/724,279
Filed:	
August 25, 1995	
Applicant:	Drawls, Inc.
Trademark:	LEGION

For: Clothing, Namely Men and Boys Wind Resistant Jackets, Pants, Parkas, Sweaters, Jackets, Sweatshirts, Gloves and Hats
Class: 25 (US 22 and 39)
Published in the *Official Gazette* of May 13, 1996 page TM 158

The American Legion learned from intellectual property counsel that a company in California had filed for a trademark of the word "Legion" for clothing. We opposed the grant of the mark and the applicant withdrew the petition.

Litigation Styled:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION COUNTY OF WAKE

HARRY H. HURLEY and NANCY C. HURLEY, CO-ADMINISTRATORS OF THE ESTATE OF DOUGLAS C. HURLEY,	)
Plaintiffs,	) 97 CV 07386
vs.	)
EDWIN L. REEL, III; EDWIN L. REEL, JR. THE AMERICAN LEGION and ITS SUBDIVISIONS THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.; and CARY AMERICAN LEGION POST 67,	)
Defendants.	

Litigation Styled:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION COUNTY OF WAKE

GRAHAM TRENT ELLIS and HOWARD ELLIS, JR.,	)
Plaintiffs,	)
vs.	) 96 CV 06139
EDWIN L. REEL, III; EDWIN L. REEL, JR. THE AMERICAN LEGION and ITS SUBDIVISIONS THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.; and CARY AMERICAN LEGION POST 67,	)

Defendants.

Litigation Styled:

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION COUNTY OF WAKE

DOUGLAS E. DANIELS, by and through his Guardian ad Litem, William D. Webb; DONALD E. DANIELS and ANTELA M. DANIELS,	)
Plaintiffs,	) 96 CV 07442
vs.	)
EDWIN L. REEL, III; EDWIN L. REEL, JR. THE AMERICAN LEGION, and ITS SUBDIVISIONS; THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC.; and CARY AMERICAN LEGION POST 67,	)

Defendants.

These are cases growing out of an auto accident involving a car load of six (6) baseball players going between games. The plaintiffs claim the 16-year old driver used an interstate exit and, at the last minute, attempted to exit. They further claim he turned too sharply for the rate of speed and rolled the car. The injuries were severe. All plaintiffs claim the driver, who was the coach's son, and the coach were agents of The American Legion.

The case has been referred to the insurance company who retained counsel. The case is in the discovery phase.

Litigation Styled:

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CHARLES LUCARELLI,	)
Plaintiff,	) No. 3:CV-96-1289
vs.	) (JUDGE VANASKIE)
JESSE BROWN, VETERANS AFFAIRS, POSTMASTER, WILLIAM BRADY, WILKES-BARRE, PA, POST OFFICE,	)

ERIC LAMBERT, STATE FARM)
REPRESENTATIVE, and)
LEONCE WILSON, AMERICAN LEGION)
REPRESENTATIVE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Defendants

This pro se plaintiff alleged that the defendants were guilty of mail fraud because his VA check was sent to the wrong address and that State Farm Insurance Company was responsible for an accident.

The American Legion represented him before the Bureau of Veteran Affairs in an unsuccessful attempt to restore his 70% disability for schizophrenia. The records indicate the representative of The American Legion, Barbara Stedman, did a good job even though she lost.

Plaintiff went to the Post Office to change his address. Later, his benefit checks were allegedly misdirected. He, therefore, sued Leonce Wilson the supervisor whose name appeared in the VA file as a contact person. The American Legion provided counsel to Leonce Wilson and filed a Motion to Dismiss or in the alternative, for Summary Judgment, which was granted. Mr. Lucarelli has appealed to the Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit. We are preparing our appeal briefs and opposing his claims.

Litigation Styled:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,
IN AND FOR DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

SHIRLEY CLOW and VERNON HANSON,

Plaintiffs

vs.

THE AMERICAN LEGION, HARVEY W.
SEEDS POST NO. 29 AMERICAN
LEGION, INC., NICHOLAS
WILLIAMS, and THE AMERICAN
LEGION, DEPT. OF FLORIDA, INC.,

Defendants

The plaintiffs filed the complaint for sexual harassment, discrimination, negligence, assault and battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and defamation due to alleged incidents at Post No. 29. A complaint was originally filed by the plaintiffs with the EEOC, Florida Human Services and Metropolitan Dade County Equal Opportunity Board which found cause for discrimination and provided plaintiffs with a notice of right to sue and thereafter plaintiffs filed suit. A Motion for Summary Judgment will be filed. The case is pending.

Litigation Styled:
Administrative Hearing
Indianapolis, Indiana File No. 97-179 (SJ)
Indianapolis Historical Preservation Commission

and
The American Legion

The American Legion petitioned for permits for the manual lift barrier gates on the parking lot. A public hearing was held to consider the approval of installation of manual lift barrier gates installed on The American Legion's parking lot. The gates were installed for the purpose of deterring drug sales by trespassers. A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued to The American Legion.

Litigation Styled:

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

ALEXANDER HAMILTON POST NO. 448, a San Francisco Post of the American Legion, its members and all others similarly situated,	) Case No. 982097
Plaintiffs	) CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT FOR MONEY DAMAGES, DECLARATORY RELIEF, AND PRELIMINARY AND PERMANENT INJUNCTION
v.	
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, a corporation; SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY COUNCIL OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, a corporation; AMERICAN LEGION WAR MEMORIAL COMMISSION OF SAN FRANCISCO, an unincorporated association; CHARLES OSWALD, an individual, DANIEL LUNGREN, Attorney General of the State of California	
Defendants.	

This case was filed on behalf of members or potential members of Alexander Hamilton Post No. 448 for discrimination in alleged attempted interference with the activities, use of the building and participation as members of The American Legion. The case also alleges discouragement of potential members from joining the Hamilton Post and alleged failure to publicize the existence of the Hamilton Post and its activities in the Department's statewide publication for members. The plaintiffs allege The American Legion discriminated against gays because of its position against gays in the military and is an attempt to force The American Legion to change its position by Court Order. The case is presently in the discovery process.

Litigation Styled:

STATE OF INDIANA	)
	)
	) SS:
COUNTY OF STEUBEN	)

IN THE STEUBEN CIRCUIT COURT FORT WAYNE, INDIANA
CASE NUMBER: 76C01-9702-CP

SHERRI S. BARONE,		)
Plaintiff		)
		)
	vs	)
		)
THE AMERICAN LEGION ORLAND POST #423, INC.,		)
AND THE AMERICAN LEGION		)
AND THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF INDIANA,		)
Defendants		)

The plaintiff had a restraining order issued against a member of Orland Post #423, Inc. for legal protection against the person. The plaintiff was an employee of Orland Post #423, Inc. and the respondent was a member of the Post. She was asked to sign a Motion to Dismiss the Restraining Order and refused to sign the Motion and thereafter was terminated by the Post. She thereafter filed her complaint alleging intentional, grossly negligent, and reckless act of retaliatory discharge for asserting her statutory rights and protections under the law. She alleged lost wages and benefits, mental anguish, stress, humiliation, embarrassment, emotional distress and prayed for punitive damages. A stipulation of dismissal was filed and the Court dismissed with prejudice as to defendants, The American Legion and The American Legion Department of Indiana only. The case is closed.

Other Legal Matters

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed.

Opinions Rendered

The National Judge Advocate has rendered 1118 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the decision affecting their Department; National Executive Committeeman, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving matters legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 7 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

The American Legion Magazine

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed all manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch*, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 327 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of The American Legion Magazine.

Firing Line

At the 1955 National Convention of The American Legion it was concluded that all statements made in each issue of the Firing Line should be documented and that the National Judge Advocate should approve each issue prior to publication in order to protect The American Legion from actions in libel. In accordance therewith all issues have been reviewed and either approved by the National Judge Advocate prior to publication, or rejected in whole or in part, with appropriate comments.

The American Legion Retirement Plan for Employees of the National Headquarters and Subordinate Groups Thereof

In accordance with the requirements of law, the National Judge Advocate has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 1996 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also prepared the Summary Annual Report for The American Legion Retirement Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law. A new Summary Plan Description has been distributed.

Employees' Salary Savings (401(k)) Plan

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) the office of the National Judge Advocate has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 1996 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Employees' Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also prepared the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law. Amendments to comply with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 have been completed, filed and accepted. A Summary Plan Description has been distributed.

Parliamentary Duties

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and all meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

Other Duties

The National Judge Advocate functions as Secretary for two (2) subsidiary corporations, Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. and Promotion Management, Inc. and attended all but one of the board meetings of each corporation and caused the minutes of each meeting to be prepared and distributed. The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel for both organizations on matters involving to date, contracts, labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. In that capacity, the National Judge Advocate reviews contracts such as the trust for the flag essay scholarship fund and attends all board meetings.

The Office of the National Judge Advocate files required charitable registrations and reports to allow The American Legion National Organization to solicit funds in the states with charitable solicitation registration laws. To date 24 registrations and reports have been filed. Some counties even attempt to require registrations and reports.

Meetings of the National Retirement Committee and Salary Savings Committee

The National Judge Advocate, as a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters, The American Legion, and Chairman of the Employee's Salary Savings Committee, has attended and participated in meetings held by these committees during the past year.

I have also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of The American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

During the past year I have met with and attended numerous conferences with officials of outside corporations and the government for the purpose of representation or for the rendering of advice and guidance for and on behalf of The American Legion on matters legal and administrative.

In conclusion, the National Judge Advocate wishes to thank all National Officers, Department Officials, and members of the National Executive Committee for the valuable assistance and cooperation extended to him during the past year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, Executive Director

Three major responsibilities are assigned to the Executive Director, whose office is located in the National Headquarters, Indianapolis:

- During temporary absences of the National Adjutant from The American Legion National Headquarters, he acts for him. He additionally performs such duties as may be assigned to him by the National Adjutant to assist in meeting the responsibilities of that office.
- He is in charge of the Administrative Services Division, which has the following divisions under that responsibility: Administrative Communications, Human Resources, Maintenance, Cafeteria, Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.

- He serves on the Personnel Committee, Publications Board, HPC/PM Board of Directors, and the MIS Committee.

The Administrative Services Division also provides all secretarial assistance to the executive officers of The American Legion, and all Division Directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the Executive Director.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS
June 1, 1996 - May 31, 1997

Labels extracted from main frame	60,420
AS/400 / Gateway 2000	1,310
A/M Varityper/Processor	42,668
Binding	1,200
Xerox 5390	8,962,284
Print Shop	1,688,624

MAIL
June 1, 1996 through May 31, 1997

Incoming Letters (Distributed to various Divisions for processing)	7,123,816
Incoming Parcels	6,922
Outgoing Letters	823,520
Outgoing Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	9,364

FREIGHT AND EXPRESS
June 1, 1996 through May 31, 1997

Out (cartons)	12,472
Out (pounds)	197,021
UPS (in)	7,116
UPS (out)	26,987

LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Library

Joseph J. Hovish, New York, Librarian

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion.

The microfilming program has been successful in the filming of all significant correspondence from 1919 to 1969. There has been a reduction in the filming of such correspondence. Attention is now directed toward filming the reports of committees and commissions. This filming will most likely take two to three years to complete.

Indexing of resolutions, reports and *The American Legion Magazine* is steadily proceeding. Staff in the library and outside have found these indexes to be of much value. The Magazine has now a computer index from January 1986 to the current issue.

Requests for information continue to remain strong. The library is one of the busiest departments at national headquarters to answer Internet e-mail traffic. Because of a transfer of operations at National Headquarters, the librarian is also now responsible for the Internet Operations area. Staff of the library help to cover staffing when the Internet manager and his part-time assistant are away from the area. The cross-training between the two areas has

been a great benefit to keeping up to date with the Internet operations and for the library staff to use this area for reference work. The Legion's Web site also means that the easy but often-asked questions can be posted on the Frequently Asked Questions page, thereby easily eliminating some routine work and allowing time for more advanced question solving.

We continue to see scholars and other research workers visiting the library for their studies. By allowing such visits, library staff can continue to be aware of books and magazine articles before they are published. Some of the subjects researched this past 12 months include:

Supplying film stock and printed material to a local PBS station documenting the life of Pat Earl Gresham, 1st A.E.F. casualty of World War I.

Locating Cpl. Joseph Karrs, a member of the 167th Signal Photo Corps, who had documented the liberation of the town of Pletlenberg, Germany. The town elders invited Mr. Karrs and his wife as guests to the 50th anniversary of the liberation. Mr. Karrs was able to provide previously unknown photos of this important World War II event to the town.

Without our book donors, our collection could not be as valuable as it is. One donor in particular stands out with his generous contributions. Robert H. Barnes has donated this past year such items as *The Mighty Eighth: A History of the Units, Men and Machines of The U.S. 8th Air Force; Hitler's War Machine; The Lockheed P-38 Lightning: the Definitive Story of Lockheed's; P-38 Fighter;* and *The US Air Force Association Membership Directory.*

Among some other of the new books added to the stock of the library, along with the names of the donors, are the following:

Adorimini: ("Up and at 'Em"): A History of the 82nd Fighter Group in World War II, donated by Association Members.

A Canary's Tale: Volume I, donated by the author, Jacob Berkson.

A Combat History of the 354th Infantry Regiment in World War II, donated by Association Members.

Cyclone: 38th Infantry Division 1967, donated by David Elmore.

"Dauntless": A History of the 99th Infantry Division, donated by Association Members.

Forgotten No More: The Korean War Veterans Memorial Story, A Tribute to Those Who Served: the Korean War Veterans Memorial, donated by PNC Jake Comer.

Hot, Straight and True: An Anecdotal View of PT Boats in World War II, donated by the author, Russ Hamachek.

In Flanders Fields: The Story of the Poem by John Mcrae, donated by the Author, Linda Granfield.

The Marshall Cavendish Illustrated Encyclopedia of World War II: Volumes 1 - 25, donated by Thomas R. Childers.

When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America, donated by the author, Michael Bennett.

Memoirs of a Barbed Wire Surgeon, donated by the author, Elmer Shabart, M.D.

General Correspondence Received and Filed	4,056
Subject Correspondence Received and Filed	469
Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed	55
Periodicals Received	8,031
Books and Pamphlets Cataloged	486
Correspondence Written by National Historian	175
Correspondence Written by Librarian	2,018
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	536
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Returned	185

Prominent Legionnaire Entries to Membership File	28,580
Resolutions Indexed	2,250
Photos Indexed	7,555
Requests Answered via Telephone	8,840
Requests Answered via Visits to Library	344
Follow-ups of Correspondence	198
Items Microfilmed	36,555
Requests of Membership Listing	81
Rolls of Microfilm Added to Stock	50

Museum
Joseph J. Hovish, New York, Curator

The Emil A. Blackmore Museum continues to be visited by individuals and groups. Our visitor book also show most states represented.

We continue to use the various objects in the museum as props and display pieces outside the museum proper.

One large project undertaken has been to accession the large philatelic collection. Once completed, a determination of its value for insurance purposes will be made, and display groups will be organized.

An invaluable piece of furniture has been added to the museum activities. A storage unit for the collection of slides of the World War I and World War II posters now allows for a very quick review of the entire scope of this valuable collection. In this way, posters are not unnecessarily handled, the slides are more likely to remain in an organized way, visitors can comfortably review the collection, and the material is in a secure environment.

Once again, we thank our donors for their contributions to the collection. Significant objects added in the past year, with the donor's name, include the following:

World War II era films donated by Mr. Vaughn Carrier. This is a very valuable collection of films; the number of films total 109. Some of the titles include: *28 Men on the Sea; 957 Days: Combat in the Pacific; AAF Pacific Report; Air Raid Warden: Duties of the Air Raid Warden; Aluminum: The Arm Behind the Army War Production; B-26 Bomber; Behind the Winning Punch; Weapons for War; What Makes a Battle?; What's Happened to Sugar?; What to Do in a Gas Attack; When Work Is Done; Work of the Rescue Unit.*

Mrs. Inez Vice donated her father's World War I memorabilia and framed color photos of the Brest, France region during the war.

Mr. Robert Barnes presented several sets of United States Commemorative Postal Stamps dealing with aviation.

Mr. Clark Harper donated a World War I walking stick purportedly used by Marshall Foch.

Mr. Wade Harper, Jr. donated his late fathers' Legion uniform and information on his service to the Legion.

INTERNET OPERATIONS
Joseph J. Hovish, New York, Director

As the World Wide Web becomes more and more accepted as a recognized information source, the Internet Operations Center of The American Legion also becomes more valuable to the organization and its members. Through the use of the Internet, The American Legion website (http://www.legion.org) provides the organization with an efficient and effective

means in which to communicate with not only fellow Legionnaires but also to the general public.

The American Legion's homepage provides basic information about the organization and its programs. Because of the immediacy and diversity of the World Wide Web, The American Legion's presence is frequently updated and expanded. The Internet Operations Center handles on average approximately 750 e-mail messages per month. This does not include very simple requests for Emblem catalogs or membership information. Also in the Operations area is the reformatting of information so that it is recognized by Internet browser software and conforms to the standards established by the Legion for appearance. Over 250 "pages" of information are now on the site.

The Internet Operations Center staff is organized to manage and maintain the professionalism and consistency of the website information, to stay abreast of changes within the organization, and to convey those changes effectively to the members and other visitors to the site.

Future plans include the installation of an Internet server. This will allow "virtual housing" for Department and Post informational pages. When security can be assured, then financial transactions can be implemented for membership dues, donations, and Emblem orders.

A number of significant additions to the site include American Legion Baseball immediate results during the World Series, selected articles from *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch*, National Convention information for the traveler, and an extensive Gulf War section.

Membership is an important factor in the life of the organization. In its first full year of operations, 185 new members have been tracked using the information and forms found on the Web site.

In addition to the information about The American Legion, the staff also use the Internet computers to find research material as they would a reference department in a public library. Many United States government publications are found on the Internet and, as a result, our own Legion Library has been able to cut back on some subscription material.

In all, the Internet has come onto the scene very quickly. The organization has been able to adapt to this technology, and with wise usage should be able to tell the message of the organization even more effectively in the future.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SERVICES (MIS) DIVISION
Ronald E. Brooks, Tennessee, Executive Director

MIS Staff plays a key role in the selection of all software to be used by National Headquarters staff. Training on the selected software, as well as support and modifications, are performed by our Staff. MIS also determines the hardware to be used by employees of National Headquarters and is responsible for troubleshooting and maintaining the equipment.

MIS is responsible for the computer system which houses The American Legion National Headquarters membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership, whether it be adding new members, renewing existing members, changing addresses of members or changing any other membership information. Much of this work is accomplished using a high-speed optical scanner, capable of processing in excess of 100,000 responses a day.

In conjunction with the membership database capabilities, The American Legion has invested in sophisticated list processing software, which the MIS Division administers. This

software ensures that all mailings are done at the lowest cost by complying with US Postal Services guidelines.

The MIS Division is also in the personalized laser printing business. Annual membership cards, membership solicitation letters, renewal notices, return address labels for the Departments' revenue programs, mailing labels for various publications and a variety of letters and fundraising pieces are all printed by MIS.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION

Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., New Hampshire, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: "We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system."

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in an understanding and practical manner to Legion Posts and other groups and individuals, including young America.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, better citizenship, youth development and counter-subversive activities, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;

Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;

Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;

Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;

Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, the National High School Oratorical Contest, Boys State, Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Boy Scout activities and many other citizenship and objective training activities;

Work for the assimilation of aliens through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection; and

Combat subversion and all un-American groups and activities which have for their aim the downfall of democracy in America.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are illegal entry of aliens into this country, voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and English as the official language of the United States. The most recent legislative initiative of The American Legion is the continuing efforts to obtain a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws.

This Commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of two standing committees: The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee and the National Committee on Education.

The Americanism Commission participates each year in The American Legion's series of National Information Conferences. These conferences are held at eight locations in different regions of the country during the months of September and October. The Commission uses these workshops as an opportunity to train and provide information to Americanism program volunteers.

Following is a summary of various programs which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 1996-97 American Legion year.

Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its present form of government, it must have a citizenry which has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what the Boys State program does for the young men of our Nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 62 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this Nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened the future of the Nation. The whole idea of Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; but its preservation depends on intelligent, informed and loyal citizens in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of the Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a program similar to Boys State at the National level and in 1946, began sponsorship of American Legion Boys Nation. This year, The American Legion celebrated its 51st anniversary session of Boys Nation.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model "state" and "nation" that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year, more than 28,000 young Americans take part in Boys State, and through 62 years, the program has graduated well over one and a half million young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 1997, the program was again held in Washington, DC, July 18-26, and it introduced delegates first-hand to the structure and function of the federal government.

The week of government training in the Nation's Capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, DC. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of a Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in Boys Nation. Sterling Dowling (SC), was elected President of the 51st anniversary session of Boys Nation. He will join the youth champion delegation as a guest of the National Commander at the National Convention of The American Legion in Orlando, Florida, August 30-September 4, 1997.

National High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over two million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual National High School Oratorical Contest. This program, in its 61st year, was recognized by the Federal Commission for the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution as a program of "exceptional merit." Additionally, the National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed the program on the NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities for 1997-98.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis to the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to his government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (not known until the time of the contest) taking not less than three nor more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling $138,000 in college scholarships are available to the fifty-four National level contestants, with the winner receiving an $18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion Life Insurance Fund. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are several hundred scholarships awarded at the discretion of the intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 60th annual National Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana. The three finalists were: First place—Alexander G. Henlin, Dracut, Massachusetts; second place — Brian Cleveland, Highlands Ranch, Colorado; third place—Bradley A. Arehart, Emporia, Kansas.

Boys Scouts of America

The American Legion charters approximately 2,500 Scout Units in communities across the country involving more than 75,000 youth. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion selected David Joosten of Balatan, Minnesota, as its 1997 Eagle Scout of the Year. His selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive an $8,000 scholarship.

Three Eagle Scouts were named runners-up for the award and each will receive a $2,000 scholarship. They were William Osmulski of Pickerington, Ohio; Jeffrey Aubuchon of Ashburnham, Massachusetts; and Philip Zimmerman of Nashville, Tennessee.

In addition, an estimated 1,300 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through Post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people 14 through 20 years of age and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Programs has 435 active clubs with 1,342 young people participating.

The seventh annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 6-9, 1997, at the Olympic Training Center range in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The

tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began shortly after the first of the year and involved over 1,300 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in each category, as well as in each of the three positions of prone, kneeling and standing.

The 1997 winners were Bradley Wheeldon of Eubank, Kentucky (Sporter) and Sarah Jacobsen of Salem, Oregon (Precision). Both received $750 scholarships.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease

The American Legion develops, publicizes and administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund. This Fund, established in 1957, was created to assist Registered Nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in either supervision, administration or teaching. These prospective positions must have a direct relationship in the areas of care and prevention as it relates to lung and respiratory diseases. The Eight and Forty, for the year 1997-98, awarded twenty-two $2,500 scholarships to recipients in sixteen states for one year's study to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 40 years to 675 scholarships, totaling $1,259,500 to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 1998-99 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, hundreds of letters, phone calls, and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of our publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States—How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or not cost to all who request it.

In 1988, The American Legion published *Our Country's Flag* for use in elementary schools. Well over a million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced. In May, 1995, the newest education booklet *I Pledge Allegiance* was published, also for use in elementary schools.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the U.S. Flag from physical desecration. A total of 49 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions as of August 1, 1995, in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact and enforce flag protection laws.

Service to God and Country

A program of basic Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the citizenry with a spirit of positive Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

"Service to God" emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while "Service to Country" attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and Nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow's responsibilities by teaching them moral

and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country's history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty, honesty and physical fitness.

Each year, a Conference for the Department Chaplains is held under the direction of the National Chaplain. Training and program information is provided for further dissemination to District and Post Chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 72nd season in 1997. Over 86,200 players on 4,791 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year.

More than 17 million dollars in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. Almost $1.2 million dollars is appropriated by the Legion's National Organization to conduct eight Regional Tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Former American Legion Baseball players Phil Niekro, Tommy Lasorda and Nellie Fox were elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Thirty-six other former Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. They include Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Pee Wee Reese, Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Willie Stargel, Stan Musial, Carl Yaztremski, Warren Spahn, Brooks Robinson and Frank Robinson.

Over 62 percent of the Major League ballplayers and almost 72 percent of college players competed in American Legion Baseball as teenagers. The lessons learned on the baseball diamond, such as leadership, teamwork, respect for the rules, are lessons that are learned for a lifetime.

COUNTER-SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
F. Rodney Loper, Pennsylvania, Chairman

The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee, since its establishment by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion on November 17, 1950, has scrutinized and continues to monitor what is transpiring in the realm of subversion and terrorism. This is a program of the Americanism Commission and detailed reports of its activities are given to the National Executive Committee at its Spring and Fall Meetings and at National Convention.

The Committee is responsible for furnishing background information on assigned resolutions that are considered by the National Americanism Commission for recommended action to the National Executive Committee or the National Convention.

The National Americanism Commission has long been concerned about anti-American activities and, in 1952, developed a publication known as *Firing Line*, which began regular dissemination of information on certain groups and organizations participating in activities of a subversive nature.

Every effort is made to maintain a publication which is current and up-to-date. During the past year, *Firing Line* has reported on matters concerning desecration of the U.S. Flag, illegal immigration, espionage and terrorism.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Dr. Charles L. Vawter, Jr., Arizona, Chairman

The National Committee on Education, established in 1976, is the only joint committee comprised of members of both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the National Committee on Education are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion; and (3) to maintain contact with the education community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion, educators, students and other organizations concerned with the well-being of education throughout the Nation.

Education was one of the first major concerns of The American Legion. In 1921, the organization committed itself to a constructive support of education. During the years which followed, The American Legion developed a formal Policy on Education.

The American Legion has always supported the principle that education is a necessary prerequisite to the successful functioning of a democracy. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist unless there is the bulwark of a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for every individual to pursue his own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach his potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers which it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) dissemination of scholarship and financial aid information through the publication of *Need A Lift?*; (3) promotion of involvement by American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units in a community-wide effort to enhance the programs and policies of the local schools through the guidelines provided in the handbook PACT (Post, Auxiliary, Community Together); and (4) scholarship programs.

American Education Week is an annual event co-sponsored nationally by The American Legion. The observance was originally established by The American Legion with the help of the National Education Association in 1921. The major objective of this program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the Nation's schools. This year's theme is "Teaching Children to Think and Dream." The observance will be November 16-22, 1997.

The publication *Need A Lift?* is revised annually and contains more than 152 pages of scholarships, grants and loan information, work-study cooperative programs and sources of career information for all students. There is a section directed toward opportunities for veterans and their dependents. Another section lists scholarships and financial aid available

from Departments of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary totaling more than $600,000. *Need A Lift?* also contains an electronic scholarship search application which the student can request at a reduced cost. Each fall, complimentary copies of are sent to over 24,000 high schools across the nation. In all, last year over 100,000 copies of were distributed from the Legion's National Headquarters.

A companion to is the pamphlet *A Guide for Parents and Students* which contains planning and financial aid information for high school students and their parents. Each year, distribution of more than 100,000 copies of each of these publications is handled through American Legion Posts, schools, counselors and librarians, by mail and through distribution at national education conventions. Copies of these publications can also be obtained by writing: The American Legion National Emblem Sales Division, P. O. Box 1050, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206. Individual copies of *Need A Lift?* are $3.00 each, prepaid. *A Guide for Parents and Students* is available at a cost of $12.50 per 500 or $18.75 per 1,000 copies, prepaid.

Scholarship programs include the National High School Oratorical Contest, Eagle Scout of the Year, Buick American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarships, the Gatorade Sportsmanship Award Scholarship and Samsung American Legion Scholarships. Through these scholarship programs, worthy students are able to further their education.

The PACT Handbook is the guide for The American Legion Education Chairmen. It contains information on the goals and objectives of the program, ideas and suggestions for activities, coordinating concepts and a typical calendar for a successful program. Programs covered in the handbook include: Citizenship Education, Career Education activities such as career nights, community resource files, Adopt-A-School, how to promote American Education Week, and financial aid nights.

Over 38,000 students are recipients of The American Legion School Award Medal each year. This award is designed to recognize the student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and girl upon graduation from elementary school, junior high/middle school or high school.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this Country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

Americanism Commission
Executive Section

Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., Rollingsford, New Hampshire—Chairman
Daniel J. O'Connor, New Fairfield, Connecticut—Chairman Emeritus
Paul B. Phifer, Jr., Richmond, Virginia—Vice-Chairman
Gerald L. Moore, Fairborn, Ohio—Commander's Representative
Kermit Holtgrewe, Belleville, Illinois—Consultant
Earl B. Wright, Severna Park, Maryland—Consultant

THE AMERICAN LEGION CITIZENS FLAG ALLIANCE
(A program of The American Legion)
Supervisory Personnel: Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, President, TCFA, Inc.
Marty Justis, Maryland, Executive Director, TCFA, Inc.

The disappointment was bitter, but the objective was not blurred when the Flag Protection Amendment of 1995—after maneuvering successfully through the House of Representatives—fell three votes shy of passage on the floor of the US Senate. Fulfilling a promise made in December, 1995, that, "We'll be back," The American Legion returned to Capitol Hill during the 105th Congress (1997) with a renewed commitment to secure constitutional sanctuary for the Flag of the United States. Bolstered by support from our own members and backed by 120 other Citizens Flag Alliance member organizations, The American Legion has again repositioned the issue in Congress.

Early in the First Session of the 105th Congress, legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives. Long-time flag protection advocate Congressman Gerald Solomon (R-NY) and Congressman William Lipinski (D-IL), the chief co-sponsors, championed the measure in that chamber. Taking counsel from these leaders, the Legion-led Citizens Flag Alliance labored toward victory as the measure meandered through the House, winning favor among Members at every turn. On June 12, 1997, House Joint Resolution 54, a proposed Flag Protection Constitutional Amendment, overwhelmingly passed, 310-114. This success didn't "just happen." It came as a result of careful planning, extraordinary dedication by The American Legion, and the solid belief by all involved that protection of the American Flag from acts of physical desecration is the right thing to do.

In mid-year 1996, with the prospect of re-introduction in the 105th Congress, a plan was put in place that would capitalize on the November elections. Labeled "Vote for the Flag," the objective was two-fold. The first was to assess support for the measure among congressional and presidential candidates. This would be accomplished through candidate questionnaires. The second objective was to let American voters know where their candidates stood on the issue of flag protection. This part of the plan took the flag protection effort into an area by now well understood, yet still thoroughly frustrating: the national media.

Using information gathered from candidate questionnaires and with help from Legionnaires, the CFA hosted more than forty (40) press conferences in twenty (20) states in the eight weeks prior to the election. From picturesque state house settings to the busy street corners of America, from cramped hotel meeting rooms to spacious chambers, among big crowds, small crowds and crowds in-between the message went out. The names of candidates who did—and who did not—support flag protection were made known. Rallies, demonstrations and gatherings large and small gave opportunity for voters to learn where their candidates stood, and the impetus to persuade those candidates who did not, to join the majority that did support Constitutional protection for the Flag of the United States.

To strengthen the effort, Legion CFA activists took to the airwaves on talk radio and in TV debate, at late hours and during prime time. Pressing the issue further and harder, attention was focused on placing the message in newspapers and magazines that would receive wide-spread attention. On November 6, election day plus one, a preliminary head-count of flag protection supporters going to the 105th Congress indicated 252 House Members and 64 Senators had been seated. The "Vote for the Flag" plan worked, much of its success attributable to outstanding work by The American Legion's Legislative Division. As 1996 came to a close, and based on questionnaire commitment and prior voting records, we believed we had 291 Representatives and 64 Senators.The months following were given

to converting congressmen from amendment supporters to official co-sponsors, a task again shouldered by the Legion's Legislative Division.

Support was strong from key House Judiciary members like Charles Canady (R-FL), William Delahunt (D-MA) and Judiciary Committee Chairman Henry Hyde (R-IL). In hearings before the Judiciary, panels of supporters like none before were brought together to testify on behalf of HJ Res. 54. Federal legislators, a state legislator (Wisconsin Legion NECman Robert Zukowski), union representatives, CFA member organization representatives, and others spoke both logically and from the heart about their belief in the need to protect the flag from physical desecration. One panelist in particular deserves special note: Ms. Maribeth Seely, a 5th-grade school teacher from Layton, New Jersey. Accompanied by her class to Washington, DC, Ms. Seely won the respect of Congress, the hearts of her students, and the admiration of The American Legion as she asked federal legislators through testimony to "protect the American Flag and give back to those of us who are average, everyday Americans, the word 'respect'."

All this and more led to victory for the flag, for the CFA, and for the Legion on June 12, 1997. The struggle, however, is far from over and plans are now being formulated that will carry the amendment to victory in the United States Senate.

Operation of the Citizens Flag Alliance

Day-to-day operations of the CFA are carried out by one full time CFA employee and those staff of The American Legion specifically assigned to the program. Offices within the National Headquarters building at Indianapolis, Indiana are provided, gratis, by The American Legion which also provides equipment incidental to the work of the CFA. Guidance for strategy in the campaign is a responsibility borne by the CFA Board of Directors. As founder of the CFA, Inc., The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary are well represented on the Board by:

Robert W. Spanogle (National Adjutant), Vice Chairman of the Board
Daniel S. Wheeler (TAL Executive Director), President
Philip B. Onderdonk (National Judge Advocate), Legal Counsel
Ms. Anna Gear (Past National President, ALA), Secretary
George S. Buskirk, Treasurer
Carl Levi, Chairman, Internal Audit Committee

Continuing in 1997 in the leadership role as Chairman of the Board of Directors is Major General Patrick Henry Brady (US Army Retired), a recipient of the Medal of Honor whose commitment to our Flag mirrors his military service to America. As a member of American Legion Post 800, the Department of California, General Brady is an ardent supporter of flag protection and the CFA's primary spokesperson.

Campaign Strategy

Specific strategy to be applied to future efforts in the US Senate is near being finalized and will entail all aspects of the basic strategy employed by The American Legion since inception of the CFA in 1994. The five broad areas of activity are: media relations, grassroots activation and training, coalition building, federal legislative initiatives, and funding.

Media Relations

In addition to press conference activity previously mentioned, Legion and Auxiliary members worked incessantly to bring attention to the issue of flag protection through the various media outlets. Legionnaires were in attendance at both the Republican and Democratic National Conventions of 1996 to highlight the issue and cite to their respective

party the significance placed on the flag by the American people. Volunteers were trained as spokespersons and, with direction, took the issue to local media outlets while national leaders handled matters at that level. Radio talk show appearances, both in-studio and from remote areas around the country were extremely effective for our cause and continue regularly. TV debate, live or taped, proved extremely effective as well for informing Americans about our position. Using the technology of the Internet, responses to flag related articles, anti-amendment editorials and letters to editors on the subject were quickly addressed and, when necessary, challenged.

Grassroots Activities

From mid-summer 1996 through election day, regular nationwide telephone conference calls were conducted by CFA. Legion activists were given the latest information about their federal candidate's position on the flag amendment. Influential and successful activities from one state were shared with others. Likewise, pitfalls that some encountered were avoided elsewhere. The effort gelled. Small groups of national CFA representatives traveled to many states to speak with and train local groups in the conduct of the campaign. Regular communication was, and still is, kept with CFA activists through *Old Glory News*, the official publication of the CFA which is issued monthly. To keep the matter foremost in America's mind, information was distributed through publications of the CFA member organizations. *The American Legion Magazine* and the *Dispatch* figured significantly in this effort, providing volumes of information on all aspects of the flag protection movement to the membership of The American Legion.

Coalition Building

Special tactics were employed in the summer of 1996 as CFA staff made appearances at conventions of several member organizations to distribute information and raise awareness of the CFA. Board President MG Patrick Brady traveled extensively to speak to gatherings of the Elks, AMVETS, Gold Star Wives, Non-Commissioned Officers Association, Catholic War Veterans, and certainly The American Legion at all levels. At other times through this administrative year, General Brady appeared before groups heretofore not affiliated with the CFA. The results of his work are impressive. The CFA now enjoys the avowed support from 121 Member Organizations, up from 114 at the start of 1997.

Federal Legislative Initiatives

Turning again to the champion of flag amendment efforts in the Senate, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), and with bi-partisan chief cosponsorship from Senator Max Cleland (D-GA), The American Legion and the Citizens Flag Alliance are preparing for an all-out thrust at the Senate in the Second Session of the 105th Congress. Now that the amendment passed the House, we must secure a "yes" vote for the amendment from 67 Senators, the number constitutionally required to move the issue off Capitol Hill and into the states. It is there, in state legislatures, where once and for all the American people—not the Courts, not the Congress, and not the media—will have the final say on constitutional protection for the Flag of the United States.

Funding

The successes realized and the advancements made by the CFA are directly attributable to the support from The American Legion and its membership. Those successes have come at no small expense. Although several CFA Member Organizations have made generous contributions, The American Legion remains the largest contributor to the work of the

Citizens Flag Alliance, having committed more than $11 million dollars since the start of the campaign in 1994.

Summary

It is appropriate at this point to reflect on the accomplishments by The American Legion as noted here. Some may see this work as an expensive endeavor. It has been. And while that burden has been shouldered in large part by the National Organization of The American Legion, hundreds of thousands of Legion and American Legion Auxiliary members, their posts, units and departments have shared in that expense.

Others may see this effort as a monumental task. It has been that, too. When work began there existed no road map to a constitutional amendment. We, The American Legion and its partners in the CFA have, figuratively, plowed acres of new ground. Much of that work was done by Legion members harnessed and ready to pull together from the beginning. All they needed was direction. We have ably demonstrated our ability to network and our effectiveness in teamwork. Because of the visibility created for the Organization by Legionnaires at all levels, we believe that the majority of those in Congress consider The American Legion a strong force for good. Some, on the other hand, may have learned that the Legion is a force to be reckoned with.

We know, and readily acknowledge, that there are good people and learned opinion on both sides of the argument to give constitutional sanctuary to the Flag of the United States. There is, however, only one fact. And that is, that the American people want returned what was taken from them in 1989 by the United States Supreme Court—the right to protect the flag from acts of public, intentional, physical desecration.

Those who support the work of the CFA take satisfaction in being part of an influential move that underscores a basic principle of American government. And that is, that the people, not the Courts have the final say in administering the affairs of our great republic. Flag amendment or no, it's a decision which must be left to the people.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

Since our beginning, The American Legion has actively voiced concerns related to the care, welfare, and education of our Nation's children and youth. As early as November 1919, we were asking local Posts to aid the widows and children of our deceased comrades.

Throughout the decades that followed, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. Our early years were devoted to progressive child care and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations, many states and communities were urged to improve their own child welfare provisions.

This development of new and improved public programs designed to provide economic security for children, made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problem areas affecting young people. To date there exists no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency—private or governmental—in its ability to expand into every arena of concern for child welfare and child health.

The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'." This remains our ultimate goal and the definite challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity. Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

(1) To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents.
(2) To extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth. Always acting in a supplementary capacity, rather than duplicating the efforts of existing agencies.
(3) To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines For Action, working together:

(1) PREVENTION — Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems.
(2) EDUCATION — Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth.
(3) LEGISLATION — Maintaining a knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws which affect young people at the national, state and local levels.
(4) MATERIAL AID — Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past seventy-eight years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Program has contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete nor completed. The American Legion has, and will continue, its deep community-centered interest in children to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. At present, there is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. But all of us know that our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education, and training which we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of the Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated organizations, and their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare is a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

1996-97 Program

Each year, during the month of May, The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth meets to discuss what programs it wants to emphasize for the coming program year. The National staff is then directed to research these areas of concern and publish materials to support our volunteers.

For the program year 1996-97, our Commission voted to focus their efforts on the following problem areas which directly impact our young people on the National level:

(1) Family Emphasis
(2) Juvenile Delinquency Prevention

(3) Missing Children

Family Emphasis: The family is the cornerstone of American society. But today, modern society places demands on the family that did not exist in years past—demands that can chip away at family strength and unity. Two-income families are becoming the norm rather than the exception. Divorced families, step-families, and single-parent families have reached all-time highs. More teenagers than ever hold down part-time jobs. Children are placed in day care centers at earlier ages. Instead of safety in their neighborhoods, adolescents face physical danger; instead of economic security, they face uncertainty; instead of intellectual stimulation, they face boredom; in place of respect, they are neglected; lacking clear and consistent adult expectations for them, they feel alienated from mainstream American society.

For many years, the Commission on Children & Youth has, by mandate, advocated the passage of federal legislation designating the week of Thanksgiving as National Family Week. Many organizations have joined us in this quest. It is now our position to continue to push for legislation, but in the meantime, to conduct our own observance of this important event.

Many activities have been outlined to help us bring the basic unit in America, the family, into proper perspective. As an example: SUNDAY—Religion Day-whatever your faith, share its importance with our young. MONDAY—Home Day-Focus attention on the responsibility a parent and children have to each other. TUESDAY—Education Day–Self-discipline, the key to excellence, is essential at all levels of education. WEDNESDAY—Community Day—Your family's role in the community. THURSDAY—Thanksgiving Day–A special celebration for the family, friends and/or the less fortunate. FRIDAY — Nature Day–Discipline selves to nature's laws and beauty. SATURDAY — Recreation Day or Religious Observance Day.

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention: Over the last three decades, violent crime has increased by more than 500 percent. America leads the industrialized world in rates of murder, rape and violent crime. Nearly three out of four convicted criminals are not incarcerated. Fewer than one in ten serious crimes results in imprisonment.

According to a recent Department of Justice report on nationwide crime, a murder occurs every 24 minutes, a forcible rape every six minutes, a robbery every 55 seconds, an aggravated assault every 33 seconds, and a burglary every 10 seconds.

The American Legion is seriously concerned about the recent high levels of violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation. While juveniles account for approximately 35 percent of our population, they account for better than 50 percent of serious crimes as reported by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports.

During one typical day in the lives of American children, the FBI reports indicate 2 children younger than age 5 are murdered, 248 children are arrested for drug abuse, and 427 children are arrested for alcohol abuse or drunk driving. In 1991, one out of every four Americans arrested was a teenager. In that year, approximately 2.7 million American youth, age 10 to 19, were arrested and a growing number are spending time in jail. The juvenile arrest rate for murder has doubled between 1978 and 1990. For that same period, we have seen juvenile arrests for aggravated assault increase by two-thirds, the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations increase by 60 percent, and the juvenile arrest rate for rape increase by almost 40 percent.

Through the urging of The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth during the 1996 Spring meetings, Juvenile Delinquency Prevention was unanimously approved as one of our major areas of concern. We are have developed support materials to be disseminated to communities through our volunteer network of Legion members. In

addition, we are in the process of developing a plan for community action in combating the problem of Juvenile Delinquency.

Missing Children: According to national estimates, the number of children who disappear each year ranges from one million to as many as two million. Many of these children are considered runaways, but of the approximately 150,000 children who are abducted each year, 50,000 are taken by strangers and 100,000 are taken by non-custodial parents of divorces or separations. This is a problem that not only threatens the family way of life, but the very existence of children that most often are too young to help themselves.

To combat this growing problem, The American Legion, in a nationwide program, is emphasizing a program of public information and precautionary steps for parents to take to avoid the tragedy of missing children. By utilizing resources and volunteers at the local, state and national levels, we have been getting the word out.

In addition, The American Legion, in conjunction with the National Crime Prevention Council, continues The American Legion/McGRUFF Safe Kids Communities Program. A key part of the program involves the distribution of the McGRUFF Safe Kids Identification Kits to children ages 4 through 12. These booklets contain safety tips and include a child identification record complete with fingerprint ink. The kit offers families an opportunity to review, in positive and non-threatening ways, personal safety guidelines and procedures. We plan to organize community distribution of these kits, working in conjunction with local law enforcement, schools and other organizations concerned with protecting children and increasing community safety.

Continuing Programs

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): This is the landmark program of the Commission on Children & Youth. Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid, the Temporary Financial Assistance program is still unique in the social work field today and remains a very active program. The past few years have seen a steady increase in the amounts of assistance required for needy veteran families. In 1996, the program aided 1,539 children with over $379,157 in grants. From it's beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans' families with millions of dollars in non-repayable grants.

The fund is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and health expense items when the parents are unable to do so; thereby helping to keep the child, or children, in a more stable home environment.

Through TFA, a Post may call upon the Americanism and Children & Youth Division of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note, while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require help. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because the father is sick or disabled, deceased, or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion; and the Temporary Financial Assistance Program is the vital tool which is used to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children, thereby allowing the child to develop in the home.

Halloween: The "Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night" program is now entering its 23rd year of National emphasis. In 1972, the Commission on Children & Youth realized Halloween was no longer the carefree, happy occasion it had once been for our nation's

young people. Nationwide attention was focused on our children being maimed and drugged by "treats" they had gathered from neighbors on Halloween. In response, the Commission established a community-oriented program on Halloween Safety.

There are many activities that can be planned at the community level to reduce the risks of children being harmed during this time of the year. A haunted house maze, carnival activities, costume parades with prizes awarded for the most imaginative and safest costume, or a party for older youngsters with a Halloween theme.

The Commission on Children & Youth of The American Legion publishes a brochure that provides safety tips to aid children and parents in keeping this a fun and festive occasion. These brochures are available through our state organizations and all are encouraged to use them to help protect the well-being of our children.

In 1992, the Commission added a project guide. This guide, produced again in 1996, provides suggestions to local Posts on how to prepare for a safe Halloween. In addition, there are sample press releases, mayoral proclamations, and radio and TV spot announcements. All are designed to be used in conjunction with the brochure to help ensure that all children "Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night."

Regional Children & Youth Award Program (V.I.S.I.O.N.): This is a recognition program for our Legion Posts and Auxiliary Units. Each year, we encourage our Posts and Units to submit a project they have conducted during the past year that has benefited the youth of their community. As an incentive, beautiful plaques and lapel pins dated for the program year are presented to the winners and awarded in the presence of their peers at their National Leadership Workshop held each fall.

Whether it is a Certificate of Participation, a Certificate of Excellence, or a plaque and lapel pin, all Posts are winners. But the true winners in a program such as this are the children and youth of the various communities throughout the country. They are the ones that ultimately benefit from these efforts.

Child Safety: The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920's. Until recently, child safety had been one of our major areas of concern, continuing on a yearly basis. In 1992, the Commission on Children & Youth, in a unanimous decision, voted to designate the Child Safety program as one of our Annual, or Continuing Programs. In the Spring of 1996, the Commission placed Immunization under Child Safety as a Continuing Program.

Child Safety is defined as any external event which may present a significant danger to a child or young person. It includes, but is not limited to:

(1) Child Abuse and Neglect
(2) Sexual Abuse
(3) Indoor/Outdoor Safety
(4) School Safety
(5) Playground Safety
(6) Childhood Communicable Diseases
(7) Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms)
(8) Fire Safety
(9) Substance Abuse
(10) Teenage Suicide

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 25,00 children under the age of 19 will die in automobile crashes, drownings, fires, and through the improper use of firearms. Even in somewhat environmentally controlled homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present.

Our Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure our children have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

Alcohol, marijuana and cocaine are considered "gateway drugs" for thousands of young people throughout the United States. The great tragedy of substance abuse, which continues to infest all levels of our society, is its prevalence among elementary school age children. Most come in contact with drugs by age seven.

Prevention education is part of the answer, but it must begin early. Children, of all ages, need to be taught drug awareness, and the physical and mental dangers involved with the use of all substances, to include the legal drugs of alcohol and tobacco. The American Legion considers a child's future to be very important. Our brochure "Gateway Drugs" is designed to let young people stop and think about what they may be doing to themselves, and how what they do can affect others. The key to their future is responsible decision making. Many of our Nation's youth are assisting with this problem by forming drug awareness clubs in schools. This generates positive peer pressure and shows our young people they can have just as much fun by staying sober. As concerned citizens, we must never give up in our battle against drugs. We must strive to increase awareness, and show our children that we care about both them and their future.

According to statistics, the suicide rate for persons under the age of 21 has tripled since 1960. Every hour, at least one American teenager or young adult has committed suicide and as many as 40 others have the made the attempt.

Research findings from around the country indicate that eight out of ten people who kill themselves give some warning of their intentions. Because of this, it is imperative for any adult who has daily contact with young people to acquaint themselves with the warning signs of suicide if we are to decrease the numbers in this tragic area. The American Legion volunteers continue their work to educate parents, schools and communities on this epidemic killer of our nation's young people. We, as parents and concerned citizens, cannot afford to let one of our greatest national resources go to waste.

Immunization levels of preschool children have been steadily declining during the past few years. According to a national study released in 1992, the United States ranks behind 16 other nations in the proportion of infants immunized against polio. When the proportion of U.S. nonwhite infants adequately immunized is compared to other nations, the United States ranks 70th in the world.

Key reasons for the U.S. immunization decline have included skyrocketing vaccine costs, rising child and family poverty rates, inadequate access to health care, and under funding of public health programs.

In the Spring of 1996, the Commission on Children & Youth of The American Legion adopted Immunization as one of their continuing programs. With the assistance of the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Commission developed and produced the brochure, "Don't Hesitate...Vaccinate!"

The American Legion continues to play a major role in assisting public health departments in effectively getting the message out. In addition, through their leadership the Legion family is helping to build local support for the resources needed to enhance the immunization services in their respective communities. The American Legion recognizes that children are our greatest natural resource and as such, should therefore be afforded every opportunity to receive the necessary treatment and immunization to protect themselves against all vaccine-preventable diseases.

Through the combined effort of our volunteers, and the education of our fellow citizens, we are helping to provide for the security, health and welfare vital for all our children to grow up safely.

National Leadership Workshops

Our Commission on Children & Youth has been very encouraged by the attendance of our volunteers. At the 1996 set of conferences, we again saw an increase of attendees for both Legion and Auxiliary members. At these workshops, we share our programs and methods of implementation with the Posts and Units. In 1996, our workshops were:

Region 1—Providence, Rhode Island—September 27-29
Region 2—Ocean City, Maryland—September 20-22
Region 3—Columbia, South Carolina—October 4-6
Region 4—Lafayette, Louisiana—September 27-29
Region 5—Milwaukee, Wisconsin—September 20-22
Region 6—Topeka, Kansa—September 13-15
Region 7—Las Vegas, Nevada—September 18-20
Region 8—Great Falls, Montana—October 4-6

We move our Leadership Workshops each year, from city to city within each Region. This gives Posts in each area the opportunity to send representatives at a very minimal cost. Our major goal is to help children, and our presence at these outreach workshops is really having a positive impact on our annual program.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one of the means by which the Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goal during the 1996-1997 program year. At our National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, September 3 - 5, 1996, the following mandates were introduced for our attention during this Congress:

Children in Pornographic Literature: Res. 276. Studies indicate that there is a direct and strong correlation between those who read pornographic magazines and those who commit related crimes. Additional data reveals that child pornography, "kiddie porn," is often found in the personal effects of child molesters after their arrest. The American Legion is firm in its position that the interstate transportation of obscene material must be stopped and that the United States Postal Service be provided sufficient investigators to enforce existing federal laws against pornography and the transportation of pornographic material.

Production, Sale and Distribution of Obscene Literature: Res. 280 As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Reaffirming Immunization Program: Res. 279 The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Though true, we also realize that several childhood communicable diseases breakout annually because children are not properly vaccinated. It is our belief that full protection is available and that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

Violence and Vandalism in the Schools: Res. 282 Juveniles account for nearly 35 percent of our population and better than 50 percent of serious crimes as reported by the FBI

Crime Reports. Much of that crime is directed to the over $500 million damage done to Government-supported institutions, specifically schools and housing. With this violence and vandalism in our Nation's institutions is an enormous loss of educational and domestic resources and human potential. The American Legion urges that local school boards, law enforcement agencies and their state organizations develop a balanced and effective program to reduce and prevent violence and vandalism in educational institutions. Further, Congress is urged to enact legislation through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to establish a grant program to assist in these efforts.

National Family Week: Res. 274 One of the basic principles of our program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country...the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. Every year we urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

School Nutrition Program: Res. 281 The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

Catastrophic Illness Among Children: Res. 283 It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Through our Temporary Financial Assistance program, we have seen an increase in the case load of needy medical problems. Unfortunately, many of our children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation to assist financially, those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Drug Trafficking: Res. 277 We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution is to urge funding to all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of these substances that are being made available in this Country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 278 United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel. In part, because of this, many children in foreign countries are progenies of United States citizens. Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens, but addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982. As The American Legion believes that no child created by a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country, we urge legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Support for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Res. 275 The American Legion is vitally concerned about the high levels of violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation each year. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is organized: to develop and encourage the implementation of national standards for the administration of juvenile justice; to develop and implement effective

methods of preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, including methods with a specific focus on maintaining and strengthening the family unit so that juveniles may be retained in their homes; to develop effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization; and to coordinate all Federal juvenile delinquency programs and all Federal programs related to missing and exploited children. The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention program now promoted by the OJJDP has proven effective in many states. The American Legion opposes any and all efforts to eliminate the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs because of a lack of funding. The need to bring the national economy under control cannot over shadow or ignore the need to further the Office of Juvenile Justice and its programs which may be our national defense against an impending escalation of juvenile crime in America.

These are the highlights of our 1996 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth has constantly urged its Departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our National objectives. Local Posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances as they deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. Our Children & Youth legislation program is a never-ending process, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children—everywhere.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 73 years, the National Commission on Children & Youth records activities from nearly 14,500 Posts of The American Legion; 12,000 Units of the American Legion Auxiliary; and hundreds of Salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of Departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1 through May 31, and combined with these reports.

This year, Posts and Departments of the Legion reported expenditures of $20,594,421.00. To this amount, we proudly add $5,017,613.00 by the Auxiliary. An additional $379,158.00 was given to families in need through our Temporary Financial Assistance program. To this we add other contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount of $464,341.00. This amounts to a grand total of expenditures and contributions to the total Children & Youth program in 1996-97 of $26,455,533.00.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 1996-97 program year, tens of thousands of pieces of Children & Youth literature were distributed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division as it attempted to further the objectives of our total program.

As shown in Table #5, our most popular brochures are related to our major points of emphasis—Missing Children, Child Safety, Substance Abuse Prevention, Teenage Suicide Prevention and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention. It is of further interest to note that some 6,135 citations were distributed to Departments in order to recognize Posts for their contributions to the overall Children & Youth Program.

Appreciation Acknowledged

The Commission on Children & Youth and its Chairman must take this opportunity to thank the volunteers of the Legion and the Auxiliary. Many hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice cannot be repaid. We are indeed thankful that the spirit of volunteerism is alive and well in The American Legion. Special mention must also go to our

National Commander Joseph Frank; not because of his rank, but because of his sincere dedication and verbal support for our program during this past year. Likewise, special thanks to National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for his support and cooperation. The American Legion does an excellent job with this program, but the record must be clear. Without the assistance of the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion, our National Children & Youth Program would have little chance for success.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Executive Section

Elmer Fuhrhop, Hamler, Ohio—Chairman
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Kenner, Louisiana—Vice-Chairman
Margaret M. Malone, Hamilton Square, New Jersey—National Commander's Representative
W. Darrell Hansel, Vevay, Indiana—Consultant
Walter F. Baker, Seneca Falls, New York—Consultant
Talmage C. Carawan, Rockville, Maryland
James P. Holley, Center, Texas
Cletus A. Lehne, North Aurora, Illinois
Eugene V. Lindquist, Clarissa, Minnesota

[See Following Tables for Child Welfare Foundation Report]

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
U.S. 'Udie' Grant, Kansas, President
Terry L. Woodburn, Illinois, Executive Secretary

In 1954, The American Legion allowed the separate incorporation of what is now called the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the Foundation has granted just under five million dollars to other non-profit youth oriented organizations. A grant may only be obtained for one of the following two purposes.

(1) To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs designed to benefit youth; and
(2) To contribute to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual welfare of children and youth through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

In October of 1996 the Board of Directors approved grants to 14 non-profit organizations in the amount of $299,030.00 for projects to be completed in calendar year 1997. The Organizations and amounts are as follows:

Chart 1

Child Welfare Grants		
Organization	**Location**	**Amount**
Bingham Child Guidance Center, Inc.	Louisville, Kentucky	$16,400.00
Center for Education Resources	Indianapolis, Indiana	$30,000.00
Child Quest International, Inc.	San Jose, California	$12,900.00
Cleft Palate Foundation	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	$17,700.00
International Rett Syndrome Association	Clinton, Maryland	$21,150.00
Make-A-Wish Foundation of America	Phoenix, Arizona	$24,400.00
National Marfan Foundation	Port Washington, New York	$22,000.00
National Organization for Rare Disorders	New Fairfield, Connecticut	$30,000.00
The New Jersey Center for Autism, Inc.	Ewing, New Jersey	$13,650.00
Prevent Child Abuse	Richmond, Virginia	$10,400.00
Shwachmann Syndrome Support Service, Inc.	Vernon, Connecticut	$18,430.00
THINK FIRST Foundation	Park Ridge, Illinois	$25,000.00
Tourett Syndrome Association, Inc.	Bayside, New York	$25,000.00
Young Marines	Washington, DC	$32,000.00

I am most happy to report that during the 1996-97 contribution year, donations exceeded $460,000 with almost $150,000 of that amount coming to us from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion. Their Posts, Units, Salons, and Squadrons are the primary contributors to the success and growth of our Foundation. We encourage each member and each local organization to make an annual contribution in support of our Foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will assist children by giving them a better chance at life.

TABLE NO. 1

Region and Department	Reporting Legion	Reporting Auxiliary	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions To Child Welfare Foundation By Posts & Units	Direct Aid From Posts, Units And Departments	Contributions To Other Child Serving Agencies By Legion And Auxiliary	Other Expenditures For Children By Legion And Auxiliary	Department Administrative Expense By Legion And Auxiliary	Total Aid For Children From 8/40	Total Number Of Children Served Nationally	Total Aid Legion And Auxiliary Lines 4 thru 10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
REG. 1											
CT	64%	0%	$500	$5,474	$57,928	$46,559	$32,704	$250	$686	4,039	$144,101
ME	41%	48%	8,215	235	123,484	85,589	45,267	-0-	257	20,274	263,047
MA	31%	100%	-0-	3,396	73,623	139,741	119,095	2,500	6,370	25,435	344,725
NH	68%	101%	1,700	1,215	143,126	121,733	159,117	-0-	651	23,431	427,542
RI	49%	97%	2,000	1,609	10,037	19,394	11,029	585	275	1,820	44,929
VT	96%	81%	588	367	98,042	161,269	143,372	400	715	27,818	404,753
TOTAL	**49%**	**70%**	**13,003**	**12,296**	**506,241**	**574,285**	**510,584**	**3,735**	**8,954**	**102,817**	**1,629,097**
REG. 2											
DE	71%	95%	500	735	30,545	17,125	29,106	300	(2)	12,284	78,311
DC	52%	100%	1,000	535	4,152	20,365	40,326	200	215	579	66,793
MD	67%	85%	13,714	700	312,694	635,801	331,066	408	3,131	259,591	1,297,514
NJ	40%	98%	11,200	2,431	196,101	101,784	63,442	650	5,769	14,677	381,377
NY	78%	90%	13,084	58,148	524,300	1,299,109	845,312	1,916	8,749	116,592	2,750,617
PA	73%	92%	2,650	2,491	292,752	652,558	626,414	12,900	2,726	48,449	1,592,491
VA	60%	90%	3,302	1,450	285,621	494,954	379,016	2,010	3,221	40,098	1,169,574
WV	75%	46%	2,750	490	111,243	206,842	116,236	0	1,869	13,324	439,430
TOTAL	**69%**	**90%**	**48,200**	**66,980**	**1,757,408**	**3,428,538**	**2,430,919**	**18,384**	**25,679**	**505,594**	**7,776,108**
REG. 3											
AL	33%	41%	20,593	4,387	46,944	87,936	32,395	450	1,358	11,208	194,063
FL	100%	102%	3,707	38,893	500,589	260,761	383,360	13,257	5,124	69,858	1,205,690
GA	51%	27%	600	2,018	439,549	339,594	265,164	0	(2)	49,343	1,046,925
KY	63%	42%	5,400	2,478	186,397	465,979	178,889	500	936	27,466	840,579
NC	31%	46%	3,370	3,304	111,160	312,720	191,562	16,929	(2)	6,887	639,045
SC	15%	15%	0	383	15,736	12,371	17,941	2,000	(2)	4,488	48,431
TN	50%	17%	2,300	1,165	188,758	214,339	117,488	100	0	13,193	524,150
TOTAL	**51%**	**48%**	**35,970**	**52,627**	**1,489,133**	**1,693,699**	**1,186,799**	**33,236**	**7,418**	**182,443**	**4,498,882**
REG. 4											
AR	34%	0%	792	419	26,932	67,410	21,563	0	2,265	2,998	119,381
LA	35%	68%	0	3,550	52,541	53,366	47,050	900	4,850	23,150	162,257
MS	27%	30%	5,500	1,625	38,069	72,915	26,256	0	660	14,755	145,025
OK	40%	14%	38,840	311	58,042	164,441	42,295	0	1,147	9,960	305,075
TX	39%	63%	500	11,460	264,145	369,672	79,091	156	2,130	51,100	727,154
TOTAL	**36%**	**41%**	**45,631**	**17,365**	**439,729**	**727,804**	**216,255**	**1,056**	**11,051**	**101,963**	**1,458,891**
REG. 5											
IL	45%	78%	47,500	7,455	288,514	458,905	148,266	2,570	26,074	72,343	979,284
IN	45%	73%	19,687	7,714	212,554	230,254	142,586	7	8,441	17,337	621,243
MI	57%	84%	1,945	3,482	147,692	310,505	193,760	384	6,459	39,465	664,226
MO	41%	0%	500	2,085	56,879	181,626	32,866	0	8,013	4,808	281,969
OH	76%	57%	1,483	15,455	413,001	621,632	613,298	0	16,695	810,676	1,681,564
WI	76%	77%	600	2,814	132,695	153,580	147,115	3,500	(2)	16,045	440,304
TOTAL	**57%**	**64%**	**71,714**	**39,005**	**1,251,335**	**1,956,502**	**1,277,891**	**6,461**	**66,182**	**960,674**	**4,668,590**
REG. 6											
IA	53%	82%	2,276	1,952	69,440	191,614	61,159	200	(2)	16,596	326,641
KS	59%	0%	700	4,626	69,162	23,426	51,050	8,715	2,368	8,197	160,046
MN	42%	92%	42,963	2,265	302,494	648,547	625,078	3,000	1,030	57,042	1,625,377
NE	63%	66%	0	3,769	59,988	163,265	120,131	6,685	1,497	35,878	355,334
ND	95%	48%	1,490	1,029	96,167	248,495	130,560	83	(2)	16,566	477,824
SD	53%	89%	2,095	240	19,265	32,833	40,921	965	5,355	20,501	101,674
TOTAL	**57%**	**68%**	**49,524**	**13,880**	**616,516**	**1,308,179**	**1,028,899**	**19,648**	**10,249**	**154,780**	**3,046,896**
REG. 7											
AZ	72%	82%	50,059	710	209,929	103,272	154,203	500	9,851	37,050	528,524
CA	44%	99%	0	9,301	300,725	302,820	335,444	300	23,337	65,064	971,927
CO	43%	41%	4,011	958	58,071	86,126	49,971	0	1,437	19,711	200,575
HI	56%	82%	0	342	11,518	34,125	36,763	300	402	1,057	83,450
NV	41%	48%	0	410	6,765	2,528	8,336	0	220	1,306	18,259
NM	98%	48%	8,634	2,027	43,799	36,268	39,073	200	391	7,060	130,392
UT	53%	43%	2,580	550	19,417	48,075	41,835	0	635	4,942	113,092
TOTAL	**52%**	**75%**	**65,284**	**14,298**	**650,224**	**613,214**	**665,625**	**1,300**	**36,274**	**136,190**	**2,046,219**
REG. 8											
AK	59%	21%	0	50	76,422	73,162	34,741	1,774	1,229	3,702	187,378
ID	50%	54%	2,099	215	45,243	23,503	16,303	428	1,473	3,797	89,264
MT	60%	57%	2,825	96	10,551	37,550	22,353	15	1,084	7,401	74,474
OR	49%	71%	2,400	2,881	122,131	70,159	48,946	730	5,394	17,958	252,641
WA	54%	99%	46,895	5,883	187,939	109,620	76,627	1,000	2,795	45,099	430,759
WY	49%	74%	1,175	3,104	26,290	27,594	11,474	400	330	5,282	70,367
TOTAL	**53%**	**70%**	**55,393**	**12,229**	**468,576**	**341,588**	**210,444**	**4,347**	**12,306**	**83,239**	**1,104,882**
REG. TOTALS	**55%**	**67%**	**$384,720**	**$228,678**	**$7,179,162**	**$10,643,809**	**$7,527,416**	**$88,167**	**$178,113**	**$2,227,700**	**$26,229,565**
FOREIGN											
France	0%	0%	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	0%	0%	0	0	7,110	4,138	6,210	0	0	3,604	17,458
Philippines	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Puerto Rico	0%	0%	3,750	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,750
Total-Foreign	**2%**	**0%**	**3,750**	**0**	**7,110**	**4,138**	**6,210**	**0**	**0**	**3,604**	**21,208**
SUBTOTAL	**54%**	**66%**	**$388,470**	**$228,678**	**$7,186,272**	**$10,647,947**	**$7,533,626**	**$88,167**	**$178,113**	**2,231,304**	**$26,250,773**

(2) Not organized in the Department

Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	11,601
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	0
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	4,965
Children & Youth Division by National 8/40	250
Child Welfare Foundation by Jr. Auxiliary	720
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	26,627
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	11,057
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	148,445
Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion	$ 1,094
GRAND TOTAL	**$26,455,533**

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 1996 — MAY 31, 1997

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY FINANCIAL AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-35	1936-45	1946-55	1956-65	1966-75	1976-90	1990-96	Last 7 mos. 96	First 5 mos. 97	Grand Total
Alabama	$ 15,281.65	$ 13,899.68	$ 27,466.26	$ 23,700.80	$ 19,672.79	$ 76,536.49	$89,564.56	$12,603.29	$7,989.76	$ 286,715.28
Alaska	----	----	627.56	1,000.00	950.00	1,200.00	---	---	---	3,777.56
Arizona	17,587.40	8,474.30	5,094.00	3,658.00	250.00	70,608.25	132,875.94	27,045.56	23,013.33	288,606.78
Arkansas	9,845.20	24,028.00	20,999.22	4,963.00	100.00	11,731.26	34,987.70	440.00	351.83	107,446.21
California	25,558.18	4,547.97	13,231.40	2,795.05	800.00	1,450.00	5,559.00	---	---	53,941.60
Colorado	26,956.23	14,664.88	17,360.78	5,257.33	770.00	3,875.25	7,755.58	2,711.32	1,300.00	80,651.37
Connecticut	160.00	1,694.00	350.00	90.00	----	450.00	552.00	500.00	---	3,796.00
Delaware	1,025.00	1,010.00	825.00	175.00	150.00	6,723.00	14,002.87	500.00	---	24,410.87
D. of C.	1,790.00	780.00	983.50	220.00	----	600.00	935.00	---	1,000.00	6,308.50
Florida	16,607.28	16,734.00	24,207.50	1,313.00	----	4,366.00	24,370.76	3,707.30	---	91,305.84
Georgia	14,839.50	55,054.57	51,488.42	34,596.00	4,015.00	3,900.00	3,184.51	600.00	---	167,678.00
Hawaii	450.00	420.00	---	----	---	900.00	---	---	---	1,770.00
Idaho	3,641.00	3,952.50	2,721.00	3,050.85	4,071.97	8,716.71	14,572.40	---	2,098.99	42,825.42
Illinois	11,943.25	18,277.54	3,211.53	1,132.00	1,078.11	14,872.75	101,409.59	33,400.00	14,100.00	199,424.77
Indiana	24,906.08	6,944.00	4,213.40	4,853.00	190.00	29,096.52	89,256.43	15,147.54	4,539.29	179,146.26
Iowa	15,833.58	1,659.50	407.00	190.00	773.45	3,805.00	11,767.82	1,900.00	376.00	36,712.35
Kansas	9,552.50	11,214.30	31,565.87	10,498.48	4,273.00	8,354.00	4,537.50	---	700.00	80,695.65
Kentucky	13,922.00	9,921.50	15,488.90	30,039.00	28,540.66	68,104.30	11,147.66	900.00	4,500.00	182,564.02
Louisiana	12,554.00	10,846.50	24,376.30	14,078.00	1,208.00	3,837.00	4,233.20	---	---	71,133.00
Maine	2,564.94	1,054.00	889.90	1,020.36	----	6,326.55	15,671.00	4,914.50	3,300.00	35,741.25
Maryland	3,862.00	2,025.00	2,430.57	960.00	358.00	4,645.00	1,200.00	1,700.00	12,013.91	29,194.48
Massachusetts	2,064.50	690.00	455.00	---	----	1,300.00	1,000.00	---	---	5,509.50
Michigan	12,709.48	11,185.85	20,653.85	12,627.39	9,719.46	7,016.60	10,591.81	1,270.00	675.00	86,449.44
Minnesota	6,516.00	2,094.77	14,908.19	8,414.60	2,327.23	14,435.00	141,159.58	25,224.54	17,738.52	232,818.43
Mississippi	16,509.00	23,784.63	30,843.14	32,411.00	37,582.00	99,937.96	26,075.55	950.00	4,550.00	272,643.28
Missouri	18,047.08	35,026.00	33,824.64	13,975.00	7,231.76	6,750.00	11,454.50	500.00	---	126,808.98
Montana	5,099.25	315.00	744.50	924.35	365.00	4,046.80	37,524.66	2,825.00	---	51,844.56
Nebraska	14,091.20	4,378.90	7,479.25	10,316.43	14,111.06	6,196.00	3,196.40	---	---	59,769.24
Nevada	390.00	195.00	566.00	200.00	1,978.00	5,894.00	1,000.00	---	---	10,223.00
New Hampshire	2,562.00	1,688.50	4,791.50	150.00	----	7,472.05	34,225.74	---	1,700.00	52,589.79
New Jersey	7,163.68	1,831.85	1,701.00	245.00	600.00	7,822.73	45,587.25	3,200.00	8,000.00	76,151.51
New Mexico	11,473.72	8,600.58	25,665.74	27,433.00	19,145.00	56,834.99	73,183.92	5,600.00	3,033.89	230,970.84
New York	4,547.97	3,339.57	3,411.00	1,392.00	300.00	2,450.00	30,342.67	4,597.57	8,486.33	58,867.11
North Carolina	12,230.50	34,367.00	52,708.00	28,311.60	3,705.00	11,601.00	10,975.07	1,000.00	2,370.00	157,268.17
North Dakota	13,204.37	12,813.08	8,138.21	3,650.00	2,083.01	7,387.71	3,065.00	---	1,490.00	51,831.38
Ohio	16,220.00	7,710.43	3,360.50	1,755.75	1,690.00	13,625.54	5,736.00	600.00	882.53	51,580.75
Oklahoma	24,955.05	15,503.00	26,118.77	39,287.70	46,835.00	81,298.91	111,207.89	22,062.72	16,776.86	384,045.90
Oregon	855.00	395.50	6,190.65	7,559.50	3,178.00	26,128.95	30,384.60	1,900.00	500.00	77,092.20
Panama	105.00	570.00	234.00	300.00	----	600.00	---	---	---	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	19,239.41	3,608.00	434.00	217.00	435.00	39,113.28	11,129.94	1,700.00	950.00	76,826.63
Puerto Rico	5,671.00	11,386.00	27,210.00	30,544.00	49,304.50	17,455.00	34,290.00	1,600.00	2,150.00	179,610.50
Rhode Island	1,277.00	285.00	1,641.00	----	760.00	650.00	16,294.38	2,000.00	---	22,907.38
South Carolina	29,589.20	38,863.85	16,780.54	9,912.80	2,936.07	2,682.93	1,627.00	---	---	102,392.39
South Dakota	19,555.89	22,874.38	13,405.05	2,957.00	----	36,460.89	36,460.89	2,095.30	---	133,809.40
Tennessee	12,211.52	18,933.25	29,403.20	25,210.00	5,604.50	26,107.23	26,107.23	1,300.00	1,000.00	145,876.93
Texas	11,239.50	24,134.00	31,879.35	15,513.08	12,856.00	2,714.74	2,464.74	500.00	---	101,301.41
Utah	3,435.00	7,690.48	3,248.00	----	----	6,815.62	5,032.12	1,500.00	1,080.00	28,801.22
Vermont	1,559.50	265.00	9,026.50	225.00	----	3,525.00	3,025.00	588.00	---	18,214.00
Virginia	19,219.86	26,090.45	26,449.78	1,588.00	9,768.00	20,190.00	17,065.00	1,802.00	1,500.00	123,673.09
Washington	3,033.00	345.00	427.50	----	----	75,072.49	50,592.19	29,454.80	17,439.85	176,364.83
West Virginia	20,276.98	7,353.00	5,801.00	5,594.94	650.00	17,023.65	15,022.11	2,750.00	---	74,471.68
Wisconsin	9,561.68	6,320.30	2,542.00	5,525.25	2,116.00	10,098.13	9,431.13	600.00	---	46,194.49
Wyoming	6,885.00	1,295.00	793.00	1,200.00	----	1,079.00	579.00	1,174.54	---	13,005.54
Other Departments	200.00	360.00	173.50	----	----	---	---	---		733.50
Miscellaneous	19,499.21	---	----	----	----	---	---	---		19,499.21
Total	$580,077.34[1]	$541,495.61	$658,946.47	$431,030.26	$302,481.57	$949,844.28	$1,373,414.89	$222,863.98	$165,606.09	$5,225,800.49

TABLE NO. 3

COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF WW II, KOREAN, VIETNAM AND GRENADA/LEBANON AND PANAMA VETERANS RECEIVING AID FROM NATIONAL CHILDREN & YOUTH DIVISION

	No. WW II Children	No. Korean Children	No. Vietnam Children	No. Grenada/ Lebanon Children	No. Panama Children	No. Persian Gulf Children
6-1-96 to 5-31-97	14 (.94%)	38 (2.54%)	849 (56.71%)	216 (14.43%)	36 (2.40%)	334 (22.98%)
6-1-95 to 5-31-96	13 (1.09%)	48 (4.01%)	904 (75.46%)	210 (17.53%)	23 (1.92%)	
6-1-94 to 5-31-95	27 (1.95%)	37 (2.67%)	1096 (79.19%)	189 (13.66%)	35 (2.53%)	
6-1-93 to 5-31-94	17 (.81%)	80 (3.83%)	1814 (86.84%)	142 (6.80%)	36 (1.72%)	
6-1-92 to 5-31-93	8 (.45%)	29 (1.63%)	1565 (87.97%)	121 (6.80%)	56 (3.15%)	
6-1-91 to 5-31-92	36 (2.27%)	68 (4.28%)	1371 (86.33%)	75 (4.72%)	38 (2.40%)	
6-1-90 to 5-31-91	17 (1.32%)	74 (5.75%)	1074 (83.45%)	47 (3.65%)	75 (5.83%)	
6-1-89 to 5-31-90	7 (1.09%)	49 (7.62%)	587 (91.29%)			
6-1-88 to 5-31-89	16 (2.35%)	61 (8.94%)	605 (88.71%)			
6-1-87 to 5-31-88	41 (6.65%)	68 (10.97%)	510 (82.38%)			
6-1-86 to 5-31-87	28 (4.60%)	60 (9.85%)	521 (85.55%)			
6-1-85 to 5-31-86	29 (4.54%)	114 (17.84%)	496 (77.62%)			
6-1-84 to 5-31-85	57 (9.27%)	114 (18.53%)	444 (72.16%)			
6-1-83 to 5-31-84	56 (8.8%)	125 (19.60%)	457 (71.60%)			
6-1-82 to 5-31-83	40 (5.9%)	158 (23.30%)	480 (70.80%)			
6-1-81 to 5-31-82	51 (14.36%)	80 (22.54%)	224 (63.10%)			
6-1-80 to 5-31-81	65 (14.74%)	125 (28.34%)	251 (56.92%)			
6-1-79 to 5-31-80	94 (21.81%)	58 (13.46%)	279 (64.73%)			
6-1-78 to 5-31-79	111 (27.54%)	101 (25.06%)	191 (47.40%)			
6-1-77 to 5-31-78	198 (30.33%)	215 (32.92%)	240 (36.75%)			
6-1-76 to 5-31-77	216 (38.30%)	140 (24.82%)	208 (36.88%)			
6-1-75 to 5-31-76	177 (29.70%)	233 (39.09%)	186 (31.21%)			
6-1-74 to 5-31-75	189 (36.00%)	208 (39.62%)	218 (41.52%)			
6-1-73 to 5-31-74	248 (36.69%)	334 (49.41%)	94 (13.90%)			
6-1-72 to 5-31-73	204 (43.59%)	150 (32.05%)	114 (24.36%)			
6-1-71 to 5-31-72	360 (46.15%)	309 (39.62%)	110 (14.10%)			
6-1-69 to 5-31-70	749 (53.32%)	417 (39.00%)	82 (7.68%)			
6-1-68 to 5-31-69	706 (61.49%)	414 (33.99%)	51 (4.18%)			
6-1-67 to 5-31-68	875 (61.66%)	390 (34.06%)	46 (4.01%)			
6-1-66 to 5-31-67	1,024 (64.02%)	463 (33.86%)	25 (1.83%)			
6-1-65 to 5-31-66	1,147 (72.86%)	384 (27.06%)	11 (.08%)			
6-1-64 to 5-31-65	1,091 (82.11%)	249 (17.82%)				
6-1-63 to 5-31-64	1,099 (79.86%)	273 (19.99%)				
6-1-62 to 5-31-63	1,077 (78.73%)	296 (21.20%)				
6-1-61 to 5-31-62	1,329 (82.47%)	221 (16.92%)				
6-1-60 to 5-31-61	1,716 (83.59%)	251 (15.79%)				
6-1-59 to 5-31-60	2,536 (84.99%)	288 (14.27%)				
6-1-58 to 5-31-59	1,589 (85.16%)	389 (13.06%)				
5-1-57 to 5-31-58	2,050 (86.78%)	195 (10.65%)				
6-1-56 to 5-31-57	1,713 (89.32%)	206 (8.98%)				
6-1-55 to 5-31-56	1,579 (90.06%)	142 (7.47%)				
6-1-54 to 5-31-55	2,098 (85.68%)	146 (7.92%)				
5-1-53 to 5-31-54	2,519 (84.32%)	140 (5.63%)				
5-1-52 to 5-31-53	2,050 (87.12%)	135 (4.66%)				
5-1-51 to 4-30-52	1,481 (84.36%)	39 (1.61%)				
5-1-50 to 4-30-51	1,506 (83.39%)	5 (.28%)				
7-1-49 to 4-30-50	1,584 (85.04%)					
7-1-48 to 6-30-49	1,796 (78.45%)					
7-1-47 to 6-30-48	1,218 (72.98%)					
7-1-46 to 6-30-47	785 (52.77%)					
Prior to 7-1-46	590 (43.83%)					

TABLE NO. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request During Period June 1, 1996 through May 31, 1997

Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	23,160
Children Beware	123,689
April Is Children & Youth Month	47,271
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	39,233
Department Children & Youth Chairman's Guide	130
Don't Hesitate --Vaccinate	46,258
Gateway Drugs	84,721
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night	113,800
National Resource Directory	275
Regional Children & Youth Award (VISION)	37,668
TFA Applications	5,160
TFA Brochures	61,583
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	64,245
Safety Tips --Indoor	118,554
Safety Tips --Outdoor	68,119
Americanism/Children & Youth Catalog Brochure	12,034
National Family Week	19,126
Parents: For Your Information	30,640
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention	53,596
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	5,000
Certificate of Meritorious Service	150
National Achievement Award	150
Special Children & Youth Citation	600
Vision Certificate of Excellence	135
Vision Certificate of Participation	100
Reporting:	
Tally Sheet	500
Unit Report Form	11,000
We Want a Report from Your Unit or Salon	10,000
TOTAL	976,897

The demand for philanthropic funds becomes greater each year. Over the past several years requests for applications have ranged between 60—70. This year so far, we have received application requests from over 250 non-profit organizations looking for project funding. As we become better known, the demand for our resources becomes heavier. This is positive because it indicates our recognition in the philanthropic community, but it also demonstrates the continued need of support required to keep funding worthwhile activities.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation held in Indianapolis on May 4, 1997, the Following officers were elected: U.S. 'Udie' Grant of Kansas, (President); Eugene V. Lindquist of Minnesota (Vice President); James P. Holley of Texas (Secretary); and Robert Turner of Georgia (Treasurer). Administrative personnel that were re-appointed by the Board of Directors were Webber LaGrange (Assistant Treasurer) and Terry L. Woodburn (Executive Secretary). Two new Board members were also introduced. The first is Mr. Bobby Coleman from the Department of South Carolina. Mr. Coleman represents the National Finance Commission on the Board. The second is Mr. George West from the Department of New Hampshire. Mr. West represents the National Executive Committee of The American Legion.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Foundation retains its tax exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests to the Foundation are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

CONVENTION COMMISSION

Jeffrey L. Olson, Minnesota, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 78th Annual National Convention of The American Legion was held in Salt Lake City, Utah August 30—September 5, 1996.

National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig (MN) called the opening session to order at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, September 3. Commander Ludwig welcomed "America's Team" to Salt Lake City and thanked them for their past, present and future service to America. Legionnaires were welcomed to the National Convention by The Honorable Olene Walker, Lieutenant Governor of Utah, The Honorable DeeDee Corradini, Mayor of Salt Lake City, Department Commander H. Dale Brockbank, The American Legion of Utah and William E. Christoffersen, President of The American Legion Convention Corporation of Utah. The convention was also addressed by The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch, U. S. Senate, and The Honorable Gerald B. H. Solomon, Chairman, Rules Committee, U. S. House of Representatives.

Commander Ludwig later presented The American Legion's Distinguished Service Award to the Honorable G. V. Montgomery, the Ranking Democratic member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, U. S. House of Representatives. Commander Ludwig praised Representative Montgomery for his many years of service to state and nation, as well as his leadership on veterans and military issues. Foremost in the minds of many Legionnaires was Representative Montgomery's authorship of the "Montgomery G. I. Bill of Education." During the convention, Presidential candidates Robert J. Dole and H. Ross Perot also spoke to the delegates.

A highlight of the convention was the Patriotic Memorial Service held on Sunday in the Mormon Tabernacle on Temple Square. Thousands of Legionnaires and guests filled the Tabernacle to capacity enjoying the Patriotic Service. Gordon B. Hinckley, President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints delivered a very stirring keynote address. The Mormom Tabernacle Choir thrilled all in attendance with their beautiful voices.

On Tuesday evening, The National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests was held in the ballroom of the Salt Palace Convention Center. Entertainment was provided by Tony Orlando to a capacity crowd of Legionnaires and guests. Tony Orlando's upbeat, highly energetic performance was enthusiastically received by everyone in attendance.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission held three regular meetings during the year. Discussions continue regarding the revisions of our requests for proposals from cities interested in hosting a national convention. This process is very important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged during the initial review process. It is the commission's desire to continue attracting new host cities for conventions. This provides the Legionnaire with a varied and enjoyable convention that can be shared with families and guests on an annual basis.

The Commission also has recommended that band and color guard contests be held at different times during the convention. These contests are very popular and many Legionnaires have expressed disappointment that the practice of scheduling both at the same time prevented their attendance at each contest. The Commission believes this change will be well accepted and increase member participation at both venues. In addition, the Commission is reviewing the potential of increasing the participation in band and color guard contests at all levels. The increased participation in these contests should also increase the number of Legionaries and guests attending our conventions and enjoying these popular events.

During recent past conventions, the Commission has surveyed the satisfaction of our delegates of our convention processes. These surveys were made available to select portions of our attendees. The Commission believes this "customer satisfaction" survey should be expanded and continued in future conventions as a method of improving our planning processes. These responses will be the focal point in planning conventions that meet the needs and desires of our membership.

During the Spring meeting, Commission members recommended to the National Executive Committee that the City of Charlotte, North Carolina be tentatively awarded the National Convention in the year 2002 for the dates of August 30-September 5, 2002. The recommendation was later approved by the National Executive Committee.

Planning for the 1997 Orlando Convention proceeds on schedule. Orlando offers a wide variety of activities for The American Legion family and a large delegation is expected. Dates and locations for future conventions are:

New Orleans, Louisiana	September 4-10, 1998
Anaheim, California	September 3-9, 1999
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	September 1-7, 2000
San Antonio, Texas	August 24-30, 2001

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS COMMITTEE
Theodore J. Costello, Florida, Chairman

The Distinguished Guests Committee exists within the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities of all persons invited to attend our convention as distinguished guests.

The Committee arranges each guest's arrival and departure transportation at the convention. Each distinguished guest is also assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
Ray G. Smith, North Carolina, Chairman
James B. Hubbard, Michigan, Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Economic Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans' Preference), and the staff from July 1, 1996, through June 30, 1997. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future reference to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

1996-1997 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

(1) Members and guests of the National Economic Commission met on Saturday, August 31, 1996, in the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, in conjunction with the Seventy-eighth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, Sept. 2, 1996. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.

(2) An executive session of the National Economic Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 14-15, 1996. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 16-17, 1996.

(3) The National Economic Commission met in conjunction with the Thirty-seventh Annual Washington Conference on Monday and Wednesday, March 3 and 5, 1997. Those sessions were held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. A report on the topics covered during those two sessions is contained in the commission's Advance Report to the NEC.

(4) Members of the commission met on May 5-6, 1997, in the headquarters of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 7-8, 1997.

Legislative Appearances

A very important part of the work of the National Economic Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission testified or participated in the preparation of testimony on several occasions. A list of those hearings follows:

July 31, 1996; House Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Government Programs, meeting jointly with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment and Housing; Small Business Administration and veterans' small business assistance needs

February 26, 1997; Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee; FY 1998 budget

February 26, 1997; House Civil Service Subcommittee; Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act

May 7, 1997; House Veterans' Affairs Committee; Government Performance and Results Act

The Economics staff prepared the commission's portion of the testimony that was presented in September 1996 by the National Commander at a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs regarding The American Legion's goals and concerns, as well as the Legion's February and March 1997 appearances before the same committees concerning the administration's proposed FY 1998 budget for the VA and veterans' programs.

Administrative Activities

The commission's staff of three manage all of its activities and programs on a daily basis.

The staff's major responsibility is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans at the national level. This is accomplished through the commission's ongoing work with Congress and the following federal agencies: the Department of Labor, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The director and assistant director also represent The American Legion on the following boards and committees: Executive Committee of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, and its Subcommittee on Disabled Veterans; the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training; the Veterans' Committee of the Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies; and the veterans' advisory committees of the Small Business Administration and the Office of Personnel Management. They also act as advisors to the Legion's Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee.

Another staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

One of the commission's major programs is its employer awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program, The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who have established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers.

Publications

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the commission does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on a network of employment chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment.

In order to assist the employment chairmen to be as effective as possible, the staff provides them with pertinent information and guidance through the Legion's biweekly newspaper, *The Dispatch*. They also provide articles on a routine basis to *The American Legion Magazine*.

This year, the staff produced a pamphlet entitled "Job Fairs for Veterans," intended to assist Legion Posts to hold successful employment fairs in their communities.

The commission's various publications are kept in stock and distributed upon request, free of charge.

Employer of the Year Awards

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Economic Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that have established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Nominations for these award are submitted by Posts to their Departments for review. Each Department must then select what it feels is the most worthy nominee in the large employer category (those companies with more than 200 employees), one in the medium-size employer category (51-200 employees), and one in the small employer category (50 or fewer employees). These three nominations are then forwarded to the National Economic Commission prior to December 15 for final approval and the issuance of plaques. After the plaques are prepared, they are sent to the Departments for presentation.

Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Economic Commission, Ray G. Smith (NC), appointed a six-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 1996 in the Employer of the Year Awards Program. The purpose of this subcommittee was to select a national winner and a runner-up in each of the employer categories. Those serving on the subcommittee were James A. McMahon (ME), Chairman; William E. Christoffersen (UT); Henry J. Field (SC); Tom Norris (NH), Leonard E. Shaw (IA), and Tom Karrh (AL).

The members of the Employer of the Year Subcommittee met on March 3, 1997, to consider 53 employer nominations from 26 Departments. Of these nominations, 19 were for small, 20 were for medium, and 14 were for large employers. Sixteen of these nominations (five large, seven medium, and four small) were, for one reason or another, ineligible for the national awards.

Prior to the meeting, the staff liaison to the subcommittee mailed copies of all nominations and supporting data to each subcommittee member. After a thorough review of this material, the Employer of the Year Subcommittee selected the following winners:

Large Employer: Comcar Industries, Auburndale, Florida

Medium Size Employer: D&H Transport, Yuba City, California

Small Employer: Ted's Western Appliance Service, Livingston, Montana

The subcommittee also selected three runners-up in the event that one of the winners is unable to accept the award, or is disqualified because of any labor relations or OSHA violations that might be pending against them. The three runners-up are as follows:

Large Employer: Cutler-Hammer Inc., Sumter, South Carolina

Medium Size Employer: UNC Aviation Services, TH-57 Project, Milton, Florida

Small Employer: Aerospace Components, Largo, Florida

Officials of the three winning companies have agreed to come to the 79th Annual National Convention in Orlando to accept the national awards. Upon their arrival in the convention city, each company will receive a small stipend to help defray the travel costs of their representatives.

LVER and DVOP Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

Department winners were selected and submitted to the national commission in the same manner as employer award winners. Entries were considered by the employer awards subcommittee on March 3, 1997. Winners are to receive their plaques at their respective Department Conventions. National winners are the following:

LVER of the Year: John L. Multer, San Angelo, Texas

DVOP of the Year: Mary O'Connell, Atlanta, Georgia

ES Office of the Year: Monroeville State Employment Service, Monroeville, Alabama.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

James A. McMahon, Maine, Chairman
James B. Hubbard, Michigan, Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment. These employment chairmen are appointed by their Posts and Departments. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the county and District levels.

Under the direction of the Employment Committee, the national staff contracted with DynCorp Information and Engineering Technology of Virginia to study the problem of non-acceptance of military training by civilian credentialing bodies in the fields of health care and aircraft maintenance. It is believed that this problem is widespread, and that many separating service members are prevented from practicing the valuable skills learned in the military without attending redundant schooling in the civilian sector. The DynCorp study will present specific details of this problem so that solutions can be sought.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE COMMITTEE

Henry J. Field, South Carolina, Chairman
James B. Hubbard, Michigan, Director

This committee is charged with the responsibility of promoting veterans' employment opportunities in federal government and for ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the activities of those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

Department of Labor: Unemployment and underemployment among veterans and non-veterans has continued to decrease over the past year. However, there are still some major problems.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, veterans constitute about 14% of the nation's labor force. The percentage of displaced workers has not been formally tabulated since 1988; at that time, however, about 23% of all dislocated workers were veterans. Many of these veterans lost their jobs because of plant closings, shift abolishment, slack work demand, or because the employer went out of business for one reason or another.

Unfortunately, it is generally very difficult for the dislocated worker to find new employment that is suitable. This is because most of these individuals do not have the financial resources necessary either to obtain job training or to relocate to an area where employment might be available. The problems of these men and women are further exacerbated by many employers' view of them as older workers. About half of dislocated workers find new jobs paying less than they were making before dislocation.

The commission is also concerned about the employment of severely disabled veterans. According to data supplied by the Department of Labor's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, about 85-90 percent of all veterans who are 60% or more compensably disabled have completely dropped out of the labor market. This has occurred partly because many employers in both the public and private sectors have refused to make the necessary accommodations for their employment, and partly because many of the workers have reached retirement age.

Another major concern of the commission and the Department of Labor is homeless veterans. While there seems to be a vast disparity in the estimates of the number of homeless persons in this country, one thing the experts do agree on is that a large percentage are veterans. They also believe that many of the homeless veterans served during the Vietnam era. In response to this need, the commission has prepared and widely distributed a pamphlet entitled *A Resource Guide for the Homeless Veteran*, intended to help homeless veterans locate resources and benefits that may be available to them because of their military service.

The American Legion will continue to work with the Department of Labor and other federal agencies that have the resources necessary to help homeless veterans to get off the streets and onto payrolls. In the weeks and months ahead, the commission will continue to work with the Labor Department to find solutions to these and other problems that affect veterans economically.

Department of the Treasury: The Economic Commission continues its active support of U.S. Savings Bonds, which have recently gained a new popularity because of an added education benefit. Savings bonds can be completely tax free when used for higher education tuition.

Because of federal budget cuts, the U.S. Treasury Department can no longer afford to send each Legion post promotional material on savings bonds. The Economic Commission, however, continues to provide Legionnaires with information on the value of these bonds through articles and public service advertisements in Legion publications.

Department of Veterans Affairs: The loan guaranty program operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs has guaranteed over 15.2 million loans to veterans since its inception in 1944. In FY 1996, VA guaranteed 320 thousand loans totaling $32.6 billion. The average home loan amount was $101,660. Over 90 percent of the veterans purchasing a home were able to obtain no-downpayment loans. Approximately 56 percent of veterans purchasing a home were first-time home buyers. VA expects to guarantee about 260 thousand loans in FY 1997.

Defaults and foreclosures continue to be relatively low. There were 110 thousand loans in serious default at the end of FY 1996. This represents 3.30 percent of all loans outstanding and an increase from 3.03 percent at the end of FY 1995. The inventory of

acquired properties was 9,549 in September 1996, an increase of 2.5 percent from 12 months earlier.

Office of Personnel Management: The federal government is the largest employer in the country as well as the largest employer of veterans. The responsibility for ensuring that veterans receive the preference they have been granted by law is vested in the Office of Personnel Management.

The following statistical summary appeared in OPM's annual report to Congress on veterans' employment in federal government. This summary covers veteran hiring and promotion activities for FY 1996.

Veterans hired totaled 34,724 (18.0 percent of new hires);
- 15,041 of those were Vietnam era veterans;
- 6,664 were disabled; and
- 2,820 of those were 30% or more disabled.

Veterans promoted totaled 58,803 (22.3%);
- disabled veterans promoted numbered 10,181; and
- 3,595 of those were 30% or more disabled.

12,672 Veterans Readjustment Appointments were made;
- This included 8,797 new hires.

Trends in veterans' employment in the federal service indicate an increase of Vietnam era veterans from 1986 to 1996, but a decline in veterans from other eras. This decline is due primarily to the retirements of older veterans (over 48 percent of all retirements over the last five years were veterans). In spite of the overall decline in veterans in the federal work force, the 27.4 percent veterans' representation in the non-Postal federal service is more than double the 11.3 percent in the civilian labor force. Representation of disabled veterans declined from 4.5% in 1986 through the late 1980s and early 1990s until returning to 4.5% in FY 1996. Representation of 30% disabled veterans increased from 1.2% in 1986 to 1.6% in 1996.

The Veterans' Preference Committee will continue to monitor veterans' employment trends in the future. It will also continue to work with OPM to promote employment opportunities for veterans.

Postal Service: The Postal Service is one of the largest employers of veterans in the nation. Out of a career workforce of 760,523, 256,884 (33.78 percent) are veterans, 81,238 (10.68 percent) of workforce are veterans with disabilities, and 18,873 (2.48 percent) are veterans who are 30-percent or more disabled.

The Veterans' Preference Committee will continue to promote employment opportunities for veterans within the Postal Service.

Small Business Administration: During fiscal year 1995, the latest year for which figures are available to us, about 14% of the loans guaranteed by SBA were made to veterans, who received 8,590 loans totalling nearly $1.4 billion. Vietnam era veterans received $867.4 million, disabled veterans $822,000, women veterans $93.2 million, and minority veterans received $148 million in loan guarantees.

Through SBA's 8(a) program, under which contracts are awarded to businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, 2,896 contracts were awarded to 313 veteran-owned firms for a total of $549 million, which represents 9% of the dollars and 9% of the contracts awarded in that program.

Many small business contractors are unable to obtain work because of the unavailability of bonding. During FY 1995, utilizing SBA's surety bond program, 1,082 veteran-owned firms obtained contracts totalling nearly $190 million, or 24% of the total dollar amount awarded.

Conclusion

The National Economic Commission is fully aware that it would be impossible to carry out its mandates without the active involvement of Posts, Districts, Counties, Departments and individual Legionnaires. We deeply appreciate their continued support and involvement. Chairman Smith also thanks the National Commander, the National Adjutant, the National Executive Committee, and the staff of both the Washington and Indianapolis offices for the outstanding support and cooperation they have provided during the past year.

FINANCE COMMISSION

George W. Boucek, Illinois, Chairman
Webber LaGrange, Indiana, National Treasurer
Paul M. Allen, Minnesota, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for submission to the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the National Organization operate within their approved appropriations. The Finance Commission comprises seven members, with the National Adjutant as ex-officio secretary, and the National Commander and National Treasurer are ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the Executive Directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the Finance Director, as well as our Liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The National Organization had an operating surplus of $4,692,913 for the year 1996.

In 1996, we received $9 dues per member, allocated as follows: $6.00 to the General Fund and $3.00 to *The American Legion Magazine.*

The income of the National Organization is derived from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions, and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report, and in addition, your attention is directed to the Reports of Committees and Trusts which come under the jurisdiction of this Commission and can be found elsewhere in this publication. These reports include the:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation
American Legion Life Insurance and Trust Committee
American Legion Emblem Committee
American Legion Overseas Graves Decoration Trust

EMBLEM COMMITTEE

Keith H. Gwilliam, Utah, Chairman
Jeffrey O. Brown, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following shows gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 1996 and for the first three months of 1997.

January 1 to December 31, 1996
(Twelve Months)

Gross Sales	$6,519,984
Cost of Goods Sold	3,637,206
Overhead	2,140,925
Operating Profit	741,853

Total number of 1996 orders processed was 70,192.

January 1 to March 31, 1997
(Three Months)

Gross Sales	$1,562,319
Cost of Goods Sold	982,828
Overhead	490,363
Operating Profit	89,128

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 1996 was 16,008.

THE AMERICAN LEGION LIFE INSURANCE COMMITTEE
Steve A. George, Minnesota, Chairman
G. Paul Dunn, Oklahoma, Assistant Director, Membership Services

The American Legion Life Insurance Committee provides oversight for the several life insurance plans currently offered by The American Legion and is assigned to the National Finance Commission.

The American Legion Life Insurance Program supports several National programs which are among the most prominent and visible activities of The American Legion. The programs are listed below with the corresponding funding for 1997.

American Legion Baseball $643,149; National Oratorical Contest $268,256; Junior Uniformed Musical Groups, $25,000 for participation at the National Convention; Boy's Nation, $149,595; Boy Scout of the Year Scholarship Award, $14,000. An award of $2,000 per year up to four years, not to exceed $8,000, for pursuit of a course of study beyond high school. Three second-place awards in the amount of $2,000 each are also granted.

These requests for grants are approved by The American Legion Life Insurance Committee, the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee.

HARTFORD LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

The American Legion currently offers a Level Term Life Plan to members, their spouses and dependents. **This includes Sons of The American Legion members and spouses.** The Legion-approved Level Term Life Plan is *underwritten by Hartford Life Insurance Company.* The Administrator for the plans is *Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc.,* located in West Des Moines, Iowa.

In addition to level term, the AdvanceLife Plan from The American Legion is one of the most unusual and important benefits Legion members and spouses will ever have the opportunity to acquire.

With AdvanceLife, members and spouses receive not only life insurance protection, but also Nursing Home Benefits and Last Illness Benefits. The Nursing Home and Last Illness

Benefits are automatically built into the Plan. For more information, call the toll-free number below.

UNION FIDELITY

Another plan available to members and spouses is Birthday Life underwritten by Union Fidelity located in Trevose, Pennsylvania. This plan is a guaranteed-issue combined level whole life and accidental death benefit insurance plan with premiums at entry age which do not increase as the insured grows older. No medical exam is required. This plan is underwritten and administered by Union Fidelity Life Insurance Company.

Guaranteed renewable for life, Legionnaires and spouses age 45 through age 80 are eligible to enroll for this plan which builds cash values and offers a loan provision. **The age limit in Washington and New Jersey is lower than age 80. Contact Union Fidelity for details.**

CLAIMS

The primary feature of The American Legion Life Insurance Plan is the benefits paid to beneficiaries of deceased insured Legionnaires. In 39 years, claims have been paid amounting to more than $125 million in benefits. These benefits were paid at no cost to the National Organization of The American Legion and no expenses to the general membership, other than certificate-policyholders. The insurance plan has proven to be a self-sustaining program. By the end of 1997, the total benefits paid will be nearly $140 million dollars.

Several new products will be reviewed this year to give members a more flexible choice of life insurance benefits. Income replacement, underwritten whole life and extended guaranteed term periods are a few of the features that will be studied to be included in future product offerings. A "First to Die" policy is also being researched. "First to Die" policies insure both spouses and pays benefits on the first spouse to die. Such policies can reduce cost by as much as 30% over two individual policies.

Two additional life insurance plans are now available to Legionnaires, Sons of The American Legion members and their dependents following action by The American Legion Life Insurance Committee and National Finance Commission.

The plans formed in response to requests by members themselves, include "Extra Life" by Globe Life and Accident, a subsidiary of United American Insurance Company; and a guaranteed issue level term plan offered by CNA Insurance Company.

"Extra Life" is a new level premium/level benefit product essentially a whole life plan with no cash values. With an initial benefit of $10,000 the premiums don't increase with age in most states and the benefits are never reduced. In some states a $1 per month increase is charged for each $10,000 of coverage during each 20-year renewal period.

The other new plan offered by CNA Insurance Company costs less than typical guaranteed issue plans and provides an option for those unable to pass medical underwriting on standard plans. The plan will be issued through age 59. The benefit amount is up to $50,000 for under age 50 and up to $20,000 for those between 50-59 years old.

Under the plan, benefits will be reduced by half at age 65 and the plan terminates automatically at age 75. The plan is currently not available in the following states: Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas and Utah.

HEALTHCARE

Several healthcare products are being offered to Departments on an individual basis, as requested. Departments must approve the products by a vote of their Department Executive Committee and certify the approval to the National Adjutant. The products cover a broad range of healthcare needs including: Major Medical; long-term nursing care, Home Healthcare; long and short term disability; Medicare Supplement; short-term major medical; Dental and catastrophic coverages. Departments may or may not approve all plans offered. Upon approval by a Department, appropriate announcements will be made to the membership. Five Departments have approved participation and more are expected in the fall. Current participating Departments are PA, IL, SC, NC and NY.

Another important achievement of the Life Insurance Committee is the approval of a "Worldwide Champus Supplement Program" adopted by the National Executive Committee at its Spring 1996 meeting. The plan compares favorably with existing plans being offered by military associations. It is expected to be very competitive from a cost and benefits standpoint. The American Legion will receive no royalties from the plan and hopes are to use the plan as a membership tool to recruit and renew active duty and retired military personnel. Additional information will appear in future issues of *The American Legion Magazine* and *Dispatch.*

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Requests for information concerning the status of applications, non receipt of insurance renewal, filing of death claims, status of death claims, amount of premium, inquiries as to whether or not a member is insured, or specific questions pertaining to the terms of coverage should be directed to:

Hartford and CNA Plans
Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc.
1776 West Lakes Parkway
West Des Moines, IA 50398
1-800-542-5547
Benefit
Decreasing Term
Advance Life
Level Term

Union Fidelity Life Ins. Co.
4850 Street Road
Trevose, PA 19049
1-800-523-5758
Birthday Life

Globe Life and Accident
Globe Life Center
Oklahoma City, OK 73184
1-800-811-3927
Level Premium/Level

CNA—Guaranteed Issue Level Term
CHAMPUS SUPPLEMENT INSURANCE
For Active Duty and Retired
Military—Offered by Allianz Life
1-800-542-5547

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION

Alan G. Lance Sr., Idaho, Chairman
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Director

The following annual report covers the activities of the The American Legion's Foreign Relations Commission and Foreign Relations Council for the 1996-97 program year ending June 30, 1997.

Overview

The purpose of Foreign Relations Program is twofold. First, the Commission is dedicated to keeping the membership of The American Legion informed on relevant foreign policy issues and to carrying The Legion's important voice on these matters to our government. Second, the Commission and its staff work to urge bipartisan cooperation by the Congress and the Administration in developing consistent, viable foreign policies for the United States.

To keep the membership fully informed, the Foreign Relations Commission conducts numerous meetings and programs throughout the year featuring prominent speakers and focusing on important relevant foreign policy issues. The Commission is also dedicated to providing and exchanging information on foreign relations topics and ideas through its speaker program, while also regularly consulting with its grassroots membership on these key issues.

To influence the Administration and Congress toward development of bipartisan foreign policies which are consistent with principles of "Democratic Activism", The American Legion participates in numerous meetings, hearings and programs throughout the year, providing both input and recommendations to the State Department, to Congressional offices and committees, and to the White House. This is done either directly or through liaison offices at these Agencies or in some cases through the Veterans liaison office at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Honorable Alan G. Lance, Attorney General of the State of Idaho was appointed in the Fall of 1996 and serves as the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission.

Foreign Relations Commission Resolutions Adopted at National Convention in Salt Lake City, September 1996

Thirty-two Resolutions, approved and adopted by the Foreign Relations Commission and its Ad Hoc Committees at the 78th National Convention in September 1996, shape the Legion's foreign relations program. Of these, two overarching *general* foreign policy resolutions outline the major principles which have characterized The American Legion's approach to foreign affairs over many years. These Resolutions are:

Resolution Number 183, *America's Future,* which outlines the major international goals sought by The American Legion and recognizes the unprecedented and far reaching changes in the international security environment in the post-Cold War period. This Resolution calls upon the U.S. Government to adopt policies of "Democratic Activism" by promoting democratic values, maintaining a strong national defense to deter or defeat aggression, cooperate with allies, encourage free and fair trade and assist developing nations.

Resolution Number 184, *Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy,* which outlines The American Legion's objectives for U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy. Resolution 184 suggests that U.S. foreign policy embody key principles which include:

- recognition of U.S. responsibilities as a world leader
- dedication to world peace and a peace through strength posture
- active promotion of democracy
- support for human rights consistent with U.S. national interests
- participation in collective security alliances
- use of U.S. national resources in critical world regions to achieve interests
- equitable and verifiable arms control agreements

- opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery
- opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
- support for responsible international organizations consistent with our interests
- participation in the increasingly interdependent free world trade system
- recognition of the importance of national sovereignty in foreign relations issues
- recognition of the important roles played by the President and Congress in foreign policy

The following additional resolutions, organized by category (General Foreign Policy and geographic region) provide the basis for the current Foreign Relations program for The American Legion:

GENERAL FOREIGN POLICY

Resolution Number 67, *Support for South Vietnamese Commandos,* outlines long-standing American Legion policy supporting legislation which would right a wrong committed by the United States in the treatment of those Vietnamese commandos who worked with the CIA and the Defense Department during the Vietnam War by providing compensation to them. This compensation was already appropriated last year and the Defense Department was charged with the task reimbursing the eligible commandos.

Resolution Number 79, *Policy on POW/MIA Issues,* states The American Legion position calling for an independent study and Congressional Hearings into reports of corruption and misuse of U.S. funds by the government of Vietnam. These funds were for the purpose of searching for the remains of missing U.S. servicemen. Resolution 79 also states American Legion opposition to further normalization of relations with Vietnam until the funds study is completed and disclosed to the public.

Resolution Number 144, *Foreign Command of U.S. Forces,* outlines American Legion opposition to the U.S. military personnel wearing UN insignia and opposes U.S. forces serving in a UN mission without Geneva Convention protections. Resolution 144 also opposes any foreign command of U.S. Forces.

Resolution Number 187, *United Nations,* states The American Legion's continuing support for United States membership in the UN; however, it calls for retention of U.S. veto power in the UN General Assembly and for a very specific list of reforms relating to reducing the UN bureaucracy, more careful decisions on UN operations, professionalizing the UN staff, establishing an independent UN Inspector General, ratification of the UN Convention on the Protection of Peacekeepers, reductions of the U.S. share of the regular budget and the peacekeeping funding budget.

Resolution 189, *Nuclear Proliferation,* urges the United States Government to take all actions necessary to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials to preclude these weapons from being used for terrorism or blackmail.

Resolution 249, *Vietnam POW/MIA Policy,* states The American Legion position that despite the President's decision to normalize relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and despite Vietnam's assertions to the contrary, improved results on POW/MIA accounting have not been seen. Therefore, The American Legion opposes any further economic and political steps to improve bilateral relations between the U.S. and Vietnam until Vietnam's pledges on full POW/MIA cooperation are fulfilled.

Resolution Number 288, *International Lending Agencies and POW/MIA Cooperation,* urges Congress to appropriate funds to International Lending Agencies only if they prohibit

granting assistance to nations which 1) give aid and comfort to hostile groups; 2) are openly hostile to the United States; and 3) do not cooperate fully on POW/MIA matters.

Resolution Number 289, *World War II, Cold War and Korean War POW/MIAs,* urges the United States Government to make a maximum effort to resolve the fate of unaccounted for Americans from World War II, the Cold War and the Korean War, and opposes providing economic assistance to North Korea or any normalization of relations with North Korea unless it cooperates fully on POW/MIA matters.

Resolution Number 290, *Missing Service Personnel,* calls upon the Congress to reinstate provisions of the Missing Service Persons Act of 1996 which were removed by Senate Amendment in 1997, weakening the first legislation in 50 years which reforms Defense Department policy and procedures for accounting for missing Americans.

Resolution Number 291, *The American Legion Policy on Activities Relating to Southeast Asia POWs and MIAs,* provides for American Legion assistance to POW/MIA families, supports humanitarian assistance to the people of Vietnam when such would be helpful in obtaining further cooperation on POW/MIA matters, and authorizes American Legion officials to travel to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos for the purpose of gathering information relative to ongoing POW/MIA investigations.

Resolution Number 292, *Regulation of Lobbying,* expresses The American Legion's long-held concerns about the ability of foreign nations to "buy" the services of influential Americans, particularly former congressional and government officials, to gain information and favorable influence. Resolution 291 applauds "The Lobbying Disclosure Act" of December 1995 but argues that further lobbying reform measures are required and necessary.

Resolution Number 293, *Priority POW/MIA Actions,* states The American Legion's firm belief concerning critical actions which must be taken by the government to improve POW/MIA accounting. These include the removal of the Defense Intelligence Agency from all POW/MIA responsibilities, providing for adequate staffing and resourcing for Defense POW/MIA activities, the full declassification of matters pertaining to POW/MIA issues, and the establishment of a joint standing Congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs.

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Resolution Number 88, *NATO Expansion,* expresses The American Legion's overwhelming support for both the Partnership for Peace Program and the Expansion of the NATO Alliance.

Resolution Number 185, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization,* urges the U.S. Government to maintain the forward deployment of U.S. troops in NATO and to encourage NATO allies to confront threats to the security of Europe.

Resolution Number 286, *Relations with the Former Soviet Union,* welcomes the substantive changes toward democracy and market reform ongoing in the Republics of the Former Soviet Union, urges the U.S. Government to extend economic aid and technical assistance to these Republics, and encourages these newly independent republics to increase cooperation on POW/MIA issues.

Resolution Number 287, *Eastern Europe,* expresses The American Legion's support for democracy and free enterprise in Eastern Europe and calls on the U.S. Government to provide aid and technical assistance to help development in this important region.

FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Resolution Number 8, *North Korea and the POW/MIA Issue,* condemns North Korea for its violations and abrogations of the 1953 armistice which provided for a cease-fire, calls on North Korea to cooperate fully on POW/MIA matters and opposes American cooperation or aid to North Korea unless or until that nation fully cooperates on POW/MIA issues and complies with the armistice of 1953.

Resolution Number 9, *Relations with the Republic of China,* supports peaceful reunification of China under the Three Principles of the People and encourages U.S. sales of defense equipment and services in order for Taiwan to maintain an adequate self-defense capability.

Resolution Number 10, *Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen (VACRS), Republic of China,* commends the VACRS organization for its outstanding performance in safeguarding the rights and benefits of American's allied veterans in the Republic of China.

INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

Resolution Number 182, *Panama Canal,* states The American Legion's long standing position that the United States should take action to ensure Panama will be able to operate the Panama Canal after the government of Panama assumes control in the year 2000. Resolution 182 also seeks an agreement with Panama for continuing United States protection for the Canal.

Resolution Number 186, *Policy on Central America,* urges the U.S. government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations while providing only minimal U.S. military aid in order to encourage economic development, democracy and peaceful relations within the region.

Resolution Number 192, *War on Drugs in Latin America,* urges the U.S. Government to cooperate fully with Latin American nations in destroying international trafficking of illegal drugs.

Resolution Number 193, *Cuban Drug Trafficking,* urges the U.S. Government to condemn Cuba's role in international drug trafficking and to seek to curtail such activities in any way possible.

Resolution Number 194, *Enterprise for the Americas Initiative,* applauds this initiative which seek to enhance growth and cooperation throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Resolution Number 196, *Policy on Cuba,* urges the U.S. Government to 1) intensify its economic sanctions against Cuba, 2) continue to maintain the U.S. naval facility at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, 3) continue intelligence flights over Cuba, and 4) oppose the export of Cuban revolution.

Resolution Number 197, *Policy on Haiti,* urges the U.S. Government to work with the United Nations and the Organization of American States to continue the process of restoring democracy to Haiti.

Resolution Number 202, *Panama Canal Treaties,* urges the President and the Senate to renegotiate the Panama Canal Treaties.

Resolution Number 203, *Policy on Mexico,* urges the U.S. Government to continue cooperative efforts such as student exchanges and scholarship programs to enhance the prosperity and security of both nations.

MIDDLE EASTERN & AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Resolution Number 190, *IRAN,* urges the U.S. Government to pursue policies which prevent aggression or terrorism by Iran.

Resolution Number 294, *Middle East,* expresses The American Legion's interest in the U.S. Government adopting a comprehensive policy to secure peace for Israel, to prevent regional domination by any power, to maintain the free flow of oil from the region and to restore full Lebanese sovereignty.

National Executive Committee Meeting, Fall 1996

On October 14 and 15, the Foreign Relations Commission met in the Ramada Plaza-Circle Center (lower level) to consider Resolutions which had been held over and for other business purposes.

In the initial meeting on October 14th, the Commission administratively disposed of 3 Resolutions. Two of these Resolutions had been held for further study from the 77th National Convention and were approved and adopted at this year's National Convention in Salt Lake City. The third resolution from a Department Executive Committee was disposed of administratively by the approval of a similar resolution at the 78th National Convention.

The Commission took note of recent Congressional Hearings held on Korean and Vietnam POW/MIAs who were reportedly subjected to medical experiments, tests for chemical, biological and nuclear radiation, and mind altering drugs by North Korea and the Former Soviet Union. In addition, recently declassified documents from the Eisenhower Library have revealed that the Pentagon knew in 1953 that more than 900 missing American servicemen who were alive at the end of the war, were not returned. Reportedly, their names simply disappeared from the lists in the North Korean POW camps. These developments, taken along with reports of "live sightings" of Americans in North Korea, and several other reports, confirm the compelling need for the United States Government to demand a full accounting by the Russian Government and North Korea. More POW/MIA Hearings on these developments are planned in the 105th Congress and The American Legion will continue to closely monitor this critical issue.

At the conclusion of the 104th Congress, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 4000, the POW/MIA Protection Act, by a vote of 404-0. H.R. 4000 would have restored provisions of the Missing Service Persons Act, concerning status determinations and location of missing persons, which were stripped from the original 1996 Missing Service Persons legislation. Unfortunately, H.R. 4000 did not pass in the Senate. The American Legion worked for many years for strong legislation to reform the Department of Defense system for determining the status and accountability of missing persons. In the next session of Congress, we will continue to press for the provisions of the original Missing Service Persons Act, without modification.

The Foreign Relations Commission concluded its meeting with a discussion of the Partnership for Peace Program. The American Legion has overwhelmingly supported expansion of NATO, in particular the 1994 U.S. initiative called Partnership for Peace (PFP). The PFP strengthens links with NATO among other nations from Eastern/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, thus enhancing European security. To date, 27 nations have joined this program. While the PFP does not provide security guarantees, it allows for consultations when a direct threat exists. PFP is also the gateway for possible membership in NATO for those nations which are eventually approved in accession negotiations which are scheduled to begin in mid-1999.

The Commission also discussed selection of guest speakers for the Washington Conference including speakers for the POW/MIA Update program.

The final meeting of the Foreign Relations Commission was held jointly with the National Security Commission to view several video tapes of mutual interest.

Washington Conference, March 1997

The Foreign Relations Commission met in general session during the Washington Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill on Monday, March 3 and on Wednesday, March 5, 1997. Issues and discussions covered during these sessions are highlighted below.

Morning Session, March 3, 1997

The Foreign Relations Commission and National Security Commissions met jointly for update briefings on 1) the Defense Department Budget and the Quadrennial Defense Review, 2) current U.S. Force deployments, and 3) the current situation in Bosnia.

Mr. William J. Lynn, III, Director for Program Analysis and Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, described the budget environment at the Defense Department as "very constrained", primarily due to Congress's clear direction toward a balanced budget. However, Mr. Lynn noted that the Defense Department and the Congress were much closer this year on Defense spending issues and attributed this progress to a better understanding of the issues by both parties. Mr. Lynn described the ongoing Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) as a series of "hard choices" which involved thorough analyses and key decisions regarding 1) U.S. Defense Strategy versus the risk assessment, 2) military force structure versus modernization programs, and 3) Defense infrastructure accounts versus actual overhead. During the question and answer session, Mr. Lynn took several questions regarding Legionnaires interest in maintaining force readiness.

Lieutenant General Peter Pace, USMC, Director For Operations (J-3), Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented a comprehensive briefing on all current U.S. Force deployments world-wide. Using maps and charts, he was able to visually show the locations and strengths of U.S. forces deployed in critical regions. During the presentation, he described the operational tempo and readiness of these forces and he also commented on the unique risks they confronted during these deployments. General Pace described the general state of readiness of U.S. Forces around the globe and took several specific questions regarding the Korean Peninsula as well as other "hot spots".

Ambassador James W. Pardew, Jr., U.S. Special Representative for Military Stabilization in the Balkans, spoke in detail about United States efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Bosnia and outlined U.S. national security interests in the Balkans. Ambassador Pardew reviewed the history of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and its evolution into a crisis situation which threatened NATO and the security of Europe. Next, he outlined the specific reasons why the United States led the NATO effort to become directly involved in separating the warring factions - essentially he argued that only the United States could lead the NATO effort to achieve peace in the region. Ambassador Pardew then described the ongoing U.S.-sponsored "Equip and Train" program, an effort designed to create a stable military balance, promote arms control, and offset Serbian military advantages in the partitioned nation of Bosnia. Following his presentation, the Ambassador took several questions regarding the chances of overall success of the Bosnia mission after the departure of the International Force and the current Stabilization Force and other questions on the overall timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region (mid-1998).

Afternoon Session, March 3, 1997

Legionnaires from both the National Security and the Foreign Relations Commissions, the POW/MIA Committee Members, and other interested Legionnaires met in a second session for an update on POW/MIA issues sponsored by the Special POW/MIA Committee. The session was presided over by the Chairman of The American Legion's POW/MIA Committee, Past National Commander Robert S. Turner.

The Honorable Robert C. Smith, United States Senator from New Hampshire, informed Legionnaires that he had serious concerns that the full accountability of America's POW/MIAs from the war in Southeast Asia was not the driving force in the President's decision to normalize relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Senator Smith stated that he believed the Administration's public claim, that the POW/MIA issue was the highest priority in the decision to proceed with normalizing relations, was suspect. Given the very questionable and possibly illegal campaign fund-raising events which occurred during the Presidential campaign, Senator Smith asked whether U.S. foreign policy may have been improperly influenced by foreign contributions raised by Mr. John Huang, a former U.S. Commerce Department official and businessmen from the Indonesian Lippo Banking organization, who are all now the subject of investigation.

Senator Smith also reviewed the progress made by Vietnam on "cooperating in full faith" on POW/MIA issues, noting that, to date Vietnam has still failed to turn over key documents such as war records or to take the necessary unilateral actions which could help identify many of the remaining 2,128 Americans still unaccounted for from that war. Senator Smith concluded his presentation by noting that despite the President's certification of Hanoi's full-faith POW/MIA cooperation, Vietnam has failed to provide information which could be easily obtained. As a result, the Senator announced that he would publicly oppose (and filibuster on the Senate floor if necessary) the nomination of a U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam or any further efforts to normalize U.S.- Vietnam relations.

Ms. Ann Mills Griffiths presented a comprehensive update on POW/MIA issues from the Vietnam War, noting that Hanoi "still holds the key" to the unanswered questions regarding Americans who remain unaccounted for from that war. Ms. Griffiths echoed Senator Smith's concerns that Vietnam was not cooperating in full faith on POW/MIA issues. For example, she noted that most "discrepancy cases" are still unresolved. She also stated that, during the current Administration, more Americans have been accounted for in Laos (52) than in Vietnam (45), and that is not indicative of full faith cooperation by Vietnam. As a result, Ms. Griffiths enjoined Legionnaires to keep the pressure on Congress to obtain war records and information held by both the U.S. Government and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which will help account for American POW/MIAs.

Ms. Griffiths also reviewed the progress being made by the U.S. military joint recovery operations (Joint Task Force-Full Accounting efforts), which she described as proceeding very well. However, she was critical of the Defense POW/Missing Persons Office for its lack of effectiveness and failure to release additional POW/MIA information.

Mr. John F. Sommer, Jr., Executive Director of the Washington Office of The American Legion, briefed the Legionnaires on the National Commander's Vietnam Trip in November of last year (1996). Mr. Sommer accompanied the National Commander on this trip. National Commander Frank first visited Bangkok, Thailand for briefings with the "Stony Beach" DIA Office and the U.S. Army's Joint Task Force for Full Accounting Forward Detachment. Also while in Thailand, the Legion's National Commander discussed POW/MIA issues and Vietnamese Refugee issues with the new U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Will Itoh. In Hanoi and later in Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City), the National Commander met with Vietnamese officials and expressed The American Legion's concern over the full accounting of American POW/MIAs. In particular, Commander Frank told Vietnamese

officials that they could easily provide unilateral assistance, especially in border areas with Laos and Cambodia, where information is lacking, which would immediately help account for missing Americans.

Ms. Sandra J. Kristoff, Special Assistant to the President and Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, outlined the current United States strategy on the Korean Peninsula. Ms. Kristoff explained in detail the alliance issue (U.S.-South Korea and ASEAN Agreement), the Agreed Framework agreement designed to defuse North Korea's nuclear program, ballistic missile issues, and finally the long term challenge of beginning negotiations (the so-called "4-Party talks") aimed at replacing the 1953 Armistice with a peace proposal.

Ms. Kristoff then reviewed the progress made on the Korean War POW/MIA Accounting issue, noting that negotiations which had begun in 1990 were still moving very slowly. However, some progress had been made and recent U.S.-North Korea talks in New York have been aimed at developing a "work plan" to resume joint recovery operations, gain access into DPRK POW/MIA archives and several other lesser initiatives. In addition to this, Ms. Kristoff noted that the Administration was attempting to build a better data base and an information retrieval system for Korean War POW/MIA developments. The Administration was also attempting to expand contacts with Korean War POW/MIA families to help build the information data base. Ms. Kristoff took a number of Legionnaires' questions regarding the declassification of Korean War POW/MIA documents. In particular, she noted for the record that most Korean War documents have already been declassified by Executive order. However, Legionnaires openly disagreed and expressed their skepticism of her contention. Other questions centered on issues of whether live POWs and American asylum seekers are residing in North Korea.

Foreign Relations Commission Business Session, Wednesday March 5, 1997 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

At 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5, the Commission held its annual business session at the Washington Conference. **Chairman Alan G. Lance, Sr.,** placed special emphasis on personally informing Committee and Council members on several key issues of concern to the Foreign Relations Commission. These included progress which has been made to date on United Nations Reforms, the current status of the Missing Service Persons Act, and the current Congressional resourcing (budget) for the U.S. Foreign Affairs program. Chairman Lance provided up-to-date information from his recent, intensive briefings at the State Department on these and other issues. Prior to adjourning, the Commission also reviewed the debate surrounding the Administration's efforts to achieve Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the subject of a Special Joint Session of the National Security and Foreign Relations Commission which immediately followed the Commission's Business Meeting.

Special Joint Session of the Commission on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Following the Business Session, the Foreign Relations Commission was joined by the National Security Commission and other interested Legionnaires for a special joint meeting featuring a debate about the impending Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The CWC is a landmark Treaty which bans the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of chemical weapons. The Treaty, which has been signed by over 160 nations and ratified by over 70, entered into force on April 29, 1997. At the time of this report, the CWC was pending U.S. Senate Ratification. The Treaty would have entered into force whether or not the United States Senate ratified it. The Administration had waged a major effort to gain support for Senate Ratification of the CWC prior to its effective

date (the date it enters into force, or April 29, 1997). Some members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had expressed serious concerns about the Treaty and Senate action has been held in abeyance pending the ratification hearings. *[NOTE: Since the writing of this Report, Senate Ratification Hearings were conducted in May and April, 1997. Then, on April 25, 1997, the Senate ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention by a vote of 74 to 26. The Senate's vote to approve the Treaty came with 28 understandings or amendments appended to its ratification action. Up until the last week of debate, the Senate's action was too close to call due to pending votes on five "killer amendments" which were introduced by Senators who believed that no Treaty at all would be better than the CWC. These "killer" amendments would have required renegotiation of the Treaty. The five "killer" amendments were defeated in turn just prior to the Senate's final vote on ratification and the other 28 amendments.]*

Dr. Lori Esposito Murray, Special Assistant to both the President and the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, presented the Administration's case for urgent Senate Ratification of the CWC. Dr. Murray argued that the U.S. had been the principal architect of the Treaty. Therefore, a U.S. reluctance to ratify the CWC would result in a loss of credibility and a leadership failure by the U.S., which has always led world-wide efforts to abolish chemical weapons. Even more importantly, Dr. Murray explained that the U.S. had forsworn any use of chemical weapons in 1991 and was in the process of destroying all its chemical weapons inventory. The purpose of the CWC, she explained, was to move all other nations in the same direction as the United States. To date, that effort has been quite successful with over 160 nations having signed the Convention and over 70 having ratified it, including Japan, the most recent victim of domestic terrorism with chemical weapons. Dr. Murray also explained the concrete consequences of a U.S. failure to ratify the CWC relative to the implementation of the Convention (the U.S. would forfeit the opportunity to participate in the implementation process).

Mr. Frank Gaffney, Director of the Center for Security Policy, a private foundation, presented the arguments against Senate Ratification of the CWC. Mr. Gaffney argued that certain provisions in the Convention were not verifiable. He also contended that certain nations such as Libya and Iran would not become signatories to or abide by the Convention. As a consequence, the CWC would not be a global ban on chemical weapons as it was designed to be. Mr. Gaffney contended that any nation could continue in the manufacture of chemical weapons whether or not such nation was a signatory to the CWC. He also explained that some lethal substances were not banned under the provisions of the CWC. He also argued that there was a possibility that United States chemical technology could be transferred to rogue states under the provisions of the CWC. Mr. Gaffney also contended that there were constitutional and legal concerns regarding the inspection and verification regime of the CWC, particularly with regard to the so-called challenge inspections which would be conducted by international inspectors. Such inspections, according to Mr. Gaffney, might open the door to industrial espionage against U.S. chemical companies. Finally, Mr. Gaffney argued that the costs associated with the implementation of the CWC would be very substantial. (Dr. Murray presented rebuttal to these arguments).

Following the presentations by Dr. Murray and Mr. Gaffney, Foreign Relations Commission Chairman Alan G. Lance moderated a debate which addressed the Legionnaire's questions concerning the CWC. Numerous questions were raised and addressed, in turn, by both presenters.

At the conclusion of the debate and after the presenters had departed, a number of Legionnaires expressed their support for the CWC and several others expressed opposing views. After hearing these views, the Chairmen of the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions concluded that there was an insufficient basis to put The American

Legion on record supporting the Administration's efforts to achieve rapid Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Likewise, there was insufficient support for The American Legion to take a position opposing Senate Ratification of the CWC. Thus the two Commissions took no position for or against the Chemical Weapons Convention. Of note however, several Legionnaires requested and received copies of the Treaty and summaries of the arguments for and against Senate Ratification of the Convention.

Chairman Lance reminded Commission and Council Members that the Resolutions process through Post, Department and National levels was available as the avenue for expression of the official American Legion position, pro or con treaty ratification.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5, 1997.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring, 1997

On Monday and Tuesday, May 5 & 6, 1997, the Foreign Relations Commission met in the Radisson Hotel, Circle West Lower Level. At the initial meeting on Monday, the Commission received updated reports from the Chairman and Washington staff members on impending foreign policy and POW/MIA issues. The Commission also discussed plans, including proposed guest speakers for the 79th National Convention. On Tuesday, the Commission completed its business sessions and met jointly with the National Security Commission to view a video tape on the Partnership For Peace Initiative, and to hear a senior Administration advisor discuss NATO Enlargement Ratification. The Commission considered one Resolution (**Register Number 2415** from the Department of Pennsylvania Executive Committee Meeting) regarding Trade and the People's Republic of China. It was decided that the Resolution should be held for further study while the staff prepares a comprehensive Resolution regarding The American Legion's Policy on the People's Republic of China. Such resolution will address comprehensive concerns including human rights, proliferation, and the transfer of Hong Kong as well as Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status with the United States.

On Monday, the Commission met in business session to learn about recent developments with regard to the Administration's proposals for expansion of the NATO alliance. NATO Expansion is the corollary program to the 1994 U.S.-sponsored Partnership for Peace (PFP) Initiative. That initiative has received the support of The American Legion by the adoption of **Resolution 88.** In addition to this subject, the Chairman and Washington staff provided update briefings on recently introduced legislation which will expand the opportunities to fly the POW/MIA Flag at Federal facilities, including U.S. Post Offices. Other matters discussed included the recent Senate confirmation of a U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam and the Senate's ratification of the Chemical Weapons Treaty on April 24. The Commission also reviewed several proposed speakers for the National Convention. Several other topics concerning foreign policy were discussed. Chairman Lance then solicited members' input concerning any new Foreign Relations Resolutions which may be needed in the future.

On Tuesday, April 30, the Foreign Relations Commission met jointly with the National Security Commission to first view a videotape on the U.S.-proposed Partnership For Peace Initiative and then to discuss NATO's proposals for expansion. Mr. Jeremy D. Rosner, Special Advisor to the President and Secretary of State for NATO Enlargement Ratification spoke in detail about the concept of NATO Enlargement and the Administration's plan for obtaining the Senate's Advice and Consent for ratification of needed amendments to permit expansion of the membership to the North Atlantic Treaty.

The National Security- Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of: G. Michael Schlee, Director; Charles S. Ciccolella, Assistant Director; Dennis M. Duggan, Assistant Director; Angela M. Guishard, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Cheryl L. Henson, Secretary.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of answering correspondence and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Transportation (Coast Guard); the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; The Retired Officers Association, Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization. Writing and delivering speeches, preparing reports and testimony, is also a duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The *Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine* and the *American Legion News Service*, the principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign relations.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION
Herman G. Harrington, New York, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The Internal Affairs Commission was established as a constitutional commission with a purpose to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes, including but not limited to (such as do not properly come within the scope of) any other national commission; further, to review and give guidance to the necessary administrative operations of the National Headquarters.

The Internal Affairs Commission is responsible for policies relating to the internal structure and operation of The American Legion at all levels.

There are four national standing committees that are assigned to the commission for supervision and coordination...they are: Trophies, Awards & Ceremonials; Resolutions Assignment; Constitution & By-Laws; and Membership and Post Activities.

The Internal Affairs Commission is also the supervisory body for the Sons of The American Legion program.

Other areas of responsibility include the National Emergency Fund, and the Paid-Up-For-Life program.

Direct Renewal

One of the measures The American Legion uses to judge the success of the various programs is through the continuing strength of its membership. Instrumental to the retention of members in the organization is the Direct Renewal Program, which is the use of a direct-mail method that invites members to renew. This organized , uniform, and simple method has been a very successful and effective approach and is funded at no cost to the Departments or Posts. Members of participating Posts receive a first renewal letter about July 1, or August 1, depending on the Department. Subsequent renewal notices are mailed to unpaid members about October 1 or November 1, December 15 or January 11, March 13, and May 1.

Direct Membership Solicitation

Research studies have shown that many veterans would consider joining The American Legion, but they have never been asked. In an attempt to reach as many of these veterans as possible and to further support our membership efforts, we solicit new members through various direct marketing media. This innovative membership program is called Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS).

DMS has proven successful, having acquired over 1,800,000 new members for The American Legion since its inception. Fifty-two (52) Departments participate in the DMS program.

DMS will continue to support The American Legion's on-going membership efforts.

National Information Conferences
(Formerly Called National Leadership Workshops)

Changes are in the works, and several will be implemented at the 19th annual series of eight weekend conferences around the country this fall.

This year, the primary audience the training is going to be directed towards will be the newer, less-experienced members who represent the future of this great organization...they are potential leaders at the post level and higher. Given this new audience, training to be presented at the conference has been modified, getting "back to the basics."

There is also a consensus that some of the presenters for the training sessions should be "volunteers." There is an abundance of good and able Legionnaires with diverse backgrounds whose skills and experiences should be "tapped" and shared with other members. The host department of each regional meeting will be asked to make some recommendations as to presenters in the respective regions for future conferences.

The training schedule for this fall is being revised to allow members to attend additional training opportunities. Optional breakouts are available to those interested on Friday evening, plus a full day on Saturday, as well as a choice of several sessions on Sunday morning. The training includes many of the programs and activities, as well as a basic training course, using the Post Officer's Guide as the principal workbook. There's also an in depth orientation of The American Legion ***Extension Institute*** course, combined with a panel discussion to address key Legion objectives, programs, and initiatives.

Members of every Post, Unit, or Squadron are encouraged to attend a conference because one of the best ways to build and maintain a strong, proactive organization is to have a membership that is well-informed. It's important to have a mix of first-time attendees, plus a like number of members who've already attended one, two, or many past

conferences. The combination of the new and the old is the bridge from the past to the future.

The following is the schedule for the 1997 National Information Conferences:

September 12-14, 1997	Region 5—Springfield, Missouri
	Region 7—Las Vegas, Nevada
September 19-21, 1997	Region 1—Manchester, New Hampshire
	Region 4—Biloxi, Mississippi
September 26-28, 1997	Region 2—Cherry Hill, New Jersey
	Region 3—Raleigh, North Carolina
October 3-5, 1997	Region 6—Council Bluffs, Iowa
	Region 8—Post Falls, Idaho

Member Benefits

The 1997 Member Benefit brochure has been printed and is being distributed with bulk supplies. The brochure was also inserted in the April renewal notice to about 315,000 members. A total of 700,000 brochures were printed and this should meet all requests for the coming year. It should be noted that one hotel discount, Park Inns International, was terminated at the end of 1996. Also, a new carrier was selected for The American Legion Annuity. The new carrier is IL Annuity and Insurance Company, a member of Indianapolis Life Group of Companies.

Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc., administrator for the life insurance plans, is mailing conversion offers to those members who received the free $5000 life insurance offer with their November renewal. The offer went to 12,000 DMS members renewing for their first time. The results of the conversion through June have amounted to 1,650 members purchasing the coverage for a conversion rate of 14%. This is very encouraging. The offer will be made to another 12,000 renewed members, under age 50, this fall. If acceptable results are repeated, a larger test will be conducted for 1999 renewals.

The Discount Prescription Program continues to be a popular benefit and participation levels continue to increase. Current monthly levels are at approximately 63,000 per month. RxAmerica is finalizing copy and design of a new brochure that should be produced by July. Magazine ads are planned for August and November. In addition, efforts are under way to approach drug manufacturers and arrange for joint advertising efforts which will promote the drug program and certain drugs manufactured by the drug company. The manufacturer ads may offer deeper discounts for members who switch to the drugs being offered. This is in the early stages of development.

Staff from membership and the Magazine met with Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc., in February to discuss marketing of membership through Posts located near military bases. The Membership Division will identify the initial Posts to participate in the test. Kirke-Van Orsdel, Inc., has developed a low-cost high-benefit modern veteran life plan targeted to active duty and retired military members, and the active duty and retired CHAMPUS Supplement plans will be offered as well. The concept is designed to provide a "calling card" for Posts to appeal to active duty and retired military prospects.

The National Health Insurance Program now has five Departments who have approved participation: New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Illinois and North Carolina. Marketing of plans is under way in those Departments. We expect at least two additional Departments to approve participation by the end of August and we are encouraged by these early results.

Paid-Up-For-Life Program

Each summer, when The American Legion prints and distributes membership cards for the coming year, there is an increasing number of Legionnaires who will receive a special card. These are the members whose dues are already paid for the coming year and for every year thereafter as long they live. They are Legionnaires who have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the National plan. The number of Legionnaires that have applied for a lifetime membership since the beginning of the program twenty years ago is approximately 200,000.

Must Be In Good Standing

A Legionnaire must be in good standing to become a Paid-Up-For-Life member. To be in good standing, the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion year.

Most Buy At Dues-Paying Time

The average Legionnaire is most apt to decide to become a Paid-Up-For-Life member at the time when dues are paid for the coming year.

Post Commanders, Adjutants, and membership workers are asked to make sure their members know that with one payment they can take care of dues for all future years.

Not A Discount Membership

The National Constitution & By-Laws of The American Legion is very clear that "there shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life."

Everyone must pay their "fair share" to support the organization. The National Paid-Up-For-Life plan was established for convenience only, giving members an alternative to paying dues on an annual basis.

Post Receives Dues Portion Annually

That part of the total dues now being retained by the Post will be returned every year for all Paid-Up-For-Life members.

Many Posts are purchasing Paid-Up-For-Life membership for their long-time members, and in calculating the cost to remit, they may leave out their share of the dues. This will reduce the amount to submit with the application.

Membership Card

Each Paid-Up-For-Life member receives a permanent plastic card, as well as an annual paper membership card, directly from National, to verify continuing membership in The American Legion. The annual card will be mailed in July of each year.

Upon request, a replacement plastic or paper card can be provided at no additional charge to the Paid-Up-For-Life member.

The cost of a Paid-Up-For-Life membership is based on the member's age at the time of application and the current annual dues of the Post; an applicant may pay by check, MasterCard or VISA.
Note: Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska do not participate in the National plan. They operate their own plan for their respective members.

Time Payment Plan

Members of The American Legion may use the Time Payment Plan to purchase a National Paid-Up-For-Life membership. No interest and no service charge will be added to the fee. The time payment plan instructions/established rules for application include:

The member must be in good standing. This means the member must have a paid membership card for the current Legion year.

(1) The total Paid-Up-For-Life membership fee has to be paid within twelve (12)months from the date of application.
(2) Non-receipt of payments for six (6) consecutive months will cause the account to be closed.
(3) On the application, the Time Payment Plan box should be checked.
(4) When the application is submitted to the Post for certification, an initial remittance must accompany the application. The payment should be at least ten percent (10%) of the total fee.
(5) The applicant will receive a monthly statement from National Headquarters. The payment due each month should be at least ten percent (10%) of the total fee.
(6) The permanent Paid-Up-For-Life membership card will only be issued after the total fee is paid in full.

Further Information/Assistance

For more information on The American Legion National Paid-Up-For-Life membership plan, you can write to the address noted below, contact your Post Adjutant or Finance Officer, or call National Headquarters (317) 630-1332 or 1221.

National Emergency Fund

The American Legion's National Emergency Fund (NEF) continues to remain a resource from which our members can draw upon immediately after experiencing a disaster. This fund exists solely through the contributions made by our members. This fund is not supported through any other means, wholly or in part. The Legion family members are fulfilling that part of our Preamble, which states in part; "...a devotion to mutual helpfulness."

Since October 1989, this fund has disbursed in excess of 2.3 million dollars to our needy members. These funds have been distributed in the wake of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding and fires. Each and every grant is made possible without strings attached or any repayment by the individual member.

"Mother Nature" has not been very kind to those families living in and around the Ohio and Red River areas. Just since January 1, 1997, the NEF has answered the appeals from over 1,300 members and 17 posts. Grants in support of these requests have reached an

astounding sum of 1.4 million dollars. In comparison, in all of 1996 the NEF responded to 225 requests for assistance and the total only came to $273,000. Over five times as many requests have been processed and funds distributed, and in a much shorter period of time. The American Legion is very proud of what we've been able to accomplish through this fund. Many of our members have stated, without the NEF they wouldn't know where to turn for help.

The increased burden placed on the NEF this year has left the fund in a deficit in the amount of over $130,000. Efforts are currently underway to promote a more heightened awareness by our members and to encourage donations for future disaster needs.

Since inception, The American Legion's National Emergency Fund has provided immediate financial assistance to any of its members who've experienced personal property loss due to natural disasters. This is not intended to replace insurance, but is available as an immediate source of financial assistance to offset initial expenses incurred.

We are very proud to report this fund is capable of meeting the future needs, and has a current balance of $559,251.56 for that sole purpose.

Consolidated Post Reports

The Consolidated Post Report–one of The American Legion's most valuable documents–is our report card to Congress. It provides a summary of the collective assistance provided to the nation from our Legion Posts. Nearly 55 percent of American Legion Posts submitted reports to National Headquarters for the 1995-1996 year.

The total figures show the cost to outfit Color Guards, Firing Squads and other uniformed groups was $2,799,501; the Legion baseball team support cost was $5,794,305; other athletic teams were provided $11,648,714; cash contributions to VA Voluntary Service was $2,015,842, and over 1,301,908 hours of volunteer service were provided; 64,595 Boy Scouts were sponsored at a cost of $1,935,169; scholarships valued at $3,683,646 were awarded to 7,191 students.

In addition, 2,796,341 hours were spent performing community service work, valued at $7,657,713; nearly 98,977 pints of blood were donated; additional millions of dollars in goods and cash were contributed to programs helping veterans and their families.

Remember, these facts and figures represent just over half of all American Legion Posts; if all Posts submitted a report, the information would reflect substantially higher totals.

Constitution and By-laws Committee
Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a National Convention. However, the Constitution and By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the Constitution and By-Laws, as well as matters that relate to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the Revocation, Cancellation, or Suspension of Department and Post Charters of The American Legion.

Resolutions Assignment Committee
Whit S. LaFon, Tennessee, Chairman

This committee meets only at the annual National Convention, and at least three days before it convenes. The committee has the responsibility to receive, consider, and transmit all resolutions (with or without recommendation) to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, 300-400 resolutions will be assigned; though, as many as 750 have been received for review at a past convention.

Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee
Vernon K. Grosenick, Wisconsin, Chairman

This committee supervises all of the official national awards, and recommends to the National Executive Committee recipients for the Distinguished Service Medal; over the years, some of the people awarded the Legion's highest honor are: General John J. Pershing, Ignace Jon Paderewski of Poland, Henry Ford, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ernie Pyle, General Dwight David Eisenhower, Bob Hope, Harry Truman, Babe Ruth, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, John F. Kennedy, the Dead & Missing of the Vietnam War, Astronauts John Young and Robert Crippen, plus many other citizens of renown, who have made lasting and significant contributions during the 20th century.

This committee also makes recommendations on the International Amity Award, the Canadian Friendship Award, and presents a report to the NEC on miscellaneous awards that have been made during each year.

They also supervise the contents of the Manual of Ceremonies of The American Legion.

Membership and Post Activities Committee
Roger L. Tingler, Georgia, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Minnesota, Director

Membership and programs go hand-in-hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide the people and the resources to serve the needs of the veteran and his/her family. Your Membership and Post Activities Committee is pleased to report a continuing membership of nearly 3 million members world-wide.

Membership Statistics

Final 1995 membership:	2,950,200
Final 1996 membership:	2,879,545
1997 membership as of August 4, 1997:	2,826,553

Education and Training
34th Annual National Membership Workshop

The thirty-fourth annual membership meeting convened in Indianapolis, Indiana on Friday, July 25, 1997, with the vast majority of the 55 departments represented. For the past several years the attendance has climbed and this year is no exception. Legionnaires arrive in Indianapolis with a very good understanding of how to work membership in their respective geographical area, but by the time this workshop concludes they are prepared to

face the day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of The American Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of this workshop is to educate and motivate those in attendance so they can return home and share the information and excitement with their membership recruiting force. With the changing times, the need to reinforce our commitment to veterans and their families is of the utmost importance. Promoting this year's theme will attest to our willingness to look beyond one's self, and meet the needs of those veterans who are disabled, distressed or are suffering as a result of answering their country's call to duty.

Other areas discussed during this annual gathering were New Post Formation, Basic Recruitment Techniques, Military Installations, National Guard and Reserves, Post Assessment, and Developing a Membership Plan.

Membership Campaign Promotion

The National Membership Awards Program distributes over 65,000 various awards annually to recognize membership accomplishments at all levels of the organization. The promotion plan for the National Membership Campaign is formulated during the annual planning session of the M&PA Committee held in Indianapolis in January.

Unofficial Membership Awards

Contained within this extensive program are a wide variety of prizes ranging from simple certificates and ribbons to valuable gifts and travel. The awards are designed to reward the membership success of dedicated Legionnaires at all levels of the organization and encourage continued growth. Get active in membership recruiting, ask a veteran to join our ranks today, you'll be glad you did—and you can earn one of the many prizes and awards listed below. Contact your Department Membership Chairman for more information.

Early Bird Contest—August 14, 1996:
Thirty-Seven (37) Departments qualified for the 30% awards.

Autumn Festival—September 20, 1995:
Thirty-Eight (38) Departments qualified for the 40% awards with (21) of them qualifying for the 45% bonus awards. Each winner earned a choice of several gifts.

Oktoberfest—October 16, 1996:
Thirty-Nine (50) Departments qualified for the 55% awards with (14) of them qualifying for the 60% bonus awards. Appropriate gifts were awarded for their continuing membership efforts.

Pearl Harbor—December 11, 1996:
Thirty-One (31) Departments qualified for the 75% awards with (4) of them qualifying for the 80% bonus. Excellence in membership earned additional gifts and rewards.

Big Twelve Competition—February 17, 1997:
Twenty-Three (23) Departments qualified for the 90% awards with (0) of them qualifying for the 95% bonus award.

"Big Twelve" Competition Winners:

Category I—Ohio
Category II—Iowa

Category III—No Department Qualified
Category IV—South Dakota
Category V—Rhode Island
Category VI—Utah
The membership efforts of the winning Departments, earned them a computer and color printer valued over $2,000.

The American Legion Birthday—April 9, 1997:
Fourteen (14) Departments qualified for the 95% award.

May Day—May 7, 1997:
By achieving 100% of the Department's '97 membership goal, winning Department Commanders and Membership Chairmen have a choice of several gifts available, based on the number of targets/bonuses made during the year.

Department Commander of the Year:
Any Department Commander who met or exceeds his/her 100% goal for 1997 by May 7, 1997, will receive a plaque recognizing his/her achievement. The plaque will be presented at the National Convention in Orlando.

Gold Brigade Recruiter Award:
A Legionnaire who recruits 50 or more new members by District Competition target date, May 7, 1997, will qualify for enrollment in the elite Gold Brigade of The American Legion.

Gold Brigade Drawing:
All certified members of the Gold Brigade will automatically be entered in a drawing with the five winners to be announced at the 1997 National Convention in Orlando, Florida. The five winners of the drawing will receive a $1,000.00 Award Certificate.

Flag Day—June 18, 1997:
By meeting 110% of the Department's 1996 membership goal, the Department Commander and Membership Chairman will receive a $1,500.00 gift certificate. Each Department that qualifies for this award will also receive the 110% National Commander's Plaque, to be presented at the National Convention in Orlando, Florida.

Delegate Strength—August 4, 1997:
Delegate Strength is determined by the membership in the hands of the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the National Convention. Total number of delegates for each Department is based on five delegates at large, one delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, and the members of the National Executive Committee.

Post Honor Ribbons:
Post Honor Ribbons were shipped to 1,759 Posts whose 1997 membership as of December 31, 1996 exceeded their final 1996 membership.

Certificate of Meritorious Service:
These certificates were awarded for 250 Posts for attaining a new All-Time-High membership for 1997 by December 31, 1996.

Five Consecutive Years All-Time-High:

These citations are awarded to Posts with five or more consecutive years of All-Time High membership in 1996. Only (5) Department reports received last year.

District Commanders' Race-To-The-Top:

District Commanders are the lynchpin of The American Legion's Chain of Command, serving as the vital link between the National and Department organizations and all Posts. As we are all aware, the local Post is where the "rubber meets the road." If it doesn't happen at the Post level–it doesn't happen at all. District Commanders are the people charged with insuring that all Posts in their District maintain their vitality.

Consequently, this unique award was created to provide a meaningful incentive for the District Commanders and reward their successful membership efforts. The winning District Commander and guest receive:

(1) Reserved tickets to the Indianapolis 500, "the greatest spectacle in racing."
(2) First class hotel accommodations for four nights at the Indianapolis Radisson Hotel.
(3) Reserved seating for the Indianapolis 500 parade.
(4) Dinner Friday and Saturday evening at two of Indianapolis' finest restaurants.
(5) Tour of the National Headquarters of The American Legion.

Previous winners have reported how much they enjoyed their opportunity to participate in this world renowned racing event and that they have fond memories that will last a lifetime.

The following provides more specific information on how you can win.

District Commanders' Race-To-The-Top:

Competition will be divided into five categories based on the membership of the District without regard to geographic locations. District Commanders will compete in each of the following categories based on the final 1995 totals, and a top District Commander for the National award will be selected from each of the five categories. Second and Third place awards will also be presented in each category.

Category I—Districts of 15 to 1,499 members
Category II—Districts of 1,500 to 2,999 members
Category III—Districts of 3,000 to 4,999 members
Category IV—Districts of 5,000 to 7,499 members
Category V—Districts of 7,500 and above members

The 500 Trip

Top District Commander and spouse in each category whose District membership for 1997 on March 31, 1997 represents the greatest percentage over the final 1996 membership of the District. Cannot be less than 100% to qualify. First Place Award entitles you and your guest to attend the 1997 Indianapolis 500 Race, and first-class hotel accommodations.

Second Place Awards

The District Commander in each category whose District membership for 1997 on March 31, 1997 represents the second highest percentage over the final 1996 membership of that District. Cannot be less than 100% to qualify. Winners will receive their choice of several gift certificates; these certificates are valued at $375.

Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Award

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion award is presented annually to the Detachment of the Sons of The American Legion which on December 31 of each year has attained the greatest percentage of increase over the previous year's total membership. There are three (3) categories and three (3) awards. The winners are:

Category I—North Carolina	116.6%
Category II—Georgia	121.7%
Category III—Pennsylvania	112.6%

The Sons of The American Legion

For the 23rd consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion is at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 1996 with a record 189,701 members. This number represents a 5% increase over the previous year.

Membership figures for the 1997 year are exceeding the figures for this same period last year. The SAL has surpassed the 1996 final figures, giving them another "All Time High" in membership. Currently, the SAL 1996 membership stands at 195,935 members. The SAL continues its support of American Legion programs and is heavily involved with the Citizens Flag Alliance in support of a constitutional amendment to protect our flag. The SAL continues its support of our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 1996, the SAL provided over 63,000 volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $242,000 nationwide. The SAL also raised over $116,000 this year for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. They also provided several grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. At present the Sons have already surpassed the 1996 goal in donations to the Child Welfare Foundation.

An integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to Posts and their communities.

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Charles Pesso, New York, Chairman
Steve Robertson, Louisiana, Director

This report covers activities of the Legislative Commission from August 13, 1996 through August 11, 1997. During this period, the Commission met five times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

PURPOSE, PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION

The Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which the Legion is officially interested. It also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of thirty-three members and five National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee in 1975 created the National Legislative Council, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their elected representatives. The Council is headed by a National Chairman, who is assisted by a Vice Chairman in 50 Legion Departments. The

Third Place Awards

The District Commander in each category whose District membership for 1997 on March 31, 1997 represents the third highest percentage over the final 1996 membership of that District. Cannot be less than 100% to qualify. Winners will receive their choice of several gift certificates; these certificates are valued at $375.

1997 First Place Winners: Trip to the Indianapolis 500 Race

Category I, H. Hugh Gray, Idaho, 111.41%, Dist. 9
Category II, Alan Tucker, New Jersey, 102.27%, Dist. 8
Category III, Russell Richards, Rhode Island, 107.01%, Dist. 3
Category IV, Norman Pamplin, Florida, 100.37%, Dist. 6
Category V, William Harvey, Arizona, 101.51%, Dist. 12

1997 Second Place Winners: Choice of Several Gifts Valued at $500

Category I, Calvin Monks, Utah, 105.59%, Dist. 9
Category II, Gordon Zdana, Delaware, 101.21%, Dist. 3
Category III,Newton Brackin, Jr., Delaware, 102.02%, Dist. 4
Category IV, no one qualified
Category V, Chauncey Ervin, Indiana, 100.60%, Dist. 11

1997 Third Place Winners: Choice of Several Gifts Valued at $375

Category I, Juan Rodriguez, Puerto Rico, 105.15%, Dist. 4
Category II, Robert Porter, Louisiana, 100.36%, Dist. 5
Category III, Jerry Childers, Georgia, 101.11%, Dist. 10
Category IV, no one qualified
Category V, no one qualified

District Commander New Post Achievement Award:

District Commanders who achieve the goal of creating new American Legion Posts in their respective District and have the new Post's Temporary Charter Application on file in National Headquarters by the 7th Target Date "May Day" May 7, 1997, qualify for a special recognition plaque.

Department Recruiter of the Year:

Each American Legion Post will have the opportunity to submit the name of the "Top Recruiter" for that Post who has signed up the highest number of new members for the 1996 membership year by May 7, 1997. Department Adjutants will determine the Top New Member Recruiter for their respective Department and certify their "Department Recruiter" to National Headquarters on or before May 22, 1997.

The "Department Recruiter" properly certified from each Department, is awarded a Plaque with his/her accomplishment inscribed thereon.

National Recruiter of the Year:

The individual certified with the highest number of new members recruited from among all the Departments will be declared "National Recruiter of the Year". The winner of this award will receive an all expense paid trip to the 1997 National Convention in Orlando, Florida.

Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion which are expressed in resolutions adopted at its annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, a deputy director, an assistant director, a grassroots coordinator, two secretaries, a librarian and a research analyst. The director, deputy director, assistant director and grassroots coordinator are registered lobbyists and submit bi-annual reports to Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

104th Congress, Second Session

The latter portion of the Second Session of the 104th Congress was hampered by a shortened budget process, due to the length of time it took to enact the Fiscal Year 1996 budget, which occurred early in the session. Another factor which compressed the budget timetable was the November congressional and presidential elections. After the August recess, the House and Senate both worked furiously to pass the FY 1997 budget by October 1, 1996 (the official start date of FY 1997).

As October 1 approached, only seven of the thirteen appropriations bills designed to fund federal government operations had been enacted. As a result, Congress was forced to pass an omnibus spending measure (Public Law 104-208) on September 30, 1996, which the President signed that evening to avoid another government shutdown similar to the ones which occurred in November-December, 1995 and January 1996. With that final major piece of legislative business taken care of, both chambers passed several minor pieces of legislation and formally adjourned the 104th Congress on October 4, 1996.

Americanism

Congress completed efforts to make changes in the nation's immigration policies. The conference report for the final measure, HR 2202, passed the House on September 24, 1996 by a vote of 305-123. However, the White House insisted that, without certain changes in the measure, it would be vetoed. After several provisions were dropped from the bill, the Senate attached the conference report to the omnibus appropriations bill for FY 1997 (PL 104-208), securing its final passage by the Senate and signing by President Clinton on September 30, 1996.

Major provisions of the bill include:

- Funding authorization to increase the number of Border Patrol agents by 1000 a year through FY 2001, essentially doubling the size of the force from approximately 5000 to 10,000. Also authorized within the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) are an additional 900 employment and document fraud investigators and 300 agents who investigate immigrants who overstay their visas;
- Funding authorization of $12 million for fence and road additions along a 14-mile strip of the California-Mexico border;
- Create a pilot program providing a database of information gathered from documents that immigrants fill out as they legally enter and leave the U.S.;
- Bar from entry into this country anyone who uses falsified or borrowed documents, as well as deny entry into the U.S., for up to five years anyone who enters this country unlawfully or who overstays his visa (repeat offenders could incur penalties of up to 20 years);

- Order the attorney general to devise an expedited process for deporting illegals;
- Authorize $5 million annually through FY 2001 for a criminal tracking system to help law enforcement agencies identify illegal aliens convicted of felonies;
- Create three pilot programs aimed at testing electronic systems to verify a job applicant's eligibility for employment. These would include a toll-free telephone number to check Social Security numbers against INS information and a system allowing employers to use an applicant's drivers' license, which includes a Social Security number, to verify their citizenship legal. Employer participation would be voluntary. A related provision would require states to either put Social Security numbers on drivers' licenses or verify that Social Security numbers provided by applicants are valid;
- Require sponsors of legal immigrants to have an income 25 percent above the poverty level;
- Deny most federal benefits to legal immigrants. Emergency Medicaid benefits would not be allowed, except in cases of communicable diseases other than AIDS. Another provision would make legal immigrants deportable if they unlawfully use public benefits programs for a period of 12 months;
- Make a deportable alien ineligible for naturalization, and deny citizenship to any legal immigrant whose sponsor has unpaid bills;
- Require those seeking political asylum to file an application within one year of entering this country. This also clarifies that asylum is not necessarily permanent if conditions in an immigrant's home country change; and,
- Make persons who renounce their American citizenship to avoid paying taxes permanently excludable from the U.S.

The measure had contained many other provisions relating to legal immigration, including lowering the annual legal immigration ceiling. However, these provisions were opposed by the White House and members of the Senate and were removed in conference.

During legislative action on immigration reform during the 104th Congress, several provisions in the House- and Senate-passed measures could have created problems for certain nonresident veterans. Both versions of HR 2202 contained sections which might have limited eligibility for federal means-tested programs to any alien not lawfully present in the U.S. Other provisions could have made any alien not lawfully present in this country ineligible for federal contracts.

Though this language was ostensibly aimed at foreign nationals residing in this country, the provisions were broadly worded and could have prevented VA payments to aliens abroad. VA benefits are rooted in the veteran's honorable military service and the nation's obligations to the veteran and his or her family, not the place of birth or residence. Further, the provisions could have hampered VA's ability to contract for personnel, supplies and services in the Philippines in support of its regional office and outpatient clinic in Manila.

When the final version of immigration reform was enacted (PL 104-208), the legislation contained an exemption for veterans. The American Legion was instrumental in urging House and Senate conferees to make specific exceptions within the language of the bill, making it impossible for eligible veterans to lose their earned benefits as a result of this legislation.

Children & Youth

Fiscal Year 1997 funding for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the Department of Justice was contained in the omnibus appropriations measure signed by President Clinton on September 30 (PL 104-208). Under the provisions of the law, OJJDP will receive $174.5 million, a funding increase of $26 million over FY 1996 totals. The American Legion continues to support the work done by OJJDP to prevent juvenile crime.

Economics

On September 30 the President signed PL 104-208, the FY 1997 omnibus spending measure. Under its provisions, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) account received $82 million, while the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) program was set at $75 million, and the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) received $2 million. While these funding totals were generally increases over FY 1996 amounts (only the NVTI funding was a decrease), the FY 1997 totals are still less than amounts recommended by The American Legion.

When the 104th Congress adjourned, one of the many pieces of legislation that expired was HR 1617, a bill The American Legion opposed. This legislation sought to consolidate a variety of federal employment and training programs under a single block grant program. The American Legion worked with congressional staff to ensure that the provisions of HR 1617 would not adversely affect the DVOP and LVER programs. Despite a conference agreement between the House and Senate, neither of the two chambers acted on the measure prior to adjournment.

By a voice vote on September 25, 1996 the House approved legislation, HR 3586, designed to help veterans obtain and keep federal jobs. Earlier in the day, the Senate included the language of S 868, a measure devoted to federal employees' use of vacation time and sick leave.

HR 3586 would extend veterans' preference to nonpolitical jobs at the White House and in the government's legislative and judicial branches. It would also strengthen redress options for veterans who believe they were unfairly denied preference and would add extra provisions for veterans as the government eliminated jobs through reductions-in-force (RIFs). An amendment to the original language would require veterans to exhaust existing redress procedures through the Department of Labor before they could make their case in court.

Unfortunately, after HR 3586 passed the House and was sent back to the Senate, it was referred to the Veterans' Affairs Committee, where it failed to receive further legislative action.

Foreign Relations

The FY 1996 Department of Defense (DoD) authorization, PL 104-106, was enacted on February 10, 1996. Its various provisions included language to strengthen the process used to determine the status and whereabouts of military personnel declared missing-in-action. These provisions revamped the organization and responsibilities for reporting military members declared MIA. In addition, the new regulations sought to produce more timely and improved accountability for missing servicemembers, and to disseminate this information to the families of MIAs in a more open, forthright way.

However, when the FY 1997 DoD authorization measure (PL 104-201) was enacted, language included in that measure effectively gutted the MIA provisions in PL 104-106. In order to keep the MIA provisions intact, Rep. Bob Dornan, R-Calif., introduced HR 4000. On September 12, 1996 the House National Security Committee voted 45-0 to send the

measure to the House floor for further action. On September 27, the full House voted 404-0 to approve the measure, but the Senate took no action on the bill prior to adjournment. The American Legion supported the original MIA provisions and will seek to revive them in the 105th Congress.

Funding for U.S. foreign aid programs for FY 1997 was contained in PL 104-208, the omnibus funding bill enacted September 30, 1996. The measure called for $12.2 billion, an increase of $300 million from the House-passed version, but $700 million less than President Clinton requested.

As in the past, the bill includes earmarks of $3 billion in aid to Israel and $2.1 billion for Egypt, by far the two largest earmarks in the measure. The legislation also includes $60 million in military aid for Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to help speed their entry into NATO. It also includes $3 million to set up a government-sponsored broadcasting service to Iran, to be known as Radio Free Iran. Finally, PL 104-208 gives $625 million in aid to Russia and the other republics of the former Soviet Union.

Another provision in PL 104-201, the DoD authorization bill, authorizes the U.S. government to make payments to nearly 300 South Vietnamese commandos who infiltrated North Vietnam and were captured during the Vietnam War. Between 1958 and 1968, the U.S. recruited, trained, and paid about 500 South Vietnamese to perform covert operations in North Vietnam and Laos. Initially, the operation was under CIA jurisdiction from 1958 to 1964, when it was transferred to the Pentagon.

As these missions began to fail, DoD wrote these men off as dead and dropped them from its rolls, despite available evidence that they had been captured. Their families were told these men were dead, and they received a $300 death benefit payment. Many of these men were tortured and killed, while the remainder were imprisoned for up to 20 years. Nearly 300 of these commandos survived and many made their way to the U.S. They have filed suit in the U.S. Court of Claims, hoping to obtain for each survivor $2000 for each year he was imprisoned.

The U.S. government asked that the suit be dismissed on the grounds of an 1875 Supreme Court ruling preventing persons who perform secret government missions from suing for payment.

Internal Affairs

On October 1, 1996 President Clinton signed PL 104-222, a measure which authorizes construction of the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum's (NASM) Dulles Center at the Washington Dulles International Airport. This annex to the NASM has been proposed for over a decade, and has been touted as a venue for displaying some of the larger airplanes in the museum's collection. One of the planes slated for display at the annex is the *Enola Gay*, the World War II B-29 which dropped the world's first atomic bomb in August, 1945 and was the center of a display controversy two years ago. However, PL 104-222 does not authorize or appropriate any federal funds for construction of this center. This means that either Congress must pass a special measure to appropriate funds for the annex, or the annex must be built completely with private funds and donations.

National Security

The President on September 23, 1996 enacted PL 104-201, the FY 1997 DoD authorization measure. The measure authorizes a total of $265.6 billion for research, development, maintenance and acquisition for defense programs, $11.2 billion more than requested by the administration.

Provisions of PL 104-201 include:

- a 3 percent pay raise for servicemembers;
- $3.7 billion for anti-ballistic missile defense;
- $4 billion to build 4 Arleigh Burke class destroyers, plus a multiyear plan to procure a total of 12 of the vessels;
- $600 million in procurement funds for a third Seawolf class submarine;
- $997 million to procure two new attack submarines, the next generation undersea hunter submarine after Seawolf;
- $155 million to procure six F-16s, an addition of two more than the administration's request;
- $234 million to procure six F/A-18C/Ds (DoD did not request any of these craft);
- $2.2 billion for 12 F/A-18E/Fs (which the Pentagon did request);
- $861 million to procure six V-22 Ospreys for the Marine Corps;
- authority to obtain 80 C-17s under a multiyear contract; and,
- $828 million for modifications to Bradley fighting vehicles and M1 Abrams tanks.

The omnibus funding bill for FY 1997 (PL 104-208) contained the actual DoD spending amounts. It provided $244 billion, nearly $2 billion more than DoD spending for FY 1996 programs and $9 billion above the administration's request. It provides the actual money for a 3 percent pay raise, an $885 million increase in anti-ballistic missile defenses, an extra $2.7 billion for the research and development account, a procurement increase of $5.7 billion, and an increase of $701 million in the operations and maintenance account.

Most of these increases came about as a result of congressional concern with a shrinking military force, aging equipment and worries about U.S. armed forces readiness and ability to fight two major regional conflicts simultaneously, required under DoD's 1993 "Bottom-Up" Review.

Another provision of the FY 1997 omnibus spending measure (PL 104-208) provided $22.9 million for continued operations of the Selective Service System. The American Legion will continue to support Selective Service as a quick, inexpensive backup for the all-volunteer military in case of war.

On October 19, 1996 President Clinton PL 104-324, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1996. The measure authorizes funding for the U.S. Coast Guard for FYs 1996 and 1997. A total of $3.5 billion in funds were authorized for each year. Among the Coast Guard's many missions are air-sea rescue, environmental enforcement, boating safety, drug interdiction and interception of illegal aliens.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

In May, 1996 President Clinton announced at a news conference that the federal government was expanding the list of disorders considered service-connected from a servicemember's exposure to Agent Orange. Vietnam veterans who have prostate cancer and the neurological disorder peripheral neuropathy will be entitled to disability payments based upon Agent Orange exposure. In addition, the Clinton administration proposed legislation to grant benefits to children of veterans afflicted with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect of the spine. This is the first time that veterans' children suffering from a condition related to their parents' service in the military will be eligible for VA benefits.

As a result of the administration's announcement, HR 3927 and S 2008 were introduced in the House and Senate to grant benefits to these youngest victims of Agent Orange. In September, during consideration of the FY 1997 VA budget, the provisions of

S 2008 were attached to the spending bill. When the measure was enacted, Agent Orange-spina bifida provisions were retained, with an effective date of October 1, 1997.

President Clinton on October 9, 1996 signed a measure, PL 104-262, to revise and update the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care eligibility criteria for veterans. One provision of the new law would expand health care services for veterans exposed to various toxic substances, including Agent Orange and ionizing radiation. The measure also contains VA construction projects authorizations and medical facility leasing agreements for FY 1997 in the amount of $370.4 million.

PL 104-262 also contains several important health care sharing and administration provisions. One broadens and expands VA's ability to share health-care resources while ensuring services to service-connected disabled veterans, indigent veterans, and veterans suffering from catastrophic illnesses are not adversely affected. Several categories of veterans will be added to the list of those receiving priority care from VA, including former POWs and World War I veterans.

Another provision makes permanent VA's ability to enter into sharing agreements with DoD under provisions of DoD's CHAMPUS program. The law also expands eligibility for Vet Center counseling services for combat veterans of conflicts prior to the Vietnam era. In addition, it extends until December 31, 1998 VA's authority to offer diagnostic exams to the spouses and children of Persian Gulf War veterans. Further, PL 104-262 eliminates some current VA rules which limit outpatient care to a select group of veterans. Current law requires that veterans check into a VA hospital before they can be treated at an outpatient clinic, a real hardship for veterans living in rural areas and an expensive way to administer care.

Despite enactment of PL 104-262, The American Legion still believes that the "eligibility reform" contained in this measure is only a good first step in reforming the VA health care system. Further, the Legion is deeply concerned that expanding eligibility without providing appropriate funding could force some veterans currently receiving VA health care completely out of the system.

Also on October 9, the President signed into law PL 104-263. This measure implements a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for payments to veterans who are service-connected disabled and to their surviving spouses and children. The 2.9 percent increase took effect December 1, 1996.

On October 9 President Clinton enacted PL 104-275, an omnibus veterans package. The law incorporated provisions from several other bills into a single measure. The new law will:

1. Establish a Commission on Service Members and Veterans' Transition Assistance, with the aim of determining the needs of service members leaving the military and entering the civilian workforce;
2. Move back the starting date of the Vietnam War from August 5, 1964 to February 28, 1961. This provision makes veterans who served in Vietnam between those dates eligible for additional benefits and recognition as Vietnam veterans. It will affect up to 16,500 veterans;
3. Make minor and technical amendments to legal authorities relating to VA's Center for Minority Veterans and Center for Women Veterans;
4. Clarify eligibility of certain minors for burial in national cemeteries;
5. Restrict the payment of clothing allowances to incarcerated veterans;
6. Reform the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance program and the Veterans Group Life Insurance program;
7. Authorize VA to refinance loans made to veterans under the Native American Veterans Direct Loan Program;

8. Revise procedures for providing claimants and their representatives with copies of Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions and clarify claimants' authority with respect to the appointment of veterans' service organization representatives;
9. Re-establish the requirement that a veteran's employment handicap must be as a result of a service-connected disability in order to receive VA vocational rehabilitation benefits (this provision would reverse a recent Court of Veterans' Appeals decision Davenport v. Brown);
10. Extend the sunset date of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project to September 30, 1998 and authorize up to $10 million per year;
11. Authorize transfer of active-duty VEAP participants to the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program;
12. Authorize active-duty Army and Air Force National Guard members who enlisted between June 30, 1985 and November 29, 1989 to participate in the MGIB program;
13. Make technical amendments to the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (PL 103-353) to clarify the rights and responsibilities of veterans and their employers; and,
14. Require VA to pay a veteran's surviving spouse an entire month's compensation or pension payment for the month in which a veteran dies, rather than require the surviving spouse to refund the payment to VA.

105th Congress, First Session

The First Session of the 105th Congress convened on January 7, 1997. For the first time in sixty-eight years, a Republican majority was retained in both chambers of Congress in two consecutive terms. There are now 228 Republicans, 206 Democrats and 1 Independent in the House. In the Senate, the Republicans picked up two more seats to expand their slim margin in that body to 55-45.

On February 10, the House approved the roster of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. In addition, several subcommittee changes occurred. The Hospitals & Health Care Subcommittee has been renamed the Health Subcommittee; the Compensation, Pension, Insurance & Memorial Affairs Subcommittee and the Education, Training, Employment & Housing Subcommittee were combined into the new Benefits Subcommittee; and, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee was reestablished after a two-year hiatus. Further, each side agreed to drop two vacancies/seats from the main committee roster. Eight new freshmen members were added to the panel, while Rep. Lane Evans became the ranking Democrat on the full committee as a result of the retirement of long-time committee chairman "Sonny" Montgomery of Mississippi.

On the Senate side, Sen. Arlen Specter became the new committee chairman. In addition, newly-elected Sen. Tim Hutchinson, an experienced legislator who served on the House panel while a member of that chamber, was added to the Senate committee roster. Sen. Hutchinson also becomes the first Republican senator since Reconstruction to represent Arkansas.

On February 6, 1997 President Clinton presented to Congress his recommendations for the FY 1998 federal budget. This proposal would provide $1.69 trillion and result in a $120.6 billion deficit. The President claims this budget is part of his plan to balance the federal budget by FY 2002.

Congressional leaders indicate that Congress would work with the President's budget as a starting point, instead of drafting a separate budget proposal like last year. Differences

still remain on the projected economic and inflationary outlook to FY 2002 between the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Congress missed a non-binding deadline (April 15) to produce a budget resolution for FY 1998. (A budget resolution is a blueprint for how the budget process will proceed and where savings will be realized.) Since President Clinton's reelection, the White House has been more stalwart in its negotiations with congressional budget chiefs compared to the two previous years. By the same token, House and Senate budget negotiators have not been as hard-line in their insistence upon large tax cuts and budget savings through elimination of programs. Areas of most contention included: a) differing deficit estimates from CBO and OMB; b) means-testing certain Medicare recipients; c) capping growth on Medicaid spending; d) increasing some spending for welfare recipients; e) the size of a proposed tax cut; and f) the amount of domestic discretionary spending.

After months of wrangling and negotiations, the President and Congress finally reached agreement on a budget package acceptable to both sides which was signed by President Clinton on August 5.

Americanism

On February 13, 1997, for the second time in two years, a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration was introduced in the House of Representatives. Introduced on February 13 by Reps. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., and William Lipinski, D-Ill., House Joint Resolution 54 would give Congress the power to prohibit flag desecration and to set penalties. This narrowing of the focus of the flag protection amendment is the major difference between this version and H.J. Res. 79 in the 104th Congress. A total of 285 House members were cosponsors of this measure going into the vote, which occurred on June 12, two days before Flag Day. The final recorded tally was 310-114, with 283 votes needed to pass HJ Res. 54. The measure now goes to the Senate for passage. A Senate companion measure still awaits introduction by Senators Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Max Cleland, D-Ga.

The Senate on July 29 passed S 1022, the FY 1998 funding measure for the Departments of Commerce, Justice and State and the Judiciary. The final vote was 99-0. The measure would provide $3.4 billion for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), an increase of $332 million over current-year funding.

During his first term, President Clinton announced an initiative called Citizenship 2000, which sought to sign up one million new citizens. Part of this program involved applicants being fingerprinted to allow the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to filter out any criminals among prospective citizens.

Unfortunately, abuses occurred as 180,000 criminal aliens managed to obtain U.S. citizenship without proper screening, with 10,800 of these aliens having felony arrest records. The House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, and State Subcommittee held an oversight hearing on March 4 at which these problems were highlighted. Oversight hearings on the problems at INS by the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, chaired by Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Mich., are scheduled to occur in the upcoming months. Last year, legislation aimed at reforming immigration law was enacted by the President (P.L. 104-208), but only after provisions aimed at limiting legal immigration were removed. Many immigration reform advocates are not looking for any substantive efforts this year.

Children & Youth

On July 15 the Senate Appropriations Committee passed S 1022, the Departments of Commerce, Justice and State funding bill for FY 1998. The House companion measure, HR 2267, was marked up by the House Appropriations panel on July 22. Contained in these bills

are funds for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), a Justice Department program which has enjoyed full Legion support since its creation in 1974.

S 1022 contains a total of $380.4 million for OJJDP and related programs. The Senate committee included new funding of $145 million for a yet-to-be-authorized Juvenile Block Grant program. These block grants would be used by states for such programs as boot camps, treatment for abused and neglected children and gang-prevention programs in schools. This block grant program is contained in HR 1818, a measure aimed at curbing juvenile crime, which passed the House on July 15 by a vote of 413-14. A similar Senate bill, S 10, was marked up by the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 24, with final action on the measure expected this fall.

In HR 2267, OJJDP would receive $237.9 million in funding for FY 1998. Both measures would increase OJJDP funding over the current year's spending amount of $174.5 million.

Economics

On April 9 by a voice vote the House passed HR 240, the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1997. The bill, introduced by Rep. John Mica, R-Fla., would strengthen veterans preference rules and redress procedures, as well as provide enhanced protection for veterans during federal government reductions-in-force. In addition, the measure mandates veterans preference for most non-political positions in the federal government, including judicial and legislative branch positions. The measure now awaits Senate consideration. Last year, similar legislation cleared the House but died in the Senate. A Senate companion to HR 240, S1021 which was introduced by Sens. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., and Max Cleland, D-Ga., was introduced on July 16. The American Legion supports the intent of both these bills.

The House Appropriations Committee on July 22 approved HR 2264, the FY 1998 Departments of Labor, Health & Human Services and Education spending measure. The Senate Appropriations Committee sent their version of the bill to the full Senate on July 24. Contained within HR 2264 for the Labor Department is funding for the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS). Below is the FY 1997 final budget totals compared to the House and Senate proposals for FY 1998.

	FY 1997 Final Totals	FY 1998 Senate Proposal	FY 1998 House Proposal
Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program	$82.0 million	$80.0 million	$80.1 million
Local Veterans' Employment Rep.	75.1 million	77.1 million	77.1 million
Federal administration, VETS	22.7 million	22.8 million	22.8 million
Job Training Partnership Act (Veterans' programs)	7.3 million	7.3 million	7.3 million
National Veterans' Training Institute	2.0 million	2.0 million	2.0 million
Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project	-	2.5 million	2.5 million
Total funding, DoL veterans programs	$189.1 million	$191.7 million	$191.8 million

Funds listed for "Federal administration, VETS" help support the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). This program conducts workshops for servicemembers leaving the armed forces and their families and helps them find employment after separation. In FY 1996, over 145,000 separating servicemembers and their spouses participated in TAP workshops, with

about 164,000 servicemembers and spouses projected to participate in the current year and 160,000 projected for FY 1998.

Foreign Relations

On April 10, the full Senate by a voice vote confirmed former Rep. and ex-POW Pete Peterson of Florida to be the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam since the Vietnam War. Peterson was nominated last year, but because he was still a member of the House, his nomination was delayed until he retired from office.

His confirmation was held up by Sen. Bob Smith, R-N.H., who was seeking assurances from the White House that Vietnam was providing the fullest possible accounting of all American servicemen listed as missing from the Vietnam War. Sen. Smith dropped his hold on the nomination after receiving assurances from the administration that the President would continue to consult with a variety of defense officials in determining if Vietnam is cooperating to the fullest extent.

On April 3 National Commander Joseph Frank wrote several letters to leading members of the U.S. Senate, including Majority Leader Trent Lott, asking the Senate not to proceed with the confirmation process. While not questioning the qualifications of Mr. Peterson, Commander Frank stated the Legion's belief that "it is premature to approve any nomination for an Ambassador to Vietnam at this time" because Vietnam has not provided the fullest possible accounting of American POWs/MIAs.

Last year a presidential delegation traveled to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to gain commitments from the Vietnamese government that it is doing everything possible to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans from the war in Southeast Asia. The American Legion, which was represented on that delegation, made a report of its finding to the President upon returning. In the report, the Legion voiced its reservations about the trustworthiness of Vietnamese officials with regard to missing Americans.

Despite pledges from Vietnamese officials with whom the delegation met, Vietnam has not been forthcoming to any appreciable extent. Promises to turn over military archival and documentary evidence, as well as other records which would establish additional Vietnamese accountability, have not been significantly met. Finally, reports of illegal contributions to President Clinton's reelection campaign have raised serious concerns about improper influence of official U.S. policy towards Vietnam. While not opposing Mr. Peterson's nomination or confirmation, The American Legion still believes that it is inappropriate for this country to recognize the Socialist Republic of Vietnam diplomatically at this time.

On March 20 Rep. Jane Harman, D-Calif., introduced legislation to expand the number of dates and sites at which the distinctive black and white flag of the National League of Families of POW/MIAs can be flown. The measure, HR 1161, would require that the flag be flown at certain federal facilities on Armed Forces Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, and National POW/MIA Recognition Day, as well as the last business day preceding the particular holiday. The bill would greatly expand the number of sites required to display the flag and would include all major military installations; federal national cemeteries; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC; the White House; the official offices of the Secretaries of Defense, State, Veterans Affairs and the Director of the Selective Service System; and U.S. Postal Service post offices.

On April 3, The American Legion outlined it's position on HR 1161 in a letter to Rep. Harman. The Legion stated that "this law will have a major impact by providing a constant reminder of the plight of America's POW/MIAs and their families who continue to suffer the uncertainty of the status of their loved ones...we are proud to advise you of our strong support for this legislation." As of August 1, HR 1161 has 47 cosponsors. On April 9, Sens.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Colo., and Kent Conrad, D-N.D., introduced S 528, a companion measure, which currently has 23 cosponsors.

On July 17 by a vote of 91-8, the Senate approved S 955, that chamber's version of FY 1998 foreign operations spending measure. The legislation would provide $16.8 billion in foreign aid funding for FY 1998, just $123 million less than the President's request. It also includes a one-time appropriation of $3.5 billion in budget authority for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) account to deal with global financial crises. The House bill, HR 2159, includes $12.3 billion in foreign aid funds and no IMF funds. It was passed by the House Appropriations Committee on July 9.

The bills continue several earmarks which have become routine portions of this funding measure in the past. They include $3 billion for Israel and $2.1 billion for Egypt. Other earmarks include $800 million for Russia and other former Soviet republics. The Senate bill contains a policy provision, opposed by the White House, which would cut off aid to Russia if it continues to aid Iran's nuclear program or sells Iran ballistic missiles. In addition, the measure contains a new earmark for Jordan, which has become another dominant player in the Middle East peace process.

On June 24, by a vote of 278-148 the House adopted an amendment to HR 1119, the FY 1998 DoD authorization measure that would prohibit funding for U.S. troops in Bosnia after June 30, 1998. The amendment, authored by Rep. Steve Buyer, R-Ind., faces a certain presidential veto if it survives conference. Proponents of the amendment said that setting a deadline for withdrawing troops would send a signal to this country's European allies that they should prepare to assume greater responsibility for keeping the peace in the former Yugoslavia.

The House defeated an amendment offered by Rep. Van Hilleary, R-Tenn., that would have withdrawn the troops by December 31 but allowed President Clinton to ask Congress for a six-month extension. This amendment was defeated 231-196.

Internal Affairs

On May 1, legislation was introduced which would increase the standard mileage rate deduction for charitable use of private passenger vehicles. The measure, S 676 introduced by Sen. Frank Murkowski, R-Alaska, would increase the charitable mileage deduction from 12 cents a mile to 18 cents a mile.

Many Americans who volunteer for community activities and use their personal automobiles for transportation incur expenses for operating their vehicle. Under the provisions of S 676, the volunteer mileage deduction would be raised for the first time in thirteen years, when it was set at its current level. The business mileage deduction, set at 20.5 cents a mile in 1984, has since been raised to 30.5 cents per mile. In addition, the Secretary of the Treasury will be authorized to make an annual review of whether the volunteer mileage deduction will need to be raised.

During consideration of HR 2014, the tax relief package, provisions of S 676 were included. However, the final version of the tax package would only raise the volunteer mileage deduction to 14 cents a mile, and the annual Treasury Department review was dropped altogether.

National Security

On February 27, 1997 The American Legion submitted testimony to the House National Security Subcommittee on Military Personnel. The focus of the hearing was on DoD health care alternative for over-65 beneficiaries. Access to affordable health care, regardless of age or health care status, represents the number one concern among military retirees. Military retirees are the only group of federal employees who lose their health care

benefits when they become 65. As a result, they are no longer eligible for CHAMPUS or TriCare, and must enroll in Medicare, seek private health care insurance or go without coverage.

The American Legion supported several proposals to ease the burdens of over-65 military retirees. These proposals include: allowing DoD health care treatment facilities to be reimbursed through Medicare subvention; allowing military retirees to enroll in the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program regardless of age or health status to offset closure of military medical facilities; and, continuing CHAMPUS/TriCare coverage for the lifetime of a retiree and not end at age 65. The one proposal which The American Legion believes will most benefit military retirees is the GI Bill of Health. The VA currently enjoys statutory authority to serve as the backup to the DoD medical care system in wartime. The Legion also believes VA should serve as a backup to the DoD health care system in times of peace.

Legion spokesmen appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security on April 17 to present our organization's views on DoD appropriations proposals for Fiscal Year 1998. Several factors of great concern were presented during the Legion's testimony:

- Procurement spending for up-to-date weapons systems has fallen to a 50-year low, putting servicemembers at great personal risk.
- Unmet training goals, plunging military readiness ratings, unmet recruiting goals, and the dropping quality of recruits have all contributed to a general lack of readiness of our country's armed forces.
- The current "win-win" strategy of the U.S. military being able to win two simultaneous wars in different parts of the world is questionable under the current force structure. The American Legion believes that the U.S. military is only capable of a "win-hold" strategy.
- Continued American involvement in peacekeeping operations, especially those in which U.S. national interests are not clearly at stake, will continue to affect personnel and preclude essential maintenance and training. This was also outlined in a committee staff report released by the House National Security Committee on April 9.

The Legion expressed its concern that the U.S. military is returning to the days of the "hollow forces" of the mid-to-late 1970's.

The Senate on July 15 passed S 1005, its version of the FY 1998 Department of Defense (DoD) appropriations bill, by a 94-4 recorded vote. The bill would provide $247.2 billion for national defense, an increase of $3.3 billion over the President's request. The President's original DoD budget proposal sought to continue a three-year trend of funding quality of life and manpower requirements at the expense of weapons modernization. The House passed its version of the DoD funding bill, HR 2266, on July 29 by a vote of 322-105, and would provide $248.3 billion for U.S. national defense needs.

Personnel: The Senate would fund the personnel account at $69.7 billion, which would provide a 2.8 percent military pay raise and support an active-duty force of 1.42 million and a Reserve and National Guard component of 892,500. The House measure would appropriate $69.3 billion. About $1.2 billion will be used to build housing or refurbish existing housing.

Operations & Maintenance: To cover the cost of operations, training and maintenance, the administration requested $82.3 billion. The Senate bill sets funding for this account at $82.7 billion, while the House would appropriate $82.9 billion.

Procurement: This account received the largest increases from both the House and Senate. For weapons and weapons systems, the House would set spending at $42.6 billion,

$1.7 billion more than Congress appropriated in FY 1997 and nearly $4 billion more than the President requested. The Senate would fund this account at $45.4 billion. One major difference in the two bills is the inclusion in the House version of $331 million to provide for additional B-2 "Stealth" bombers above the current inventory of 21 planes, while the Senate would end production and procurement of the plane altogether. Some of the major proposed purchases include:

- $2.1 billion for 20 Navy "E" and "F" modules for the F/A-18;
- $2.3 billion for a new class of nuclear-powered submarine;
- $2.7 billion to build 3 additional Aegis destroyers in the House measure; $3.4 billion for 4 destroyers under the Senate bill;
- $1.6 billion to overhaul the aircraft carrier *Nimitz*;
- $1.9 billion for 9 C-17 wide-body cargo planes in the House bill, $2.3 billion for 11 of the aircraft in the Senate measure;
- $595 million to upgrade M-1 tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles;
- $531 million for various long-range precision weapons; and
- $472 million for 5 more V-22 Osprey troop carrying planes for the Marine Corps in the House measure, and $627 million for seven Ospreys in the Senate bill.

Research, development & testing: A total of $36.7 billion was requested by the House in this account, while the Senate asked for $36.6 billion. This includes $3.5 billion for research and development of anti-missile defense programs in the House bill and $4 billion in the Senate measure. The Air Force will receive $2.1 billion for further development of the F-22 stealth fighter, $931 million for continued development of the Joint Strike Fighter with the Navy.

A conference committee will begin meetings as soon as Congress returns from its August recess. October 1, 1997 is the beginning date of Fiscal Year 1998.

On July 30 the Senate voted 98-1 to approve HR 2264, the Department of Transportation spending bill for FY 1998. Previously, the House had voted 425-5 on July 23 to pass the measure. HR 2264 must now go to a conference committee before it can be signed by the President. The Coast Guard's missions, besides enforcing U.S. law on the high seas, include promoting safety of life and property at sea, protecting the marine environment, aiding navigation, and maintaining a state of readiness to function as a specialized service of the U.S. Navy in time of war.

The House bill contains $3.9 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard, a 2.8 percent increase over current year funding, compared to the Senate's total of $3.7 billion. Coast Guard accounts funding include: $2.41 billion for operating expenses from the House, $2.43 billion from the Senate; $370 million for acquisitions, construction and improvements contained in the House bill, while the Senate version would set this figure at $403 million; $35 million for boating safety by both chambers; $21 million for port safety development in the House bill and nothing in the Senate bill; and, $19 million for research, development, testing and evaluation from the House and $20 million from the Senate.

Funding for the Selective Service System is contained in HR 2158, the FY 1998 VA, HUD and Independent Agencies spending bill. Both the House and Senate would fund the agency at $23.4 million. The American Legion continues to support the Selective Service System as a quick, inexpensive backup for the current all-volunteer military in case of war.

Legislation was introduced in both the House and Senate which would guarantee the voting rights of servicemembers when they are out-of-state on military business. These bills are S 278, introduced by Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, and HR 699, introduced by Rep. Henry Bonilla, R-Texas. The measures are in response to a lawsuit filed in Texas seeking to deny 800 military absentee ballots from being tabulated in local elections. HR 699 was approved

by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on June 12 by a voice vote. In the Senate provisions of S 278 were included in the Senate's version of HR 1119, the FY 1998 DoD authorization measure. A conference committee must now decide on the fate of the Military Voting Rights Act of 1997. The American Legion fully supports this legislation.

The American Legion is continuing its efforts to reverse a discriminatory federal policy directed at service-connected retired veterans. Veterans who receive VA disability compensation must offset it by forgoing retirement benefits or returning some of the retirement money they receive. Military veterans are the only retired federal employees who cannot receive both military pensions and disability pay.

Consequently, Rep. Michael Bilirakis, R-Fla., has introduced 3 measures attempting to address this problem. HR 44 would allow military retirees with at least 20 years of military service and who are at least 70 percent disabled to receive both types of pay. This bill currently has 17 cosponsors.

A second measure, HR 65, would permit military retirees to be paid retirement pay concurrently with disability compensation so long as their entitlement to such retirement pay is based solely on age, length of service or both. Also, under HR 65, the military retired pay is reduced by a percentage equal to a veteran's disability rating. Finally, if a military retiree has a one hundred percent disability rating, no reductions from either disability compensation or retired pay would be permitted. HR 65 currently has 111 cosponsors. There is also a Senate companion measure, S 657, sponsored by Sen. Tom Daschle, D-S.D., with 8 cosponsors.

Finally, HR 303 permits veterans with service-connected disabilities who are military retirees to receive VA compensation concurrently with retired pay, without deduction from either. This bill has 109 cosponsors.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On the first day of the 105th Congress, Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-N.Y., introduced HR 335. This measure would establish a Commission on the Future for America's Veterans. This commission would conduct a comprehensive study of VA health care services and develop a plan for 20-40 demonstration projects at specified VA medical centers nationwide.

If passed, this legislation would make important contributions toward necessary changes in VA's future delivery of health care to America's veterans. However, HR 335 does not directly deal with the GI Bill of Health. During its deliberation process, the commission may require that some or all of the VA medical centers operating as demonstration projects make use of the provisions of the GI Bill of Health to test that proposal's viability.

The American Legion supports passage of HR 335 as an important first step in having the GI Bill of Health eventually integrated into VA's health care plans. Passage of this bill does not mean that the GI Bill of Health will become law; it only means that it will be that much closer to congressional consideration, passage and eventual enactment. The American Legion has invested a great deal of effort in seeing that this proposal is passed. The importance of the GI Bill of Health to America's veterans can only be compared to the 1944 passage of the GI Bill of Rights. The American Legion believes that a concerted effort will surely yield similar results.

On April 16, the House, by a voice vote, passed a measure, HR 1090, which would make important changes to the veterans benefits decisions process. Under the provisions of this bill, introduced by Rep. Lane Evans, D-Ill., veterans benefits claims decisions can be reviewed by the Court of Veterans Appeals (CVA) for cases of "clear and unmistakable error" (CUE) by VA regional offices and the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA). The measure would also entitle veterans to retroactive benefits if an original ruling is overturned

or modified. Senator Patty Murray, D-Wash., introduced a companion measure, S 464 in the Senate on March 18.

A recent CVA decision, *Russell/Collins v. Principi*, involved the question of whether or not the Department of Veterans Affairs had the legal authority to reverse prior VA decisions on the grounds of CUE and whether the Court had jurisdiction to review VA's determination on the issue of CUE. The American Legion filed an extensive "friend of the court" brief and presented oral arguments before the Court in favor of the concept. When CVA found for the plaintiffs in *Russell/Collins*, the VA opposed the Court's conclusions, arguing that VA regional offices had sufficient authority to reverse prior BVA decisions.

The American Legion is opposed to efforts by VA to limit or restrict the circumstances under which the issue of CUE can be reviewed by either VA regional offices or BVA. It is vitally important for veterans that decisions of the VA regional offices and BVA be correctable on the grounds of CUE. The American Legion supports passage of HR 1090 and S 464, while VA opposes these measures.

On July 16, by a recorded vote of 397-31, the House of Representatives approved legislation, HR 2158, to fund the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for Fiscal Year 1998. The Senate cleared its version of the bill on July 22 by a 99-1 tally. Following is the FY 1997 final budget totals, compared to the totals approved by the House and Senate and The American Legion's FY 1998 recommendation:

	FY 1997 Final Totals	FY 1998 House	FY 1998 Senate	American Legion Recommendation
Compensation and pension (mandatory)	$19.60 billion	$19.93 billion	$19.93 billion	----
Medical Care	17.01 billion	17.01 billion	17.03 billion	18.20 billion
General operating expenses	828 million	853 million	786 million	840 million
Medical and prosthetic research	262 million	292 million	267 million	280 million
Major construction	251 million	160 million	93 million	225 million
Minor construction	175 million	177 million	166 million	200 million
National Cemetery System	77 million	84 million	84 million	80 million
State home grants	47 million	55 million	80 million	75 million
Other accounts	1.84 billion	1.92 billion	1.77 billion	-----
Total	$40.09 billion	$40.48 billion	40.31 billion	-----

The President's original request, as well as the House and Senate final VA budget recommendations, included language authorizing VA to retain third-party collections which CBO estimated to total $604 million. In the past, most of the money collected went to the U.S. General Treasury. Although The American Legion supports third-party reimbursements, the Legion also believes it should not be used in lieu of appropriated funds, but rather to supplement VA funding. The Legion also questions whether VA will be able to collect the full $604 million as forecasted by the CBO under current VA rules, regulations and procedures.

In an attempt to improve this situation, an amendment to the VA funding bill, introduced by Rep. Gerald Solomon, R-NY, was approved by the House. The amendment would initiate supplemental funding for VA health care should VA's efforts to collect and retain third-party reimbursements fall more than $25 million short of the $604 million projected by CBO. The amendment would greatly assist VA in meeting its obligation to provide veterans with necessary medical services. Otherwise, VA may be forced to further

scale back health care services and reduce staffing levels, ultimately forcing VA to ration health care to service-connected and other eligible veterans.

When Congress returns from the August recess, a conference committee will begin the task of reconciling these differing figures before a final spending bill can be signed by the President.

In related action, when the Senate approved its version of HR 2014, the Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1997, the measure contained a provision authorizing a three-year demonstration project to allow VA to collect and retain Medicare payments for services rendered to certain Medicare-eligible veterans. These veterans are considered high-income veterans under current rules. Many of these veterans desire to use their Medicare benefits to pay for VA health care services, but are turned away under existing law. The American Legion believes VA could provide these services at a significantly reduced rate compared to the private health care sector and ultimately save Congress money.

However, when HR 2014 emerged from conference, the VA-Medicare collection provision was removed and replaced with one authorizing DoD to take the same action. Further, the VA demonstration project was replaced by language to authorize only a study of a VA-Medicare demonstration project. The American Legion will continue to seek help for veterans seeking medical care in VA.

On April 16 the House by a voice vote passed HR 1092, a bill to make several changes relevant to VA. The measure would extend and expand VA's authority to enter into so-called "enhanced-use" leases. Under HR 1092, VA will have authority through December 31, 2002 to enter into long-term leases with private and other public entities to improve unused or underused VA property to contribute to VA's overall mission. These include child-care centers, parking facilities and VA office space. These leases can last as long as 35 years.

The funds realized by the leases are retained by VA, with 75 percent of the funds going to its Nursing Home Revolving Fund and the remainder being retained by the VA medical center for medical care. This legislation also would repeal a section of current law which limits the number of enhanced-use leases which VA can execute.

Another section of HR 1092 would rename the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals as the "U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims". This would clear up confusion with regard to the court's current acronym "CVA" with the Board of Veterans Appeals "BVA." Also, adoption of the name "U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims" would establish that it is an independent judicial entity and not an administrative tribunal within VA, like BVA.

Finally, HR 1092 would rename VA's National Cemetery System (NCS) as the National Cemetery Administration. It would also redesignate the Director of the National Cemetery System as the VA Assistant Secretary for Memorial Affairs. These changes would more accurately reflect NCS' status as a benefit-delivery administration of VA, and assure that the director's status would be commensurate with other VA Assistant Secretaries.

On June 18 President Clinton enacted PL 105-19, the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, legislation to address the problem of personal civil liability for volunteers working for nonprofit organizations and governmental entities. Many voluntary organizations, which are nonprofit in nature, have experienced problems with high liability costs and unwarranted litigation costs due to lawsuits against persons who have volunteered their time to the organizations.

The measure grants liability protection to volunteers of nonprofit organizations or governmental entities under certain circumstances. Three amendments were added to the measure which would: a) ensure that protection for volunteers would not be extended to members of hate groups, like the Ku Klux Klan; b) allow punitive damages to be awarded against a volunteer if a court determined that harm was committed because of "willful

misconduct" on the part of the volunteer; and, c) allow any individual state to opt out of the federal law if the state determined that its own state laws protecting volunteers from frivolous lawsuits were adequate. The House passed the measure on May 21, with the Senate agreeing to the bill on the same day.

Last year during the waning days of the 104th Congress, the GI Bill of Health was introduced in the House of Representatives by then Rep. James Lonely of Maine as HR 3950. However, due to the crush of other legislative business, the bill never received full consideration.

Since that time, the Legion has held meetings with dozens of congressional staff members, as well as representatives and senators, to engender support for the GI Bill of Health. At the same time, consultations with CBO and the Government Accounting Office (GAO) have occurred, as well as discussions with some prominent "think tanks."

As a result of these many meetings, a number of changes are being considered to the Legion's proposal for the future of the VA health-care system. These changes are mainly enrollment changes and requests by CBO and GAO to clarify some terminology. These changes are technical and not philosophical, and should make the provisions of the proposal clearer, more understandable and help the plan conform to current congressional budget rules.

On July 9 spokesmen for several veterans' groups, including The American Legion, testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. The subject of the hearing was legislation, S 923 and HR 2040, legislation which would deny certain veterans' burial benefits to veterans convicted of certain capital crimes. The veterans' groups voiced their opposition to S 923, a bill introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Arlen Specter, R-Pa., which passed the Senate on June 18 by a 98-0 recorded vote. Their disagreement with the legislation was based on the bill's language which sought to increase punishment for criminal veterans simply because they are veterans. "Veterans status," said the Legion spokesman, "should not be exposed to rescission as a result of civilian conduct following, or for other reasons unrelated to, the performance of military service."

By contrast, the veterans' groups came out in favor of HR 2040, which was introduced on June 25 by House Veterans' Affairs Chairman Bob Stump, R-Ariz. This bill, unlike its Senate counterpart, specifically stated those capital crimes which would bar a veteran from interment in a national cemetery, including first-degree murder of federal officers or employees, damage or destruction of federal property, use of chemical weapons and providing material support to terrorists within the U.S.

Two years ago, VA began efforts to remake itself to administer its health-care system in a more efficient manner. Its new approach emphasizes customer service, strives for improved efficiency and makes local and regional planning a priority. To that end, the Veterans Health Administration has been reorganized into 22 Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) to provide a foundation to the reorganization effort. In addition, a new system to allocate VA funding based on veteran population in each VISN has been introduced. It is called the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) system.

However, The American Legion is concerned that VA's efforts may result in undue hardship for VA and impact upon its veteran patients. VA funds and resources may be directed away from some VISNs and assigned elsewhere, resulting in personnel, funding or program changes. Legion staff members have been sent to visit various VISNs to evaluate the impact of VERA and will be issuing a comprehensive report in the near future. In addition, several members of Congress have introduced legislation to set aside the VERA program entirely.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Allen L. Titus, Indiana, Chairman
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Director

As has been its custom since its inception, the National Security Commission has attempted to remain informed, and to keep the membership of The American Legion informed on the range of issues related to the National Defense of the United States in order to recommend responsible national security policies to the governing bodies of The American Legion. To accomplish this task, the Commission conducts regular meetings designed to provide members with current information from responsible government officials on timely issues concerning national security. One of these meetings takes place in conjunction with the National Convention, two in conjunction with meetings of the National Executive Committee, and the fourth is held during the Washington Conference of The American Legion.

Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) is Chairman of the National Security Commission. Mr. Titus was selected as Commission Chairman at the Fall 1995 meeting of the National Executive Committee.

Pre-Convention Meetings, 1996

During the 78th National Convention of The American Legion in Salt Lake City, Utah, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions convened a joint session at the Salt Palace Convention Center on August 30, 1996. The first speaker was Ambassador L. Craig Johnstone from the State Department who spoke on the impact of reduced resources on the conduct of United States foreign policy. He was followed by Mr. John C. Gannon, Deputy Director for Intelligence of the Central Intelligence Agency, who presented an overview of potential "hot spots" on the international scene. The final speaker was Rear Admiral Richard West, Acting Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Office, who addressed the need for the United States to develop and deploy both theater missile defense systems and a national missile defense system.

The National Security Commission and its Standing Committees conducted a comprehensive review of the resolutions assigned to the Convention Committee on Security. Many of the resolutions reviewed were updated versions of previously adopted positions.

National Security Resolutions, 78th National Convention

The following resolutions, listed in Committee order, were unanimously adopted by the delegates to the 78th annual National Convention:

General Security

Resolution No. 30, *Accelerate Military Airlift and Sealift Production.* Urges the funding and production of modernized airlift and sealift so as to enhance the rapid deployment of U.S. forces.

Resolution No. 155, *The Honorable Nature of Military Service*. Upholds the honorable nature of military service as it has always embodied the highest form of service to the nation.

Resolution No. 156, *United States Military Forces in Peacekeeping Operations.* Includes the principle that United States military forces should not be placed under foreign or U.N. operational control except where Congress grants specific approval.

Resolution No. 158, *Foreign Investments in American Defense Industries.* Urges foreign entities not be permitted to own U.S. defense industries.

Resolution No. 159, *Revising the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.* Urges the USG to renegotiate, modify or abrogate the 1972 ABM Treaty to clear the way for developing and deploying a national missile defense system.
Resolution No. 160, *Theater Missile Defense Systems.* Urges the Congress to fund and deploy theater missile defense systems.
Resolution No. 161, *Support for Collegiate and High School ROTC Programs.*
Resolution No. 162, *Retention of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Service (USUHS).*
Resolution No. 163, *Retention of the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service.*
Resolution No. 188, *National Security Principles.* Establishes The American Legion's national security objectives.
Ressolution No. 208, *Protection of United States Military Personnel.* Urges the strictest security measures be maintained to protect the lives of American military personnel.

Conservation of Natural Resources
Resolution No. 109, *Domestic Energy Production.* Calls for the further development of domestic sources of energy.
Resolution No. 110, *Federal Oil and Gas Leasing Systems.* Supports the current federal oil and gas leasing system and opposes any legislative changes that would further restrict oil and gas exploration.
Resolution No. 111, *Curtailment of Additional Wilderness Areas.* Urges continued assessment of the impact of additional wilderness areas on the economic and national security interests of the United States.
Resolution No. 112, *Oil Exploration on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Coastal Plain.* Supports legislation that would open up the ANWR Coastal Plain to oil exploration and development.
Resolution No. 113, *Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Waste.* Encourages the continued growth of our nuclear electric capacity and proper disposal of nuclear waste material.

Aerospace
Resolution No. 28, *Support for the National Space Program.* Urges continued support for the goals of the National Space Program.
Resolution No. 29, *Aerospace Production and Research.* Urges the continued support of the U.S. aeronautical and aircraft production.
Resolution No. 31, *The United States Air Force in the 21st Century.* Supports three major objectives of the United States Air Force, mainly, maintaining its combat readiness, shaping tomorrow's Air Force and supporting Air Force people programs.

Defense Civil Preparedness
Resolution No. 164, *Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard.* National Guard units should be maintained at reasonable levels so that they may continue to perform both Federal and State missions.

Law and Order
Resolution No. 81, *Enforcement of Criminal Laws.* Reaffirms The American Legion's long-held stand that the efforts of government should be directed to the enforcement of laws rather than banning the possession of firearms by law-abiding citizens.
Resolution No. 145, *Department Law and Order Committees and Their Recognition of Law Enforcement Officials.* Additionally, urges Departments to participate in the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award.

Resolution No. 217, *Domestic Terrorism in the United States.* Condemns all terrorist activity in the United States.
Resolution No. 218, *Combating Crime in America.* Recommends a series of judicial actions including more stringent measures to combat juvenile crime.
Resolution No. 284, *Support for the Second Amendment.* Reaffirms its recognition of the United States Constitution as guaranteeing law-abiding American citizens the right to keep and bear arms.

Merchant Marine
Resolution No. 165, *Rebuild the Merchant Marine.* Also urges the enforcement of Maritime Cabotage Laws of the United States which preclude foreign shipping interests from gaining inroads into American domestic shipping routes.
Resolution No. 166, *Support for the Maritime Security Act.* Supports a more modernized and responsive Merchant Marine capable of responding to national emergencies.

Military Affairs
Resolution No. 3, *Total Force Policy and Viable National Guard and Reserve Forces.* Urges that the National Guard and Reserves be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels.
Resolution No. 5, *Support for the Selective Service System Registration Program.*
Resolution No. 6, *Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation.* Urges action to amend Title 38 United States Code to remove the unfair restriction against the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay for longevity and VA disability compensation.
Resolution No. 62, *Death Gratuity Pay.* Urges Congress to amend appropriate United States Codes so that military death gratuity payments would not be declared as income for purposes of computing eligibility for other federal, state or local assistance programs.
Resolution No. 167, *Establishment of the Military Draft as a Backup to the All-Volunteer Force.*
Resolution No. 168, *Quality of Life Features.* Urges the USG to support and fund military quality of life features.
Resolution No. 169, *Department of Defense Health Care Reform for Military Beneficiaries.* Recommends a series of guidelines be incorporated as an inherent part of the military health care package including the implementation of Medicare Subvention for Medicare-eligible military retirees.
Resolution No. 170, *Transitional Assistance Programs.* Urges the continued funding of transitional assistance programs until the military downsizing has been completed.
Resolution No. 171, *Homosexuals Serving in the Armed Forces.* Would urge the Congress to restore the former DOD ban on homosexuals serving in the military if the current law should be struck down by the Supreme Court.
Resolution No. 172, *Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act.* Supports the principle that former spouses of military personnel have the right to adequate support, but that federal laws that permit divorce courts to distribute military retired pay to former spouses should be amended.
Resolution No. 173, *Concurrent Receipt of Military Separation Pays and Veterans Disability Compensation.*
Resolution No. 174, *Modernization of the United States Army.* Urges the retention of no fewer than 12 active U.S. Army combat divisions and that Army readiness, modernization and people programs be sustained.

Resolution No. 175, *Service of Women in the Armed Forces.* Supports the expansion of women's roles in the armed forces when it is demonstratively proven that such expanded roles will not impair deployability, readiness and unit cohesiveness in the Armed Forces.
Resolution No. 178, *Maintain Full Funding for Military Commissaries.* Also opposes any efforts to privatize the military commissary system.
Resolution No. 285, *Military Chaplains for the Armed Forces.* Urges the USG to maintain the commitment to provide uniformed chaplains to the Armed Forces.

Naval Affairs
Resolution No. 151, *Captain Charles McVay (USS Indianapolis).* Requests that the United States Navy reopen the controversial case of the sinking of the U.S.S. Indianapolis.
Resolution No. 176, *Support for the United States Coast Guard.* Fully fund the United States Coast Guard to carry out its numerous vital missions.
Resolution No. 177, *Modernize the United States Navy and Marine Corps.* Supports defense budgets which reflect a viable United States Navy and Marine Corps capable of projecting American seapower abroad.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall, 1996

At this meeting, a total of four resolutions were considered, and none were recommended for adoption. National Security Commission Chairman Titus noted that the President had signed the omnibus spending package allowing Federal government departments to spend over $600 billion in Fiscal 1997. The smooth continuation of federal operations was in sharp contrast to the previous year when budget standoffs caused government shutdowns. The Congress approved a generous $244 billion defense budget for 1997 which exceeded the Administration's request by more than $9 billion. The defense budget authorized and funded a number of issues advocated by The American Legion to include, for example, increased military quality of life features; accelerated military procurement and modernization to include additional funding for theater and national missile defense systems; and it sustained readiness. It also approved the establishment of a National Defense Panel which would evaluate the National Military Strategy. In separate legislation, the Congress also passed the Maritime Security Act which replaced a decades-old subsidy program with a new annual stipend system for the owners of some 47 merchant ships which could be called into government service during national emergencies.

The defense budget process, however, also reflected the give-and-take struggle between the Congress and the White House during this election year. In our view, there were a number of congressional disappointments. For example, a bill to establish six Medicare subvention demonstration sites, to test the reimbursement of military medical centers by the Medicare system for the treatment of military retirees over 65, was defeated in the House Ways and Means Committee. The major concern was its cost and potential impact on the Medicare Trust Fund. In other legislation, the House passed a bill requiring the President to justify to Congress before placing U.S. troops under United Nations, or foreign, commanders. The Senate, however, did not consider the measure which, if passed, would have meant a certain Presidential veto.

In all likelihood, these issues would be revisited by the 105th Congress beginning in January 1997, and the views of The American Legion would again be heard.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in general session during the Washington Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill on Monday, March 3 and on Wednesday, March 5, 1997. Issues and discussions covered during these sessions are highlighted below.

Morning Session, March 3, 1997

The National Security Commission and Foreign Relations Commission met jointly for update briefings on 1) the Defense Department Budget and the Quadrennial Defense Review, 2) the current U.S. Force deployments and 3) the current situation in Bosnia.

Mr. William J. Lynn, III, Director for Program Analysis and Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, described the budget environment at the Defense Department as "very constrained", primarily due to Congress's clear direction toward a balanced budget. However, Mr. Lynn noted that the Defense Department and the Congress were much closer this year on Defense spending issues and attributed this progress to a better understanding of the issues by both parties.

Lieutenant General Peter Pace, USMC, Director for Operations (J-3), Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented a comprehensive briefing on all current U.S. Force deployments worldwide.

Ambassador James W. Pardew, Jr., U.S. Special Representative for Military Stabilization in the Balkans, spoke in detail about United States efforts to achieve a lasting peace in the Bosnia and outlined U.S. national security interests in the Balkans.

Afternoon Session, March 3, 1997

Legionnaires from both the National Security and the Foreign Relations Commissions, the POW/MIA Committee Members, and other interested Legionnaires met in a second session for an update on POW/MIA issues sponsored by the Special POW/MIA Committee. The session was presided over by the Chairman of The American Legion's POW/MIA Committee, Past National Commander Robert S. Turner.

The Honorable Robert C. Smith, United States Senator from New Hampshire, told the Legionnaires he had serious concerns that the full accountability of America's POW/MIAs from the war in Southeast Asia was not the driving force in the President's decision to normalize relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Ms. Ann Mills Griffiths presented a comprehensive update on POW/MIA issues from the Vietnam War, noting that Hanoi "still holds the key" to the unanswered questions regarding Americans who remain unaccounted for from that war.

Mr. John F. Sommer, Jr., Executive Director of the Washington Office of The American Legion, briefed the Legionnaires on the National Commander's Vietnam Trip in November of last year (1996). In Hanoi and later in Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City), the National Commander met with many Vietnamese Ministers and expressed The American Legion's concern over the full accounting of American POW/MIAs.

Ms. Sandra J. Kristoff, Special Assistant to the President and Director of Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, outlined the current United States strategy on the Korean Peninsula.

Ms. Kristoff then reviewed the progress made on the Korean War POW/MIA accounting issue, noting that negotiations which had begun in 1990 were still moving very slowly.

National Security Commission Business Session, Wednesday March 5, 1997

At 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 5, the Commission held its annual business session at the Washington Conference. Chairman Allen L. Titus, introduced the Committee Chairmen of the six Standing Committees of the National Security Commission. The Chairman of The American Legion Auxiliary National Security Commission, Mrs. Katherine Morris, was introduced and delivered a short presentation on Auxiliary national security programs. Mr. W. Dudley Robbins, Chairman of the Law and Order Committee, announced The American Legion Regional winners of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year competition. Commission Chairman Titus also presented several items related to the National Convention including the planned Pre-Convention Trip to the Kennedy Space Center. Prior to adjourning, Commission members had the opportunity to review several handouts which emphasized the pros and cons of the Senate ratifying the proposed Chemical Weapons Convention. The National Security Commission and Foreign Relations Commission then held a Special Joint Session on this issue.

Special Joint Session on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

Following its Business Session, the Foreign Relations Commission was joined by the National Security Commission and other interested Legionnaires for a special joint meeting featuring a debate about the impending Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Dr. Lori Esposito Murray, Special Assistant to both the President and the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, presented the Administration's case for urgent Senate Ratification of the CWC.

Mr. Frank Gaffney, Director of the Center for Security Policy, presented the arguments against Senate Ratification of the CWC. Mr. Gaffney explained that the Convention could not be verified. He also stated that rogue nations such as Libya and Iran were not intending to sign it; therefore the CWC was not really a global ban on chemical weapons as it was designed to be.

At the conclusion of the debate and after the presenters had departed, a number of Legionnaires expressed their support for the CWC and several others expressed opposing views. After hearing these views, the Chairmen of the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions concluded that there was insufficient basis to put The American Legion on record supporting or opposing the Administration's efforts to achieve rapid Senate Ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring, 1997

The National Security Commission considered a total of six resolutions, and three were recommended for adoption: "Buy American Program", "Red Chinese Activities in the United States" and "Support for Military Voting Rights Legislation." The Commission Chairman discussed the highlights of the Fiscal Year 1998 Defense Budget. It was noted that the rapid and deep reductions in defense spending are making it increasingly difficult to keep the promises made to our current and former warriors and ensuring that the United States maintained a first-class All-Volunteer Force. Law and Order Chairman Dudley Robbins announced the results of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award competition. The award will be presented for the first time at the 1997 National Convention.

National Security Commission Chairman Titus' comments to the National Executive Committee included the following:

Congressman Floyd Spence, Chairman of the House National Security Committee, recently released a report, entitled "Military Readiness 1997: Rhetoric and Reality," which warns that the combination of declining defense resources, a smaller military force structure and increasing peacekeeping and humanitarian operations are causing more serious readiness problems than we have been lead to believe.

The report states that "...so-called official reports seem to indicate that there is no military readiness problem, although we have been told that the services are on the "razor's edge" of readiness. But the fact is that you cannot sit on a razor without bleeding, and military readiness is beginning to hemorrhage. Doing more with less may be the military's new motto, but it is not a sustainable strategy nor is it conducive to ensuring long-term preparedness of the All-Volunteer Force."

The National Security Commission's greatest concerns include quality of life issues for the active forces and the string of broken promises being experienced by military retirees: If such benefits such as health care, commissaries, adequate pay and quarters—all of which were taken for granted in the past—are funded at significantly reduced rates, or are privatized or eliminated completely, they will only serve to prove that the United States Government can not be trusted to honor its obligations. They will also exacerbate already delicate retention and recruiting difficulties.

The American Legion testified to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on National Security on these and related issues on April 17th and again before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense on June 4th.

National Security-Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, DC office. The staff of the Division consists of: G. Michael Schlee, Director; Charles S. Ciccolella, Assistant Director; Dennis M. Duggan, Assistant Director; Angela M. Guishard, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Cheryl L. Henson, Secretary.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of answering correspondence and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Transportation (Coast Guard); the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; The Retired Officers Association, Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization. Writing and delivering speeches, preparing reports and testimony, is also a duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as *The Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine* and the *American Legion News Service*, the

principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign affairs.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen: Robert C. Gabrielson—Aerospace; Frank J. D'Amico—Defense Civil Preparedness; W. Dudley Robbin;—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland—Merchant Marine; Norbert E. Harmeyer—Military Affairs; J.B. Broussard—National Security Council; and Robert L. Klipstine—Naval Affairs.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Robert C. Gabrielson, South Dakota, Chairman

During the past year, the Aerospace Committee continued its efforts to ensure that the United States does not become a second-rate power in modern air power or advanced aerospace technology. The authority for the Committee's efforts are the resolutions adopted at the 78th National Convention. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

Legislative Activities. Implementation of these policies necessitates correspondence and testimony to the Armed Services/National Security and Appropriations Committees of both the Senate and House in coordination with our Legislative Division. In addition to correspondence, principal presentations were before the House and Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittees. Testimony and resolutions on aerospace and other issues were presented to the Subcommittee in their consideration of Fiscal Year 1998 defense appropriations bills. Of particular emphasis was continued support of the National Space program and adequate provision for Operations and Maintenance funding, the military health care system, research and development, strategic airlift, and aircraft production and development to include the C-17, F-22 fighter, and the Joint Strike Fighter.

DEFENSE CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Frank J. D'Amico, New York, Chairman

The American Legion continues to advocate adequate staffing, adequate budgeting and adequate technical and research support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In an era when Russian civil defense efforts are far greater than those of the United States, it becomes imperative that planning for emergencies to include, for example, a possible chemical or biological attacks be enhanced.

Disaster Relief Assistance: The Defense Civil Preparedness Committee, under direction of the National Security Commission, will continue to review and monitor the progress and after-action reports of FEMA as well as legislation affecting disaster relief assistance. In 1995-1996, 1,380 Posts were involved in disaster relief and other emergency assistance programs.

Energy: War in the Persian Gulf had refocused the attention of The American Legion on America's continued reliance on foreign sources of energy. Unquestionably, Iraq's seizure of Kuwait and the threat to Saudi Arabia could again endanger our national security interests and economic well-being.

The energy crisis in 1973 prompted a series of energy-oriented resolutions in the mid-1980s which addressed, primarily, energy recovery and conservation. At its Fall meetings

in 1989, the National Executive Committee mandated that the Chairman of the National Security Commission annually appoint a Subcommittee on the Conservation of Natural Resources, which included energy issues. Over 786 American Legion posts have appointed Energy Chairmen.

The American Legion at its 73rd National Convention adopted a comprehensive National Energy Strategy resolution which collectively addressed energy conservation and efficiency, energy recovery and development, and alternative sources of energy such as nuclear electricity. Many of these recommendations were incorporated in the National Energy Act. More recently, The American Legion has been supportive of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge area for oil exploration as well as urging the Federal government to adequately dispose of nuclear waste.

Blood Donor Activities: The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary continue to be principal sources of blood donors in the United States. Through our vast network of Posts and Units organized into Department programs, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members continue to supply the blood needs of their own members, hospitalized veterans and through cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian hospitals. During 1995-96, a total of 98,977 pints of blood were donated by 47,844 American Legion donors.

National Commander Awards: To stimulate activities on the part of Departments and Posts, annual awards are made by the National Commander. During the period from July 1, 1995 through June 15, 1996, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Florida, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, Rhode Island and Wisconsin.

Each winning Department received a Certificate of Recognition signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
W. Dudley Robbins, North Carolina, Chairman

The Law and Order Committee continued this year to emphasize crime prevention by promoting the distribution of the Crime Prevention booklet across the nation. Liaison was maintained with the National Crime Prevention Coalition in order to keep the committee up-to-date on the latest developments in the field of crime prevention.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been overwhelmingly responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention program. Requests for this booklet have come from state and local law enforcement officials; from senior citizen groups; from libraries; and from school children. This program is viable, ongoing and important to our National interest. The Law and Order Committee has continued to promote its goals in this area. Over 1,464 Posts had crime resistance programs in 1995-96.

Fire Protection/Prevention: The National Executive Committee authorized the American Legion Fire Protection and Prevention programs. An information booklet on this subject was published in the Spring of 1986, and was the basis of a slide show production. Over 1,392 Posts had Fire Prevention programs in 1995-96.

Junior Law Cadet Program: The American Legion, in its efforts to better educate our young people in regard to laws which govern our society, and the agencies which enforce those laws, has developed several programs which feature law enforcement training. Fifteen Departments, in cooperation with state law enforcement agencies, sponsored youth programs designed to acquaint the participants with methods of basic law enforcement.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Program: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order Committee selected five Regional winners who contended for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

Corporal William Rhodes of the Huntingdon Police Department in Pennsylvania was selected and presented with the first award of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year at the 79th National Convention at Orlando, Florida.

MERCHANT MARINE COMMITTEE
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Since its founding, The American Legion has realized the importance of a strong American merchant marine and the indispensable role of this "fourth arm of defense." Today, the ever increasing dependence of the U.S. economy on raw materials from Third World countries and overseas areas demand renewed efforts to build up our merchant fleet.

Retaining American merchant marine independence in supplying our economy and the added demands of military sealift, spurred this Committee's support for expanding the Merchant Marine during the past year. The effort to inform its membership, the general public and the Congress of our views were guided by resolutions which were unanimously adopted by the 76th National Convention.

Maritime Power: Throughout our history, maritime power has been a key element in the growth and strength of America. Moreover, the new sealift demands of the United States make the Merchant Marine even more imperative in our strategic planning. We must rebuild the merchant marine if we are to maintain free use of the seas in the face of potential challenges presented by regional conflicts.

The Merchant Marine Committee was supportive of the Maritime Security Act which was passed and enacted last year. This act should significantly enhance America's merchant fleet during national emergencies.

For the second consecutive year, the National Organization of The American Legion presented its award to an outstanding midshipman at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. The American Legion now presents awards at all the Service Academies.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Norbert Harmeyer, Iowa, Chairman

During the year, the Military Affairs Committee has directed its major efforts toward maintaining a strong and modern United States armed forces, second to none in the world. We believe the times deserve no less. Our activities have been guided by the resolutions adopted by the 76th and 77th National Conventions and subsequent National Executive Committee actions. Wide dissemination was given those resolutions to Congressional, government, military and industry leaders to inform them of our mandates for supporting a strong and modern military forces to include the Reserve Components. Bound volumes of the resolutions were presented to the President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Maintaining a strong national defense was designated as a legislative priority by the National Commander.

Press Conference/Legislative Activities: The staff has kept up-to-date by attending press conferences on various subjects of interest, including the press conferences sponsored by the Department of Defense, Department of Transportation (Coast Guard) and several Congressional press conferences.

The Department of Defense presented a special briefing on the Quadrennial Defense Review to which The American Legion and other veterans service organizations were invited.

Through the Legislative Division, correspondence with Members of Congress and Congressional staff was initiated and followed through in other areas as follows: military procurement, military health care; military commissaries and impact aid for military school children; military pay and allowances; and military quality of life incentives, including career stability and retention initiatives. Additionally, testimony was presented before the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense in support of military readiness, quality of life features and continued modernization of the Armed Forces. Emphasis was placed on maintaining current manpower levels for the Armed Forces in the face of continued overseas deployments which is beginning to impact on the morale and well-being of the Armed Forces.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Robert L. Klipstine, Ohio, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 76th National Conventions, the Naval Affairs Committee has worked to strengthen the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard during the past year. It begins with the premise that sea lanes are the life lines of America, both in peacetime and war. The United States is no longer hesitant about sending powerful signals to aggressors that it will not stand idly by and watch while they conduct violent takeovers of legitimate governments, particularly when those takeovers are contrary to the national interests of the United States. This new diplomacy requires a mobile, flexible and capable and deployable United States Navy and Marine Corps.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
J.B. Broussard, Louisiana, Chairman

Selective Service System: The American Legion over the past year has continued to support the Selective Service System by strongly advocating the maintenance of the Selective Service Registration Program as a viable preparedness measure.

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Criterion for judging the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy is based on Departments giving the greatest degree of support to ROTC programs to include the number of medals presented and Legion participation in award day ceremonies this year. The winners of the Paul H. Griffith Trophy for School Year 1996-1997 are the Departments of Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Montana, New York, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
Robert L. Morrill, New York, Chairman
Joe March, Maryland, Director

The National Public Relations Commission actively works to properly position The American Legion before the media and the general public. During 1996-1997 program year, Commission efforts were increased to create opportunities for volunteers and to implement communications strategies which play a key role in achieving corporate goals.

Providing the first step to actively involving volunteers is the intent of the new Public Relations Volunteer Award program. Eight individuals will be selected and then will serve as presenters during the National Information Conferences.

Another step to involving volunteers came in support of American Legion Boys Nation. Departments were provided materials for PR volunteers to use in promoting delegates to their hometown media when they are selected. The information Department volunteers

obtained was subsequently provided to the National Public Relations staff for on-going media relations efforts while the delegates were in Washington, DC. This joint volunteer-national staff effort served as a test for future cooperative volunteer-staff efforts.

Achieving Corporate Goals

Providing Public Relations services to advance corporate goals involved a variety of tactics and efforts in support of the campaign for a Constitutional Amendment to protect the American Flag from acts of intentional physical desecration. Among them, special guest editorials by the National Commander provided to key media; creating a support program to assist in the promotion of the new CFA high school essay contest, etc.

The Commission staff provided special media guidance and materials to support the post revitalization and new post formation efforts of the Membership staff. A radio public service announcement campaign targeting veterans with Gulf War Syndrome increased calls to a special 800 number and opened doors in many radio stations to discuss other American Legion issues.

The Commission staff continued to provide volunteer support materials including Suggested Addresses for key patriotic holidays, maintained a Veterans Media Data Bank which was used to support CNN, PBS, CBS as well as members of local media outlets searching for a veteran with specific duty assignments. Making the form available on The American Legion home page on the World Wide Web added names to the Data Bank and also helped media become aware of the availability of the service.

Awards

The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to Justin Dart Jr., for his life-long efforts on behalf of Americans with disabilities.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented during the 79th National Convention to the Tribune Chronicle of Warren, Ohio, for the investigative special insert: "Disorderly Conduct."

With the start of the new Public Relations Volunteer Recognition program, the Department Media Awards program came to an end. The final awards in that program were made to: The Telegraph-Forum, Bucyrus, Ohio, Daily Newspaper of the Year; Gloucester-Matthews Gazette-Journal, Gloucester, Va., Weekly Newspaper of the Year; KCYY-100FM, San Antonio, Texas, Radio Station of the Year; and Cablevision, Hauppaugue, NY, Television Station of the Year.

Three 1996-1997 Commission video productions received Bronze Telly Award recognition for excellence in video production. "The GI Bill of Health" earned awards in two categories: Health & Medicine and Government Relations; and the 1996 motivational Membership Workshop Open also earned recognition.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, members of the National Public Relations staff, in concert with the National Public Relations Commission, will focus on telling the story of The American Legion to a more diverse audience. The Commission will work closely with other National Commissions and their staffs to ensure that a communications strategy is developed and implemented.

The American Legion Magazine
Milford Forrester, South Carolina, Chairman
Steve Salerno, New York, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief

As *The American Legion Magazine* heads into the homestretch of 1997, all signs indicate it will cross the wire with revenue increases in advertising and continued success in editorial quality and operations.

In the first two quarters of 1997, advertising came on strong with revenues of $4.24 million, nearly $900,000 more than the same period in 1996. This positioned the magazine well to meet its projected $8.5 million goal for 1997. This reflects a turnaround from last year, when the magazine joined thousands of other publications around the country which were financially strapped because of unprecedented increases in printing and production costs. As a result, many mail-order companies were forced to cut back on catalog distribution and advertising that supports it.

Paper costs have been stable for most of 1997, but industry observers warn prices will edge upward slightly later this year. There has been indication, too, that postal rates for second-class mailers also might increase in 1998.

Throughout 1997, the publisher and advertising staff, working with national advertising representatives, Fox Associates, Inc., have worked closely on strategies designed to attract and secure new accounts, and to develop more business with long-time major clients such as Buick Motor Division. For example, the advertising sales team aggressively pursued "image" and full-page display ads from 200 of the nation's top industry and service corporations to be used in the September 1997 issue, "Good News, America!"

And the good news for magazine readers in 1997 has been continued improvement in editorial operations and ground-breaking features. The realignment and consolidation of the magazine and *The American Legion Dispatch* editorial staffs was completed. Combining both staffs paved the way for more efficient coverage of our organization's news and features—and it also has created additional advertising revenue for the *Dispatch,* the Legion's twice-monthly national newspaper.

In 1997, *The American Legion Magazine* rises to meet new challenges in advertising sales and adapt to the ever-changing nature and costs of producing a monthly publication. The magazine commission and staff work side-by-side to evaluate and implement ways to control cost, but not at the expense of providing readers with a quality product.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION
Chester F. Stellar, Ohio, Chairman
Carroll Williams, Maryland, Director

The Seventy-eighth Annual National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah and the Fall and Spring meetings of the National Executive Committee approved programs expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the year ending June 30, 1997. The first section of the report describes the action taken on all resolutions assigned to the Commission for consideration, and the status shown as of June 30, 1997, the date of this report.

Beginning with the 1996 National Convention, the Commission received a total of 68 resolutions for appropriate action and consideration. There follows a breakdown of these resolutions by source and type.

Approved or Approved as Amended	31
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	19
Referred to Resolutions Standing Commission	10
Rejected	6
Received and Recorded	2
Total Resolutions from the 1996 National Convention	68

There were no resolutions from the National Adjutant at the meeting of October 16-17, 1996 ("register resolutions").

There were 3 resolutions from the National Adjutant at the meeting of May 5-6, 1997 ("register resolutions").

The status of these resolutions upon which action has been taken as of the end of the reporting period is set forth below, beginning with those covering the 1996 National Convention, followed by those presented and referred by the National Executive Committee.

1996 National Convention Approved Resolutions
September 3-5, 1996

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs was informed by the Director on September 13, 1996, of The American Legion official policy on the following resolutions.

The National Commander testified in support of these resolutions on September 17, 1996, before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees.

Resolution No. 16 (TN): Urge Congress to Support State Veterans Homes

Resolution No. 21 (CA): Expansion of West Los Angeles Cemetery

Resolution No. 60 (MA): Provide Funding for DVA Construction Program

Resolution No. 68 (PA): Recognize Service in Turkey and Israel as 'Gulf War Service'

Resolution No. 69 (PA): Contingency Funding for VA

Resolution No. 82 (VA): Eliminate All Time Limitations for Filing Applications for Correction of Naval or Military Records

Resolution No. 83 (VA): The American Legion Policy on VA Compensation

Resolution No. 84 (VA): Reduce Disability Requirements for Nonservice-connected Pension

Resolution No. 85 (VA): Amend Title 38, USC to Change Vietnam Era Dates

Resolution No. 97 (PI): Urge Congress to Enact Legislation to Provide Equal Benefits to Naturalized Filipino Veterans

Resolution No. 98 (PI): Urge Congress to Amend Title 38, USC, Section 107 to Recognize the Status of Filipino Veterans

Resolution No. 114 (UT): Vocational Rehabilitation Job Training for Disabled Veterans

Resolution No. 115 (UT): Support Legislation Providing Benefits and Services to Vietnam Veterans Children with Spina Bifida

Resolution No. 140 (ND): Enhanced Education and Training Readjustment Program for Servicepersons (GI Bill)

Resolution No. 141 (MD): The GI Bill of Health: The American Legion Veterans' Health Care Security Plan

Resolution No. 148 (IN): The American Legion Policy on Death Indemnity Compensation

Resolution No. 149 (IN): Improve the Disability and Death Pension Program
Resolution No. 150 (IN): Provide Dependent Children of Veterans in Nursing Homes Greater Pension for Incidental Expenses
Resolution No. 179 (MO): Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
Resolution No. 180 (MD): The American Legion Policy Regarding the Use of Depleted Uranium
Resolution No. 213 (ND): Seek Legislation to Pay Accrued Benefits in a Pending Claim to Date the Deceased Veterans' Claim Was Filed
Resolution No. 214 (ND): The American Legion Policy on the National Cemetery System
Resolution No. 215 (ND): The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange
Resolution No. 230 (FL): The American Legion Policy on Former POWs
Resolution No. 231 (FL): Protect Disability Ratings After 10 Years
Resolution No. 232 (FL): Seek Equity for VA Survivors Benefit Recipients
Resolution No. 244 (MD): Review of Claims of 'Clear and Unmistakable Error' by the Court of Veterans Appeals
Resolution No. 245 (MD): The American Legion Policy on Exposure to Ionizing Radiation
Resolution No. 247 (MD): The American Legion Policy on VA-NSLI Insurance
Resolution No. 248 (MD): Oppose Centralization of VA Claims Processing Centers
Resolution No. 295 (VA&R): Support Establishment of a Commission for Implementing and Evaluating the 'GI Bill of Health'

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 16-17, 1996

The National Executive Committee approved the following resolutions:
Resolution No. 8 (Origin: Res. 65 (GA), 1996 National Convention): Construction of a Regional Office in Decatur, GA, Next to the VA Medical Center
Resolution No. 9 (Origin: Res. 34 (TX) with Amendment, 1996 National Convention): Support Increase in Claims Personnel for VA

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 5-6, 1997

The National Executive Committee approved the following resolutions:
Resolution No. 12 (VA&R): Policy on State Cemetery Grants Program
Resolution No. 13 (CO): Support Mission of VA Chaplain Service
Resolution No. 14 (VA&R): Advocate the Enactment of Legislation Concerning Volunteer Protection
Resolution No. 15 (PA, D.E.C. 97): Seek Legislation to Expand Burial and Plot Allowance to Certain Disabled Retirees
Resolution No. 18 (VA&R): Gulf War Veterans Economic Study Stage II
Resolution No. 27 (VA&R): Support the Fourth Mission of the VA Office of Emergency Medical Preparedness
Resolution No. 28 (VA&R): The American Legion Policy Regarding the Treatment of Non-Veterans at Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held three meetings during the period August 31, 1996 through May 6, 1997, as follows:

The VA&R Commission met on September 1, 1996 in Room 251B-C, 2nd Level of the Salt Palace Convention Center. A report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A 13-member Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 16-17, 1996, for the purpose of considering those matters which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other matters of a current nature. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 16, 1996.

The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 74th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 5, 1997, in conjunction with the 37th Annual Washington Conference. The actions taken by the Commission's Advance Report to the National Executive Committee on May 5-6, 1997, also appeared in the proceedings of that meeting.

An eight-member Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on May 5-6, 1997, at National Headquarters. Chairman Chester F. Stellar (OH), chaired the Subcommittee meeting and encouraged those present to continue their efforts on behalf of the nation's veterans. A report of this meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on May 7, 1997.

National Leadership Workshops
The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary

For the eighteenth consecutive year, eight National Leadership Workshops were conducted throughout the months of September and October 1996. The meetings were held in the following cities:

Region 1—Providence, RI, September 27-29
Region 2—Ocean City, MD, September 20-22
Region 3—Columbia, SC, October 4-6
Region 4—Lafayette, LA, September 27-29
Region 5—Milwaukee, WI, September 20-22
Region 6—Topeka, KS, September 13-15
Region 7—Las Vegas, NV September 18-20
Region 8—Great Falls, MT, October 4-6

The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary met jointly at each Saturday session to discuss issues of mutual interest. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commission attended the Conferences in their respective regions. The Regional Chairmen were in attendance at all Conferences.

Staff members of the VA&R Commission were present at each Conference providing those present with overviews of various topics relative to the VA&R program including "The American Legion Veterans Health Care Security Plan."

Representatives of VA medical centers attended the Conferences for the purpose of discussing the impact of funding shortfalls regarding veterans' access to medical care. A significant number of questions were posed concerning veterans' access to VA medical care and eligibility reform.

Noteworthy at all Conferences was the high percentage of first-time attendees, and a large number of Post Service Officers.

For the fourth year, a full-day Post Service Officers School was held and well received. Claims, ratings, and benefits were discussed. This school will continue on an annual basis.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 75th National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference was held March 2-5, 1997, at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. Participants included members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Department Service Officers and Rehabilitation Directors, County and Post Service Officers, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, and various National, Department, and Post officials.

Mr. Chester F. Stellar (OH), Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and Tom Cadmus (MI), Vice Chairman, presided at the sessions of the Conference. Addressing the Conference were National Commander Joseph J. Frank, Phyllis Bachman, President, American Legion Auxiliary, and the Honorable Jesse Brown, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska

In addition, presentations were made by the following officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs: Honorable Hershel Gober, Deputy Secretary; John Hanson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs; Jim Delgado, Director of Voluntary Service; Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Department of Veterans Affairs; Jerry Bowen, Director, National Cemetery System; and Stephen Lemons, Acting Under Secretary for Benefits. Presentations were also made on Persian Gulf War illnesses by Matt Puglisi, Assistant Director Gulf Task Force and Dr. Michael Hodgson, Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Connecticut.

During the Conference, panel discussions covered topics of vital concern such as the operation of veterans benefits programs, medical care, memorial affairs, and other pertinent subjects.

Prior to the Conference, for the sixteenth year, the Chairman and members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Staff met with Department Service Officers for the Annual Department Service Officers Seminar. Topics discussed included veterans affairs and staff operations.

Conference Recommendations

The members of the Recommendations Committee met on March 2, 1997 in the Hyatt Hotel Capitol Hill. However, there were no recommendations submitted from either the 1996 National Leadership Workshops or the 1997 Washington Conference.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

Over the past year, the staff of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission has been actively involved with legislative issues affecting veterans' benefits and programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such activities included the preparation and presentation of testimony at hearings scheduled before Congressional Committees, as well as drafting legislation pursuant to the mandates adopted by the National Convention and the National Executive Committee. In addition, active liaison is maintained with the staff of the Legislative Commission, officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, staffs of the Congressional Committees, and various members of Congress.

The following is a brief summary of the Congressional hearings held from July 1, 1996, to June 30, 1997, relative to the deliberation of Congress on matters pertaining to the Legion's National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission programs.

(1) On September 17, 1996, the National Commander presented The American Legion's recommendations and concerns on a broad range of topics to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.
(2) On September 30, 1996, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Veterans Task Force presented testimony to a joint hearing of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on reports of exposure to U.S. soldiers to chemical warfare agents during the Persian Gulf War.
(3) On December 12, 1996, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Veterans Task Force presented testimony to the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, Subcommittee on Human Resources and Intergovernmental Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, on Gulf War veterans' illnesses and associated issues.
(4) On January 10, 1997, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Veterans Task Force presented testimony to the Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States Senate, investigating Gulf War veterans' illnesses.
(5) On February 11, 1997, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War veterans Task Force testified before the Veterans Affairs Committee, U.S. House of Representatives, on the final report of the Presidential Advisory Committee of Gulf War veterans' illnesses.
(6) On February 13, 1997, the Assistant Director for Resource Development, testified before the Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on the President's Fiscal Year 1998 Department of Veterans Affairs budget request.
(7) On April 16, 1977, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Veterans Task Force, testified before the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on Department of Veterans Affairs medical treatment to Gulf War veterans.
(8) On May 5, 1997, the Assistant Director for Resource Development, testified before the Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, on the proposed Fiscal Year 1998 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs.
(9) On May 8, 1997, the Assistant Director for Resource Development, presented testimony before the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on Medicare subvention legislation.
(10) On May 14, 1997, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Task Force presented testimony before the Subcommittee on Benefits, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on the processing of Persian Gulf War veterans' claims.
(11) On May 22, 1997, the Assistant Director for Resource Development, testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on the security program of the Department of Veterans Affairs–Veterans Health Administration.
(12) On May 21, 1997, the Deputy Director for Operations testified before the Subcommittee on Benefits, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on the final report of the Veterans Claims Adjudication Commission.
(13) On June 19, 1997, the Assistant Director for the Persian Gulf War Task Force, testified before the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, on medical treatment provided to Gulf War veterans with difficult to diagnose and ill-defined health conditions.

Informational Services

Each year, through its informational services, the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation staff endeavors to keep Legion officials and other parties informed of our program activities and functions. Preparation and distribution of various publications consumes considerable research, time and effort. Publications based on various topics are disseminated routinely.

Publications are sent to Department Service Officers, members of the Commission and others interested in The American Legion's rehabilitation program. For the Calendar Year 1996, a total of 27 Bulletins were issued. During the same time-frame a total of 43 Memorandums were distributed. To date, 23 Bulletins and 27 Memorandums have been mailed out.

To improve, strengthen and preserve the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care delivery system, The American Legion developed the GI Bill of Health. We have produced an informative, colorful brochure and video which are available to Departments requesting same.

The American Legion Handbook of Veterans—Get What You Deserve is always in great demand and is used for hand-outs at Seminars, Conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained for distribution upon request.

On an annual basis the staff revises The American Legion *Post Service Officers Guide* (PSO) to reflect legislative and program changes. This publication has a wide distribution. Sufficient copies are mailed to all Department Headquarters equal to one half the number of Posts. The *PSO Guide* is an indispensable research tool for Post Service Officers in providing services to veterans and their dependents. An additional responsibility is the updating of The American Legion Voluntary Service Handbook which is furnished to new VAVS Representatives and Deputy Representatives in VA medical centers.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff strive to provide as much information as possible concerning our program to the various Divisions of the National Organization, Departments and individual Legionnaires and the general public.

Report on the National Cemetery System

The National Cemetery System (NCS) requests a budget of $84 million for Fiscal Year (FY) 1997. This is an increase of $7 million over the current operating budget. In part, the increase will cover the first full year of operation for the new Tahoma National Cemetery near Seattle, Washington (scheduled for dedication November 11, 1997); as well as partial activation of new national cemeteries in Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; and Albany, NY.

Funding is requested in the FY 1998 budget for construction of a new national cemetery near Cleveland, OH and for the expansion of existing cemeteries at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona and Ft. Sam Houston, TX. These funds are included in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) construction budget.

The FY 1998 budget request is critical to the continued success of the NCS program. The Department of Veterans Affairs projects an increase in the number of annual interments from 71,786 in 1996 to 93,000 in 2002. During this period, the total number of graves maintained will increase from 2.1 million to 2.5 million.

The FY 1998 budget also includes incentives for states to participate in the State Grants Cemetery Program. VA proposes to increase the maximum federal share of the cost of cemetery construction from 50 percent to 100 percent. In addition, the initial equipment cost for state cemetery operations would be funded from federal resources.

The American Legion supports the proposed enhancements to the State Grants Cemetery Program. However, this support is subject to the National Cemetery System maintaining the critical leadership for the construction of new national cemeteries. The American Legion opposes transferring Federal Government's long-standing commitment to providing for the burial needs of the nation's veterans and their eligible dependents. We do not believe this important responsibility and obligation can be or should be shifted to the states.

The Department of Veterans Affairs needs to develop a strategic plan to meet the expected burial needs of American's veterans and their eligible dependents. The State Grants Cemetery Program should remain a complementary program and not be the main burial option for veterans and dependents. VA's future objective should be to seek adequate appropriations to carry out the primary mission of the National Cemetery System.

Annual Report of the Medical Consultant

There were no significant changes in the duties and activities of the medical consultant in the past year. Dr. Nikita Tregubov is the Senior Medical Consultant.

The primary duty assigned to the medical consultant is to act as a source of medical/technical knowledge to the appeals and claims representatives of The American Legion at the Board of Veterans Appeals. The case workers refer the case folders to the medical consultant for evaluation and advice as to the appropriate course to pursue in presenting the case. They may take place in the form of guidance, but more frequently it will involve a written memorandum to the appeals representative who refers the case. Certain cases are medically and technically difficult for a non-physician to present and such cases are presented directly to the Board of Veterans Appeals by the medical consultant.

In some cases the medical consultant is directly contacted by The American Legion service officers in the field asking specific questions. Department Service Officers are encouraged to refer difficult cases to the Washington office and to call or discuss them with the medical consultant. This year, again, there was an increase in requests for consultations from the field. It is strongly felt that having more contact with the representatives in the field will benefit the veterans as well as the representatives in the field. The requests were answered within days, usually requesting additional information and records. In some cases a formal request for a disability rating was subsequently initiated.

The Director of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission uses the medical consultant in an advisory capacity for the work conducted by his office. This can be in the form of policy with regard to the operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs' medical care system, or it might be in an advisory capacity on legislative proposals and testimony before Congressional Committees. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and is discussed among several key members of the VA&R division. Occasionally, perceived administrative problems within VA have been drawn to the attention of the director who calls upon the medical consultant for a solution to these problems. This year more requests from the various sections of VA&R have been received. Some of the requests dealt with the issue of individual veterans and some were of a general nature. Several of those requests required additional information not available at the time of the request. Fortunately, the availability of multiple medical libraries in the area helped to gather the required information and present it to the requester. These requests are welcome and gives the medical consultant an opportunity to have input in the decision-making process of the various departments of The American Legion.

The medical consultant represents the Director at the monthly meetings with the Chief Medical Director, along with other veterans service organization representatives, to gain

information concerning the recent operation and direction of the Veterans Health Administration. These meetings are to express concern over the changes in the course of treatment being offered by the Veterans Health Administration.

During the past year the medical consultant has screened/evaluated 218 cases referred by staff.

Government Life Insurance Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans, and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by VA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have over 2.5 million policies in force as of end of May 1997, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $16.2 billion dollars. Dividend distributions for participating policies in these programs amount to approximately $800-$900 million dollars annually. NSLI processes some 110,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of numerous diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 3900 veterans with over $229 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of VA Insurance Centers in Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN. These Centers are to be consolidated in the future at the Philadelphia site in a multi-year operation now underway in accordance with initiatives under the Reinventing Government II Plan. Consolidation began in January 1997 and as of June 15, 1997 some 150,000 case files have been transferred to VAROIC Philadelphia, with a completion date of March 2000. In addition, all new insurance applications, disability insurance claims and settlement claims (death claims) are now under the jurisdiction of the Philadelphia Center, along with all monthly installment awards of any type. A new and modernized facility for the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center, located at the same general site, was completed and moved into during Fall 1996, as scheduled. Construction continues in order to remove the previous building and on new parking areas.

An unprecedented feasibility study to determine privatization of VA's NSLI/USGLI program was begun in June 1995 and has been completed and released with a decision it would not be either cost-efficient nor in the best interest of the veteran policyholders to attempt any privatization of the NSLI program. The intent of such privatization would have ostensibly been to save tax dollars under the presumption that a private insurance company could administer the program better than VA has done for some 60 years. However, as VA already operates an extremely efficient program at a full-service level and at lower cost on a per policy/per claim basis than the always privatized and much simpler in nature OSGLI program (described below), and has been decreasing real costs, personnel levels and paperwork requirements consistently for over a decade now (arguably the most efficient and cost effective unit with highest overall quality of work in the Department of Veterans Affairs), it is most likely the actual intent of any such privatization would be to simply delete some 500 VA insurance and support personnel from the rolls of government employment to assist in meeting the current Administration's political goal of reducing the federal workforce by some 279,000 job positions. Continuing House and Senate Republican Party Budget resolutions, according to VA, may also call for the elimination of at least 950

to 2000 employees from the Veterans Benefits Administration in general. Any complete privatization would have almost certainly resulted in substantially reduced levels of service (to attain any significant cost savings over current operations) for the veterans in the program, and have brought an end to future program enhancements. Basic fundamentals of proper government would have been violated, effective VA control of cost and quality lost, and meaningful participation by Veterans Service Organization representatives eliminated. (VA could, of course, with their present organization meet any cost savings/decreased service level that may in the future be mandated by the Administration, and still maintain a higher level of service quality to insureds due to their long expertise in this field, and the public service orientation of their personnel). National VA&R staff personnel at the main VA insurance center had input into this process and monitored it closely for appropriate action by The American Legion, if necessary.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by VA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veteran's Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), and to separated veterans (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Newark, NJ, with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in VA's NSLI program. On March 31, 1997 SGLI provided some 2.54 million active duty and reserve personnel with more than $481 billion dollars in life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 370,000 veterans with insurance in excess of $30.7 million dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI Center in Newark, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI Center processes between 3500-4000 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the nature of the coverage. Several major program changes have occurred in the SGLI/VGLI programs since the December 1992 addition of an optional $100,000 of coverage to the previous basic SGLI coverage limit of $100,000 (thereby allowing a possible total of $200,000 in life insurance per policyholder), and the conversion of VGLI coverage to one of a renewable nature, instead of the single five year period previously in effect. As of January 1997, the SGLI Retired Reservist Program was discontinued and merged into the VGLI program instead (allowing these insureds to keep their coverage as long as may be desired rather than lose it upon receipt of their first military retired pay check or upon attaining age 60 as was the case), and veterans are now permitted to convert their coverage, if desired, to a private plan of insurance with a participating company as they leave service, or any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period. Reserve personnel leaving the reserves with less than the amount of time for full retirement may also be covered under VGLI if they so desire. In addition, those entering service are now insured automatically for a $200,000 coverage under SGLI. The American Legion VA&R insurance unit presented supporting testimony on these legislative changes as they improve the range of options available to veterans in the SGLI/VGLI programs, especially as VA has advised such conversions could be done for partial amounts of the overall coverage a veteran could have in effect, thus allowing this life coverage to be tailored to differing circumstances as time passes and family situations change; a highly significant benefit given these insurance amounts can now be $200,000 per insured.

The American Legion's VA&R insurance unit at Philadelphia has also provided VA with a set of recommendations for providing added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as continues to happen periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system, or failing to respond in a timely manner to premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards include such items as automatic deduction start-ups from military retired pay or VA compensation, policy liens for premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. A determination from VA is now being awaited on this subject. VA Program Administration staff has obtained DoD personnel outprocessing system data from the service departments and the Defense Manpower Data Center, and is presently conducting a cost analysis study to determine if it is feasible to engineer a process whereby these particular type cases can be separated out from the main body of personnel leaving active duty, and targeted for special attention by OSGLI for converting their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage without running the danger of insurance lapse due to inadequate communications or counseling.

For all programs, the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 5.5 million life insurance policies for military personnel and veterans, with a total in force coverage of over $536 billion dollars.

In the NSLI program thousands of disabled veterans continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance also provided for in the legislative changes (PL 102-568) of late 1992, whereby up to an additional $20,000 of coverage may be purchased by those having a basic NSLI Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. In connection with this new benefit, the VA&R Commission office of The American Legion has initiated and maintained a system to provide those veterans using The American Legion as their representative to the VA with comprehensive notices, sent as early as possible, to those veterans applying for, or who have been recently granted, service disabled NSLI coverage (or disability premium waivers on such coverage) and who are under age 65. This has been seen as particularly needful as the current VA system may, in certain areas such as during the time period while a claim for service connection is pending completion, be faulty in communicating this new benefit in a timely manner to veterans who may qualify for it.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Insurance Centers continue an on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders in the USGLI/NSLI programs in the face of continuing personnel budget constraints by the installation of new computer processing systems utilizing Microsoft Windows and Office 95 programs with new in-house communications networks and databases, and through a continuing process of placing ever more insurance documentation to an on-line, rather than a paper, system. Insurance policy files have been bar-coded to permit fast and accurate location and tracking of files as claims are processed for disability and death awards. Daily transactions records, historically kept on microfiche, have now been added to the on-line system in the NSLI Insurance Centers to allow fast information call-up directly from employee work stations; to this has now been added insurance award statements and beneficiary designations as well. A comprehensive annual policy statement containing all major data and financial items on each policy is mailed to policyholders on the anniversary date of the policy. This is an automatic service item which far transcends information offered by private insurers to their policyholders, and on which the VA Insurance Centers are receiving numerous letters of appreciation from the veterans in the NSLI program. VA Insurance services have also been augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to their toll-free phone service, and by ever increasing use of faxed

correspondence, claims and transaction request submittals. The new Insurance Center at the VAROIC Philadelphia site has been completed and put into operation as mentioned earlier.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Service Units:
VA Insurance Centers Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN

The American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and one Secretary/Transcriber. An associated office at the St. Paul Insurance Center has one Supervisor/Insurance Representative and one Secretary/Transcriber.

The Chief of Insurance Activities and the Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze and apply them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in VA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and nonservice-disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continue to be an American Legion legislative mandate.

Daily operations include a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and VA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of VA actions and records both on cases involving disability and death claims and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on both active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with VA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A new telephone FAX capability has been added to the Philadelphia staff office and has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times. The Philadelphia office has also presented to the National Organization the computer requirements to enable a direct tie-in to the VA Benefits Delivery and related systems. The St. Paul office continues to handle both its remaining insurance work (mostly in-force policy transactions after September 30, 1997), and to re-orient more work activities to the facilitating of Debt Management claims, the center for which remains located at the VA St. Paul facility.

For the period July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1997, the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Letters Received	4,444
Letters Written	6,642
Disability Insurance Claims	627
Death Insurance Claims	3,211
Insurance Folders Reviewed	4,355
In-Force Policy Accounts Reviewed	4,886
Telephone Contacts	3,516
Personal Contacts	3,357
Submittal Memorandums & Reports	3,042

VA Case Responses Mailed	5,701
*Live Claims, Evidence and other Submittals Presented	9,105

* Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, check tracers, master record data changes, disability questionnaires processing and general inquiries.

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs and appeals for upgrade of military and naval discharge and correction of military and naval records through a staff of fifteen Appeals Representatives. One Appeals Representative has been temporarily assigned to the Veterans Pro Bono Consortium as a case screener in pro se cases appealed to the U.S. Court of Veterans Appeals.

Within the Table of Organization, the Deputy Director for Operations is responsible for the operation of the Appeals Unit, and the Discharge Review and Correction Boards Unit.

Cases at the Board of Veterans Appeals are reviewed and written briefs submitted or a personal hearing is held with the appellant. There is an office manager, a Senior Medical Consultant, two secretaries, and eight Appeals Representatives assigned. During the past year, the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit has been augmented by Senior Claims Representatives participating in The Veterans Law Internship Program sponsored by The American Legion and the National Veterans Legal Services Program. Interns have been trained in veterans law from Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Iowa, South Carolina, Ohio, Arizona, Wisconsin, Alabama, and Pennsylvania. Claim Service is provided in those cases coming under jurisdiction of the VA Regional Office, Washington, DC, which include residents of the District of Columbia, the Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince Georges, and the Virginia counties of Arlington and Fairfax, as well as those residing overseas. Three Appeals Representatives and one Secretary are assigned

Cases at the Discharge Review and Correction Board Unit are reviewed and written briefs submitted or a personal hearing held with the appellant. One supervisor and one Appeals Representative are assigned.

Board of Veterans Appeals

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion Board of Veterans Appeals Unit for the period July 1, 1996, through June 30, 1997. During these twelve months, the Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 10,219 cases for written presentations or other dispositions to the Board of Veterans Appeals. Included in the above total are scheduled personal hearings and 384 scheduled personal hearings and 87 Court of Veterans Appeals remands.

Assisting in the review and presentation of complex medical cases is Dr. Nikita Tregobov, Senior Medical Consultant. A total of 152 cases were referred to Dr. Tregubov for advisory opinions.

During this reporting period, the Board rendered a total of 42,030 decisions which included 9,250 cases with The American Legion representation. These decisions consisted

of 1,479 approvals (15.9%), 4,240 remands (45,7%), 3,375 denials (36.4%), and 156 others (1.6%). The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases and dismissals.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of five cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion for advisory legal and medical opinions or assistance in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

Military and Naval Discharge Review Boards

Statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Discharge Review Boards and Boards for the Correction of Military and Naval Records is set forth in 10 USC, sections 1552-1554.

During the period July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997, staff of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Military Review Boards unit, provided advice, assistance, representation and/or other services before the Department of Defense Boards on 4,109 actions pertaining to changes of narrative reasons for discharge, discharge upgrades, entitlement to or upgrades of disability retirement, reserve retirement pay, granting of entitlement to and reissue of awards and decorations and other corrections of military and naval records. Of these, 94 personal hearings were conducted and 1,005 were documentary review presentations

The following is a breakdown of the presentation actions taken before the Service Department Boards:

Military and Naval Discharge Review Boards

	Presented	Allowed	Denied
Department of Air Force	282	34	12
Department of Army	454	91	20
Department of Navy	245	29	12
DOT Coast Guard	1	1	100

Boards for Correction of Military and Naval Records

	Presented	Allowed	Denied
Department of Air Force	76	11	13
Department of Army	184	46	25
Department of Navy	56	2	4
DOT Coast Guard	1	1	100

The processing time for an individual's application has been drastically reduced by the efforts of the different Boards as driven by and in concert with the requested Congressional review of Board problems of timeliness of review, independence of action by the Boards from the active components and lack of satisfaction of decisions by applicants. The following are current projected time-frames:

Air Force Discharge Review
- 18 to 24 months with a personal hearing
- 24 to 30 months for a record review

Air Force Correction Board
- 24 to 36 months

Army Discharge Review
- 12 to 18 months for a Travel Board personal hearing

8 months for a personal hearing, Washington, DC
6 to 12 months for a record review.

Army Correction Board
18 to 24 months (there are approximately 1,000 cases that predate January 1996 which are being processed as priority cases)

Navy/Marine Corps Discharge Review
6 to 9 months

Navy/Marine Corps Correction Board
18 months
24 to 30 months for medical and legal cases

Coast Guard Discharge Review
24 months

Coast Guard Correction Board
24 months

Staff Workload

Part of the overall activity of the various offices of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission is reflected in the annual volume of correspondence. During this period, approximately 10,684 pieces of original correspondence were received from claimants, service officers, and VA officials. Correspondence received by the Insurance Units at the VA Insurance Centers in Philadelphia and St. Paul, Minnesota was in excess of 3,797 and outgoing correspondence exceeded 5,032.

The following combined workload reported for the Appeals Unit, Discharge Review and Correction Board Unit, and Insurance Unit exceeded 23,500 cases presented to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense Boards.

Department Service Officers School

The National Commander continued to authorize the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission to conduct two separate three and one-half day training programs for Department Service Officers and other accredited representatives of The American Legion.

The purpose of the Department Service Officers School is to provide current technical information on a variety of issues relating to the development and presentation of claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs. The program of instruction includes basic information and updates on subjects such as veterans benefits, claims processing, disability evaluations, rating procedures, the conduct of personal hearings, the development of appeals, interpretation of decisions of the Court of Veterans Appeals and advocacy skills. Instruction is provided by Mr. Ron Abrams, Director of Training, National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) and members of their legal staff, as well as staff to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The goal of this formal training is to improve proficiency of American Legion Service Officers in their effort to represent veterans, their dependents, and survivors. A sub-goal is to enable participants to share the knowledge, information, and material with the other service officers in their respective departments.

This School represents a major commitment by The American Legion to develop a network of highly trained and experienced service officers to carry out the VA&R program. The cooperation and participation of the departments continues at a very high level.

The seventeenth session of the Department Service Officers School was held July 24-27, 1996 at the Ramada Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 120 service officer attendees. The eighteenth session was held February 26-March 1, 1997 at the Hyatt Hotel On Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. There were 110 service officer participants. This was followed immediately by the Annual Department Service Officers Seminar and National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, held in Washington, DC.

Field Service

The Deputy Director for Health Care is responsible for the activities of the staff of the National Field Service with day-to-day supervision provided by the Senior Field Representative. There are four assigned positions, one of which was recently filled in November 1996. Field Service Representatives make scheduled site visits to VA medical centers, satellite outpatient clinics, and Vet Centers in their assigned areas to review the adequacy of each station's resources including budget, staffing, construction, and equipment needs. Particular attention is paid to the patient environment, patient satisfaction, and the timeliness of services. A report is prepared for the Director of the VA&R Commission based on the representative's findings and observations. A copy is submitted to the Under Secretary for Health for action or comment, and copies of the reports are also provided to the respective American Legion Department and Congressional representatives and Committees on Veterans Affairs. Field Service staff is in the process of developing an audit instrument (based on HEDIS 3.0) that would provide valid and reliable data for their reports.

During the period July 1, 1996 - June 30, 1997, a total of 69 site visits were conducted. The Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) reorganization of field operations is rapidly progressing. Field Service Representatives have been assigned areas of responsibility to cover the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) established by VHA this fiscal year. Field Service attention will continue to focus on the impact of the changes engendered by the evolving development of the VISNs.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services

The 50th National Advisory Committee meeting of the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Services was held in Tampa, Florida, October 23-26, 1996.

One of the highlights of the program was the presentation of the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Award during a luncheon for that purpose. The recipient of the $10,000 scholarship was Jennifer Nelson, whose volunteer efforts were carried out at the Butler VAMC, Butler, Pennsylvania.

The American Legion representative on the National Advisory Committee is the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission who serves as the National VAVS representative. He was represented by Harry Kelly, Assistant Director for Program Management. At the National Advisory Committee he is a member of the Recommendations Committee on the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Board.

Special workshops were held for those present. The special workshops provided valuable information about professionalism in volunteering, new and innovative volunteer assignments, youth and disabled volunteers, National VAVS and how it relates locally.

The Honorable Jesse Brown, Secretary of Veterans Affairs spoke on the dedication of veterans to their country and the need for volunteers to aid them now.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Chairman, Chester F. Stellar, continues to view The American Legion Volunteer Program as a priority issue.

The American Legion anticipates an increase of both numbers of volunteers and hours contributed for the year ahead.

A donation of $2,000 was made to the James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship Fund.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA Form 21-22, Power of Attorney, the claimant appoints The American Legion as their accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel to veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a Congressionally chartered organization, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Formal representation in claims before VA regional offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals is provided by Accredited Representatives of The American Legion. These representatives have been recommended for accreditation by their respective Departments because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To become an Accredited Representative of The American Legion, a formal application (VA Form 2-21) must be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Commander or Department Adjutant. The Director, as the National Certifying Officer, or the Assistant Director for Information Management, as Assistant National Certifying Officer, will review and forward the request to the General Counsel of the VA for action. This form is never sent directly to the General Counsel, as accreditation will not be granted unless the request has been certified by the organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an Accredited Representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from the VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission receives a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to cancel the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, or resignation. The Director will then notify the General Counsel that the accreditation should be canceled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's General List of Accredited Representatives–VA Information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 124 requests for accreditation and 106 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 1997, there were 1,202 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

Distribution of VA Releases

To ensure employees of the National Veterans Affairs Commission and service officers in the field are kept advised and informed about American Legion policy, recent legislative action, changes in VA regulations, policies, and procedures, the Administrative section of the Director's office receives and distributes copies of VA news releases, printed changes in the regulations and manuals, and other information material to all VA&R staff. Special

requests from the field for VA publications can be submitted to the Director's office and an effort will be made to provide the material. However, an attempt should first be made to obtain the material through the Publications Officer at the local VA regional office.

This information is disseminated through VA&R Bulletins and Memorandums to Department Service Officers, Directors of Rehabilitation, Department Commanders and Adjutants, and members of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. In this reporting period, 80 Bulletins and Memorandums were distributed.

Personnel and Organization

The following changes occurred in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division in the period from July 31, 1996 through June 30, 1997.

Mr. Tracy Underwood, Appeals Representative, was reassigned from the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit to the Persian Gulf Task Force.

Mr. Joseph Sharpe was hired as a Field Service Representative to fill a vacancy in the Field Service Unit.

Leonce Wilson, Supervisor of the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit resigned to accept a position with another organization. Henry Taylor, Appeals Representative, was appointed as Office Manager of the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit. Six new Appeals Representatives were hired and assigned to the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit: Ed Castillo, Hezekiah Hayes, Algeon Lewis, Ricardo Nelson, and Joyce Price. Four Team Leaders were appointed: Thomas Holland, Clayton Klemm, Anita McKim-Spilker, and Walter Bledsoe. Mrs. Theresa Dixon was hired as a Secretary at the Unit to replace Ms. Lily Ma who was reassigned as the Secretary at the Veterans and Dependents Claims Unit at the Washington VA Regional Office. Mr. Thomas Eagles, Appeals Representative, resigned to accept a position with another organization.

The table of organization of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 1996 is as follows:

Director	1
Administrative Assistant	1
Deputy Director for Health Care Issues	1
Field Representatives	4
Secretary	1
Deputy Director for Operations	1
Field Representatives	4
Secretary	1
Assistant Director for Program Management	1
Secretary	1
Assistant Director for Information Management	1
Assistant Director for Resource Development	1
Secretary	1
Assistant Director for Persian Gulf Task Force	1
Appeals Representative	1
Secretary	1
Supervisor, Review and Correction Boards	1
Review Board Representative	1
Office Manager, Board of Veterans Appeals Unit	1
Appeals Representatives	12
Case Screener, Court of Veterans Appeals	1
Secretary	2

Medical Consultant		1
Secretary		1
Veterans and Dependents Claims Unit		1
Total Personnel - Washington office		39
Insurance Field offices:		
Philadelphia, PA:		
Chief of Insurance Activities		1
Secretary		1
St. Paul, MN:		
Supervisor of Insurance Activities		1
Secretary		1
TOTAL PERSONNEL		
Field offices	4	
Washington office	39	
VA&R TOTAL	43	

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, deputy directors and assistant directors attended various Legion functions around the nation such as the National Convention, Department Conventions, Department Seminars and Service Officers Schools, Conferences and fact-finding trips. Departments visited included: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin. The staff also participated in the eight National Leadership Workshops.

The Field Service Unit performed visitations to selected VA medical centers in all 22 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). The entire Division staff attended the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

In addition, the Director received official visits from representatives of the Governments of Canada, Russia, Romania, Croatia, Republic of China, and Zimbabwe. The purpose of these visits was to discuss the benefit program provided for U.S. veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the service program of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

Certificates of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, "for services rendered and cooperation extended in connection with The American Legion's rehabilitation program." Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

Fifteen Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 1996 through June 30, 1997, for an overall total of 1,104 since the program was initiated.

Citations for Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Ninety-one Citations "for meritorious service and loyal cooperation in The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program" have been presented during the period July 1, 1996 - June 30, 1997. Since this type of recognition and appreciation began, 4,098 Citations for Meritorious Service have been presented.

Persian Gulf War Task Force

The American Legion's Persian Gulf Task Force was created in October 1995. The Task Force has two missions: Enhance The American Legion's service to Gulf War veterans, their families and their advocates; and oversee and assist in improving the Federal Government's response to Gulf War veterans' illnesses. The American Legion is the largest Veterans Service Organization (VSO), and has the largest membership of Gulf War veterans of any VSO.

The Task Force has seven goals for 1997:

(1) Lobby VA to end the centralized processing of Gulf War Undiagnosed illness claims.
(2) Oversee and evaluate the medical treatment provided to Gulf War veterans by the Federal Government, and the research investigating their illness.
(3) Publish and distribute an updated "Gulf War Veterans' Guide to VA Benefits."
(4) Improve the Gulf War veterans' site on The American Legion's Homepage.
(5) Assist Congress in the conduct of effective oversight hearings investigating the Federal Government's response to Gulf War Illnesses.
(6) Assist The American Legion Magazine's regular coverage of Gulf War Illnesses.
(7) Assist the Membership Division in increasing Gulf War veterans' membership in The American Legion.

The Task Force has accomplished almost all of its goals, and the work on some is ongoing.

Centralized Processing of Gulf War Undiagnosed Illness Claims

VA was adjudicating Gulf War Undiagnosed Illness claims at four Regional Offices (ROs) that it designated as Area Processing Offices (APOs). The American Legion investigated the operation of the APOs and found numerous failures that led to two outcomes detrimental to disabled Gulf War veterans: 95% were denied benefits for undiagnosed illnesses; and a claims backlog of over 14,000 claims had developed.

The National Commander brought these failures to the attention of Secretary Jesse Brown, and negotiated a trial with VA whereby American Legion service officers would review these claims before they were shipped to the APOs. The Task Force, however, never lost sight of the ultimate goal: abolishment of the APO system. After intense lobbying the House Committee on Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Benefits held a hearing in May

1997 on the APO system. VA conveniently abolished the APO system the night prior to the hearing in order to avoid defending a failed system at the hearing.

The Task Force will now closely monitor the shipping of the claims back to the ROs, and the performance of the ROs in their adjudication of their claims.

Oversight of Government Medical Treatments and Research

Through the use of the medical consultant from the University of Connecticut, the Task Force has systematically reviewed the medical treatments provided to Gulf War Veterans by VA and DoD. With some exceptions, the Task Force has found the overall approach of both agencies to be wanting. The Task Force has therefore approached Congress to intervene. The Task Force has also reviewed the research into Gulf War Illnesses and found one remaining gap: research into effective medical treatments for Gulf War Illnesses. This gap has been filled by Congressional action.

Update of Gulf War Veterans' Guide to VA Benefits

The Task Force updated its popular Guide and began distributing it to veterans, advocates, government officials and elected officials. The original Guide was cited by the Presidential Advisory Committee as an excellent information tool for Gulf War veterans.

Improvements to the Gulf War Veterans' Site on the World Wide Web

The site is updated regularly and has developed into a joint effort between the Task Force and the MIS Division. Congressional testimony, important health information and links to government sites are available.

Congressional Oversight

The Task Force lobbied the House Committee on Veterans Affairs to hold oversight hearings on the medical treatment provided to Gulf War veterans by the Federal Government after its investigations and site visits determined that there is little evidence that VA or DoD provide effective medical treatment to sick Gulf War veterans. The Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Subcommittee on Health, have held a total of three hearings in this Congress that have supported the Task Force's contention concerning medical treatments. More hearings are planned, the U.S. General Accounting Office has been tasked with its own investigation, and both agencies are reexamining their medical program for Gulf War veterans.

The Task Force's most successful legislative effort was the assistance it gave to the House National Security Committee and House Veterans Affairs Committee in drafting legislation that funded research into medical treatment for Gulf War veterans. The Task Force drafted the initial language of the legislation, and lobbied key staff to have it introduced. It passed the House 417-0 in June 1997.

The American Legion Magazine

The Magazine has featured two prominent researchers and advocates into Gulf War Illnesses, and published regular updates of interest to Gulf War veterans.

Membership

The Task Force, in cooperation with the Membership division, has undertaken efforts to follow-up its service to Gulf War veterans with encouragement for them to become part of The American Legion. A mailing to former members who are Gulf War veterans, the addition of a membership application in the Gulf War Veterans' Guide to VA Benefits, and joint appearances at Department events by Task Force and Membership staff have further tied the two groups together. The Membership Division and the Task Force recognize that Gulf War veterans are the future of The American Legion and will conduct more joint efforts to increase their numbers in The American Legion.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
American Legion Auxiliary
Mrs. Virginia Hobbs, Kentucky, Chairman

In support of the theme of "Promoting America", the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program has "promoted America Through Service to her Veterans." With streamlining and reorganization of the veterans healthcare delivery system, service to our veterans poses an increasingly large task in helping to meet the physical and mental needs of our aging veteran population and has been addressed throughout the year in our Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Program. With the added emphasis on youth volunteers, our members have striven to add their brightness and energy to this foundation program.

While statistical reporting is extremely important within this program, it is noted that 47 Departments acknowledged the efforts of their members with an annual report and that these reports represent approximately 6,800 Units. This segment of the VA&R report is limited to those special promotions for 1996-1997 and the collective efforts on Home Service.

This year was a golden celebration for the VVS and for the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project (HVWP). In support of HVWP, 357 Units participated through promotion of the program within local facilities, providing sponsorship within the publication, and obtaining subscriptions. Within the Department of Illinois, 25 Units either subscribed to *Veterans' Voices* or contributed to publication costs and copies were placed in schools and libraries in Texas.

For a second year, Fisher Houses was a program focus with $17,265 contributed through National Headquarters, by 30 Departments, for their use as needed within the network of facilities. In total, 42 Departments contributed $38,535 directly to Fisher Houses or to the network headquarters. The increasing direct aid has largely benefited those Fisher Houses which are located near military installations. Particularly strong performances were noted from the Departments of Colorado, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Minnesota, Illinois, New York, Washington, and Florida. An amazing note to the level of assistance to Fisher Houses was that only 556 Units reported participating. Members from the Department of North Carolina enjoyed the open house at the Fayetteville Fisher House. Members within the Department of California obtained a truck-load of personal hygiene products for the Fisher House at Travis Air Force Base. Auxiliary members also serve in advisory capacities at various Fisher Houses. Within the Department of Maryland, the Fisher House concept was taken a step further with the establishment of the West-Mar House to be associated with the Martinsburg, West Virginia VAMC.

As Departments and Units have served our veterans, tremendous volumes of resources have been expended. The Departments of Pennsylvania and Ohio reported VA&R expenditures exceeding $500,000, with Missouri and Minnesota exceeding $250,000.

Aggregate Unit and Department expenditures totaled $4,489,000. This reflects a banner year in striving to serve our veterans. A total of 420,000 veterans were touched by our programs with over 20,000 aided in Maryland, Missouri, California, Texas, Florida, and Virginia.

An often forgotten segment of the VA&R program is Home Service; however, annual reports indicate that Home Service has flourished this year. Units have expended $794,000 in the Home Service program while approximately 24,000 volunteers have contributed 940,000 hours. Among this volume of volunteers, 1,350 earned their 50-hour pins of which 605 were non-affiliated volunteers. The Home Service segment of the program is reminiscent of a golden era of domesticity when ladies would get together for group projects. Lap robes, wheelchair bags, tray decorations, baked goods, and a variety of handmade gifts are among the products of the Home Service program. Periodically, it was the labors of Home Service activities which stocked Christmas Gift Shops.

In order to evaluate the overall effectiveness and the scope of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program, the segments of Hospital Service, Field Service, and Home Service must be aggregated. These efforts when coupled with the added focus of Fisher Houses and the Hospitalized Veterans Writing Program represent a truly outstanding effort in serving our veterans. Today, we serve our veterans who earlier served us.

VA Hospital/Facility Volunteer Service
Mrs. JoAnn Shafer, Illinois, Director

American Legion Auxiliary VA Hospital Facility Volunteers accepted the challenge to change with the times as they continued to provide services with the same dedication as given in the past. There were no specific goals set, in this program phase, other than to encourage recruitment of VolunTeens and to promote the $500 cash award.

Reports from 37 Departments representing 219 facilities reflected hosting 11,643 activities which served 654,875 veterans and totaled $1,964,603. Regularly scheduled volunteers numbered 12,066 giving 657,640 hours. VolunTeens numbered 1,229 donating 49,457 hours, 1,613 non-affiliate volunteers gave 59,417 hours and 159,223 occasional hours were expended. New adult volunteers totaled 878 with an additional 414 new VolunTeens added for the year.

A broad variety of activities were hosted across the country with only a portion highlighted within this report.

Iowa City VAMC hosted a Golf Tournament for blind patients. Volunteers assisted by accompanying the golfers throughout the tournament. Participating veterans came from surrounding states to compete. The event ended with a banquet at a nearby American Legion Post where prizes were awarded. *KWCH Channel 12 TV*, Benton, Kansas recognized A.L.A. Hospital Representative Mary L. Folle as Volunteer of the Year during the local volunteer promotion in May 1997.

A West Virginia Unit provides refreshments and moral support to laryngectomy patients. A support group has been formed and are called The Lost Cord Club. Another Unit adopted the Palliative Care Unit at their Medical Center and provides the food and supplies needed for the "Family Room" when it is necessary for family to be near the veteran-patient.

The Department of Delaware was proud to be recognized by VA for having the most volunteers per organization at the VA Medical Center and provided year round activities. The Department of Massachusetts increased the number of volunteers by 97. Working together as a team seems to be the key to their success.

The Department of New York, Northport VAMC reported a successful recruitment drive in achieving 18 new volunteers for the year. The Department of Pennsylvania Commander and President visit all 14 facilities during December and distribute monetary

gifts and cards to all hospitalized veterans. The Coatsville, MD facility has a successful program in providing dogs for visits to veterans confined to the hospital.

The Department of Minnesota VA&R Chairman had a special project of recognizing the Hospital Representatives during April Volunteer recognition week. Published articles including volunteer pictures were used as a tool to increase awareness to volunteer recruitment. At Miles City VAMC, veterans enjoy the monthly parties provided by the Units and are treated to Strawberry Shortcake at the first hint of spring.

Comments expressed from the Department of Montana and South Dakota verify the welcome Christmas Gift Shop Days. The joy and appreciation expressed by veteran patients makes it all worthwhile and is the incentive to provide gifts each year.

The Department of Wyoming reports a "Pie and Plant Sale" for hospitalized veterans and volunteers and staff to raise funds to support patient activities and the Volunteer Recognition Dinner at Buffalo VAMC. At Cheyenne VAMC, garage sale profits provide funds to supply personal care items for patients as well as serving the needs of 19 homeless veterans with Christmas Gifts, haircuts and incentives to find employment.

Highlights from the Department of Florida reported supplying T-shirts for the VolunTeens while they are working at the VAMC. Junior members adopt veterans as grandparents to be remembered during the year. Juniors support the Bedside Movie Program, as well. The Department of Kentucky reported support of Fisher House with donations and contributions to National Wheel Chair Games.

The Department of Louisiana sponsors lodging for veterans traveling 75 miles or more who are coming to the medical center for early morning appointments. Over $3,000 has been expended this year for the lodging. The Department of Mississippi sponsors year-round programs with Unit volunteer support. The Unit members especially enjoyed a "Senior Prom" for a locked ward and the veteran-patients also enjoy the Mardi Gras Parade each year. The Department of North Carolina, reported a Unit that showed compassion above and beyond the call when members assisted a dying patient with legal services in estate matters just prior to his death.

The Department of South Carolina reported a full schedule of activities for hospitalized veterans. The Auxiliary Hospital Representative at Salem, Virginia VAMC initiated a catered luncheon for 250 veterans instead of the usual Christmas Gift Shop. Volunteers assisted wherever needed and distributed gift bags at the conclusion of the luncheon event. It was very successful.

The San Antonio VAMC has been working with youth volunteers for 8 years. The American Legion Auxiliary sponsorship of physically and mentally challenged students has accomplished service to veterans as well as developing a skill that will make them an employable citizen. A group of 13 VolunTeens have directed over 2,000 hours to the Auxiliary this past year. The Auxiliary sponsorship is in its 5th year.

Highlights from the Department of Arizona indicated the Veterans Writing Program doing well in all three medical centers and the Department will initiate the program at the State Veterans Home, soon. The Department of California volunteers were known as "Long Distance Runners–Going The Distance for Our Veterans." Publications encouraged an increase in volunteers. "Legion Day" at the California Veterans Home is always enjoyed by veterans and volunteers alike. Volunteers didn't lose a step as the change to VISNs created daily challenges.

A special project of Department of Idaho President in starting a Refreshment Center for the new Outpatient Clinic. Auxiliary members have sponsored a 14-year-old at-risk student for 5 years. Twenty-three students successfully completed the program in May and have shown appreciation to volunteers for caring enough to help them change their life-style and improve their self-image.

The Department of Oregon volunteers say they are few in numbers but contribute huge amounts of money and provide volunteer hours in giving the veterans the best care available. Departments of Utah and Washington reported successful programs of service and continue to serve their veterans with steadfast dedication.

The American Legion Auxiliary Volunteers, VolunTeens, Non-affiliate, Legion and Sons of The American Legion throughout this nation have proved that the Volunteer program for hospitalized veterans is needed. The volunteers message to veterans is "We Remember Your Sacrifice and We Care."

VAVS
Mrs. Helen Klimek, New York, Director

Enthusiasm displayed by the members at the Regional Workshops indicated our year of volunteer service to our veterans was off to a good start.

The 50th Anniversary VAVS National Advisory Committee Meeting held in Tampa, Florida in October 1996 was a time to celebrate the accomplishment of "Keeping The Promise" for the past fifty years. Almost 800 participants registered and this included many A.L.A. volunteers. The VHA Directive 1620 and VHA Handbook 1620.1 were presented and reviewed.

The James H. Parke Memorial Youth Scholarship recipient was Jennifer Nelson from the Butler, PA VA Medical Center. She was present to accept the $10,000 scholarship at the Parke Luncheon.

Additional scholarships presented were:

$4,000 Heather Widenmyer—Ft. Howard, MD VAMC

$2,000 Michelee Martindale—Salt Lake City, UT VAMC

$2,000 Jennifer Taylor—Gainesville, FL VAMC

During the luncheon, our National President presented, on behalf of the A.L.A., a check for $2,000.00 to the Parke Scholarship Fund. The VAVS National Advisory Committee Executive Committee meeting held in March 1997 gave me a greater insight into the workings of the VAVS. My appointment as a member of the selection committee for the James H. Parke Memorial scholarship for the coming year was accepted with pleasure.

Our Auxiliary members volunteer in 188 VA facilities and we have representation on 173 local VAVS committee. We have 24 associate representatives. At 132 facilities, our auxiliary had 100 percent organization representation at the quarterly VAVS meetings.

For Fiscal Year 1996, 5644 Regularly Scheduled volunteers served 567,535 hours, and 116,528 occasional hours were posted, with a grand total of 685,964 hours served at VA facilities as recorded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Annual Joint Reviews conducted by the representative and her VA Chief of Voluntary Service is the way our organization assesses our participation in VAVS programs during the preceding year and plans and goals are developed for the next year.

Out of 173 all but 34 reviews were received. A reminder from the Division Chairman to the Departments was sent out in February and in May another contact was made. Each representative was acknowledged for her completed review.

Quarterly minutes provide vital information from our VA facilities on our organization participation. In spite of staff shortages at VAMCs, approximately 650 sets of minutes were received from most of the facilities. Attendance taken from these minutes for the representatives and deputies was recorded and those having 100 percent attendance will receive a recognition award card.

Field Service
Mrs. C. Jane Dupuis, Louisiana, Director

Field Service Volunteers across America gave a grand performance in revitalizing this program. 266,165 veterans were served through 17,756 programs. There were 34,376 senior volunteers with an additional 2,291 VolunTeens spending a total of 1,172,127 hours in service. Additionally, there were 17,756 programs and $831,412 sent. These figures show an increase in volunteer hours, but a decrease in monetary contributions.

Fifty-one Departments were accounted for with six showing no activity. The work initiated by the Departments reflected their love and support of the veteran. 147 seniors were awarded 1,000 hour bars; 33 received 2,000 hour bars; with 49 volunteers receiving higher hour bars and six individuals each receiving 20,000 hour bars. What an exciting accomplishment for the Unit Auxiliary member working for our veteran.

All across America, departments were busy. In Pennsylvania nursing homes and state hospitals are visited regularly with "sit down visits" and special foods. On Memorial Day, Pennsylvania's favorite food--"Bean Soup" is served to all veterans as part of the commemoration. This dates back to the Civil War.

The Department of Ohio started the year off with a bang by having 12 Field Service Orientation courses held which recruited 158 new and active volunteers to visit shut-ins, nursing homes and Ohio State Veterans' Homes.

The Department of Arizona volunteers work with 11 adopted veterans and depending on their health, take them fishing, shopping, to ball games and especially like to take them into their homes for a special family meal. What a joy for their veterans who have no family.

One district in the Department of Minnesota sponsored a blanket project where Units provided funding to purchase new blankets for all the residents at one veterans home. The blankets were presented at Christmas to the veterans as a gift from the auxiliary members. They even added a reserve fund to provide replacements.

In Louisiana, a private nursing home converted one wing just for veterans. This nursing home is located in South Louisiana and is quite a distance from a VA facility. This enables the veteran to remain close to his family and allows the neighboring Units to provide Field Service volunteers to assist them.

We are so proud of the increase in Junior volunteer members. Thirty nine Juniors will receive a special citation from the National President and her pin for joining the rank of Field Service Volunteer. Juniors reported working in the "Salute to Hospitalized Veteran Week" and also remembered the veterans with Valentines. In addition, Seniors and Junior Field Service Volunteers were recognized during National Volunteer Week. The regional conferences were again a tremendous learning and sharing experience.

Seniors, Juniors, SALs and Non-affiliated Field Service Volunteers "*Promoted America*" through rendering service to our veterans. The curtain has fallen and Field Service Volunteers need to take a second bow and prepare for an encore.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President Phyllis Bachman

National President Phyllis Bachman of LaFargeville, New York was sworn into office at the organization's National Convention in September, 1996. Her theme was "Promoting America," and she sought to renew the American Legion Auxiliary's offensive against flag desecration, disrespect and crime against a backdrop of patriotism. She also placed emphasis on the development of responsibility in youth.

Americanism

The effort to "Promote America" and foster patriotism in our nation's children was extended in many ways. This year, the largest group ever attended the Auxiliary-sponsored Americanism Youth Conference at Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania — 91 high school students from 35 states participated. Over 25,000 students submitted essays entitled "Promoting America: An Awesome Challenge." Thirty-nine students received Department Girl Scout Achievement Awards, and members contributed $27,385 to the Spirit of Youth Fund.

Efforts to support the Citizens Flag Alliance in their quest to secure passage of a Flag Protection Amendment resulted in myriad rallies, letters, phone calls and literature distribution. Almost 120,000 flags were distributed to schools, businesses, hospitals, city offices, libraries and citizens.

Other Americanism activities included registering voters, planning "Kids Voting Days," helping with Naturalization of citizens and providing Americanism videos to schools.

Auxiliary Emergency Fund

"Women helping women" is the concept behind the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. When women of the Auxiliary find themselves in difficult situations with no where else to turn, they can turn to AEF. This year, Auxiliary members in 40 states received $202,042 in AEF relief. In the flood-ravaged states of last spring, $102,300 of those expenditures provided emergency cash for 113 households. The AEF worked closely with The American Legion National Emergency Fund to aid disaster-stricken members.

Funds for the AEF, raised in various ways such as bakeless food sales, white elephant sales, dinners and auctions, streamed in from 48 states and totaled just under $133,250. The Juniors provided help with the activities and donated personally.

Children and Youth

The American Legion Auxiliary has always had a heart for children. This year a total of 1.6 million children were reached through nearly one million volunteer hours with total expenditures of nearly $5 million. Aid to children came from many avenues: The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, the Spinoza Bear project (which provides comfort for terminally ill or distressed children), Project Oz (a violence prevention curriculum) and various child safety programs, such as the innovative Halloween Safety Coloring Book which was introduced by Phyllis Bachman this year.

Community Service

The caring reach of the American Legion Auxiliary has always encompassed the entire community. This year, emphasis was placed in four special areas: youth and their needs, caring for senior and physically-challenged citizens, environmental issues and other community activities. Units spent almost $1 million to support youth programs such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H clubs and teen court programs. A total of 623 schools and 702 classrooms were adopted. Over $750,000 was spent to help seniors and physically-challenged citizens. Units undertook building ramps and making necessary changes to community centers. Members cooked meals, mowed lawns, cleaned houses, planted flowers and ran errands for disabled persons. To help the environment, Units recycled waste,

adopted highways, cleaned up parks and planted flowers and trees. Units also contributed vast amounts of money and numerous volunteer hours to help such organizations as blood centers, women's crisis centers, hospices, election boards and others.

New this year was the Auxiliary's participation in "Make A Difference Day" on October 26, when Units joined with others across the nation for a day of serving their communities with special projects.

Education

Three major areas were emphasized in education this year: promoting scholarships, recognizing and rewarding, and volunteering with visibility. Scholarships helped hundreds of students further their education. The National Scholarships totaled $42,500, Departments awarded $148,800 and Units gave $775,700. Educators and staff were honored at breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, receptions, Unit meetings and Girls State banquets. Juniors figured largely in this recognition: 816 Junior members participated in Outstanding Teacher Programs, assisting with gifts and cards. Members from 350 Units visibly volunteered as they provided adult career enrichment opportunities through Career Days and Job Fairs.

Girls State/Girls Nation

Each year for over half a century, the prestigious Girls State/Girls Nation program has provided extraordinary young women from all over the country an opportunity to participate in a hands-on government education program.

This year over 25,000 high school juniors were selected by local American Legion Auxiliary Units to attend Girls State, where they learned the inside workings of the government on a state and local level.

Ninety-six of these young women from 48 states were then selected to go to Girls Nation, where they organized into political parties, elected party officials and prepared legislation in mock senate sessions. Anna Manasco of Alabama was elected Girls Nation President and she was inaugurated into office by Rep. Constance Morella of Maryland.

This year's Girls Nation participants met with Secretary of Defense William Cohen and reporter Lynn Sherr from ABC News' *20/20*, laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns, spent a day on Capitol Hill meeting with their Senators and Representatives, attended a press conference with Vice President Al Gore and culminated their week with a private visit to the White House where President Bill Clinton spoke to the assembly and met each girl individually.

The experiences from these two special programs go a long way toward preparing young women to be leaders of tomorrow.

Junior Activities

Juniors "Promoting America" and the American Legion Auxiliary "Promoting Juniors" went hand-in-hand throughout the year.

Juniors were invited and involved in every aspect of Auxiliary service. Members from 807 active Junior groups rolled up their sleeves and went to work, helping with blood drives and cancer drives, recycling, distributing flags, collecting goods for the needy and adopting "grandparents" at nursing homes. These young members volunteered at local hospitals, helped with Special Olympics and placed flags on the graves of deceased veterans. They wrote to their congressmen, lobbying for the Flag Protection Amendment, and were active

in their support of education programs. Honorary Junior President Jackie Reeves participated in this year's Awareness Assembly and met First Lady Hillary Clinton.

With 70 new groups organized and 48 groups reorganized, the Juniors are blossoming into a sturdy foundation for the future of the American Legion Auxiliary.

Legislative

The two primary legislative issues for this year were the passage of the GI Bill of Health and the Flag Protection Amendment.

Members from over 6,700 Units worked to influence passage of these two pieces of legislation. They lobbied their congressmen with over 87,000 letters, faxes and phone calls. Efforts on behalf of the Flag Protection Amendment were rewarded in June when the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Bill by a resounding 310 to 114 vote.

Membership

Membership is the foundation and strength of the American Legion Auxiliary. This year, the membership theme was "Command Performance," and the roster showed an enrollment of over 65,000 new members.

Poppy

The veteran is never far from the thoughts of American Legion Auxiliary members. Nothing symbolizes this better than the memorial Poppy. This year Units strove to increase awareness of the Poppy Program, exceed the status quo with new programs and incentives, and to further involve the Juniors. The results were that Poppy contributions totaled over $1,600,000 and Poppy orders increased by 400,000.

These contributions were reinvested into programs to enhance the lives of veterans.

Independent Auditor's Report

Independent Auditor's Report

Mr. Joseph J. Frank, National Commander
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statement of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters, and its wholly owned subsidiary, as of December 31, 1996, and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the year then ended. These consolidated financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. 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 audit provides 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 and subsidiary as of December 31, 1996, and the changes in their net assets and their cash flows for the year then ended, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

As further discussed in the notes to the financial statements, during the year ended December 31, 1996, the Legion changed its method of accounting to comply with Statement of Financial Accounting Standard (SFAS) No. 124.

Our audit was made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the basic financial statements taken as a whole. The reconciliation of audited financial statements to internal financial statements is presented for purposes of additional analysis and is not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the basic financial statements and, in our opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

Geo. S. Olive & Co. LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
March 31, 1997

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET
December 31, 1996

ASSETS	DECEMBER 31 1996
Cash	$286,491
Restricted cash	29,852
Accounts receivable	
Emblem Division	115,283
Publications Division	1,375,724
Other	1,402,620
Unbilled production costs	67,435
Inventories	
Emblem Division	1,562,214
Publications Division	245,750
Prepaid expenses and supplies	1,100,919
Prepaid pension expense	8,142,183
Deferred membership expense	38,413
Deferred direct membership solicitation expense	4,899,299
Postal deposits	108,107
	19,374,290
Investments	
Segregated for Designated Funds	13,794,906
Segregated for Washington, D. C. building	958,852
Overseas Graves Decoration Funds	905,261
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Funds	28,862,790
Other	20,058,264
Investment in affiliate	181,362
	64,761,435
Property, equipment, and intangible asset	
Land, Indianapolis parking lot	238,359
Washington, D. C. real estate	
Land	80,000
Building	4,116,940
Furniture, fixtures, and equipment	
National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana	9,420,187
Washington, D. C. building	1,525,991
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	793,624
Goodwill	303,372
	16,478,473
Accumulated depreciation and amortization	(9,985,370)
	6,493,103
Total assets	$90,628,828

See notes to financial statements.

LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCES	DECEMBER 31 1996
Liabilities	
Accounts payable	$2,454,542
Cash overdraft	829,220
Deposits on Emblem merchandise sales	158,805
Deferred advertising income	87,372
Deferred dues income	20,102,896
Deferred income—direct membership solicitation	818,543
Accrued vacation benefits	572,929
Note payable—line of credit	94,815
Other liabilities	700,001
Long-term debt	535,449
Deferred dues income, Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	24,129,631
Total liabilities	50,484,203
Net Assets	
Unrestricted, general	8,017,150
Unrestricted, designated	
Computer reserve	500,000
Real estate reserve	838,412
Convention reserve	100,000
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000
Convention stabilization fund	165,699
Restricted fund	11,505,497
Reserve fund	2,260,321
Oratorical	280,203
Life Insurance Trust funds	4,136,834
Paid-Up-For-Life	4,738,159
Citizens Flag Alliance	181,362
Others	56,033
	32,879,670
Temporarily Restricted	
Relief fund	529,285
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	968,235
Samsung scholarship	315,767
Others	451,668
	2,264,955
Permanently Restricted	
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000
Total net assets	40,144,625
Total liabilities and net assets	$90,628,828

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF REVENUE, EXPENSES AND CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES: Year Ended December 31, 1996

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
REVENUE						
National dues	$24,001,487	$1,383,984	$25,385,471			$25,385,471
Sales	1,041,941		1,041,941			1,041,941
Sales of Emblem items	6,517,637		6,517,637			6,517,637
Advertising	7,214,913		7,214,913			7,214,913
Investment income	845,982	2,228,499	3,074,481	$ 306,418		3,380,899
Net realized gains (losses)	(569)	298,494	297,925	58,550		356,475
Direct membership solicitation	1,550,085		1,550,085			1,550,085
Revenue enhancement	818,625		818,625			818,625
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation income	524,339		524,339			524,339
Amounts withdrawn from The American Legion Life Insurance Plan	1,207,591	(1,207,591)				
Contributions	359,027		359,027	1,531,216	$5,000,000	6,890,243
Other	6,424,138	806,973	7,231,111			7,231,111
	50,505,196	3,510,359	54,015,555	1,896,184	5,000,000	60,911,739
Net assets released from restriction	1,470,969		1,470,969	(1,470,696)		
Net assets released from designation	1,813,844	(1,813,844)				
Total revenues, gains and other support	53,790,009	1,696,515	55,486,524	425,215	5,000,000	60,911,739
EXPENSES						
Salaries	9,256,941		9,256,941			9,256,941
Employee benefits	1,455,831		1,455,831			1,455,831
Cost of sales	3,688,477		3,688,477			3,688,477
Selling, general, and administrative	385,321	94,795	480,116			480,116
Paid-Up-For-Life		1,024,915	1,024,915			1,024,915
Direct publication	12,430,910		12,430,910			12,430,910
Executive and staff travel	949,936		949,936			949,936
Commission and committee	1,239,721		1,239,721			1,239,721
Operational	7,921,674		7,921,674			7,921,674
Office and postage	3,978,815		3,978,815			3,978,815
Occupancy	2,770,833		2,770,833			2,770,833
Special projects and programs	5,018,637	4,216,556	9,235,193			9,235,193
Total expenses	49,097,096	5,336,266	54,433,362			54,433,362
Change in Net Assets Before Net Unrealized Gains (Losses)	4,692,913	(3,639,751)	1,053,162	425,215	5,000,000	6,478,377
Net Unrealized Gains (Losses)	(192,798)	550,137	357,339	39,551		396,890
Change in Net Assets	4,500,115	(3,089,614)	1,410,501	464,766	5,000,000	6,875,267
Net Assets, Beginning of Year, as previously reported	7,716,745	19,521,244	27,237,989	1,788,556		29,026,545
Cumulative effect of change in accounting method	290	4,230,890	4,231,180	11,633		4,242,813
Net Assets, Beginning of Year, as restated	7,717,035	23,752,134	31,469,169	1,800,189		33,269,358
Transfer of funds	(4,200,000)	4,200,000				
Net Assets, End of Year	$ 8,017,150	$24,862,520	$32,879,670	$2,264,955	$5,000,000	$40,144,625

See notes to financial statements.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
Year Ended December 31, 1998

OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Change in net assets	$6,875,267	
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities		
Depreciation and amortization	1,673,446	
Gain on sale of investments	(356,475)	
Unrealized gains on investments	(396,890)	
Contributions restricted for long-term investment	(5,000,000)	
Changes in		
Restricted cash	(1,548)	
Accounts receivable	719,861	
Unbilled production costs	(29,519)	
Prepaid pension expense	(1,076,216)	
Inventories	(272,724)	
Prepaid expenses and supplies	(883,880)	
Deferred expenses	(1,205,667)	
Postal deposits	(28,107)	
Accounts payable	(183,682)	
Deposits on emblem sales	(135,081)	
Deferred advertising	26,495	
Deferred income	1,907,961	
Accrued vacation	19,137	
Other liabilities	457,453	
Net cash provided by operating activities		$2,109,831
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of property and equipment	(329,228)	
Purchase of investments	(71,410,727)	
Sales and maturities of investments	64,898,388	
Net cash used by investing activities		(6,841,567)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Proceeds from contributions restricted for investment in endowment	5,000,000	
Payments on capital lease	(3,419)	
Reduction of long-term debt	(55,568)	
Cash overdrafts	(73,417)	
Net cash provided by financing activities		4,867,596
NET INCREASE IN CASH		135,860
CASH, BEGINNING OF YEAR		150,631
CASH, END OF YEAR		$ 286,491
SUPPLEMENTAL CASH FLOWS INFORMATION		
Cash paid for interest		$57,773

See notes to financial statements.

NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General

The American Legion National Headquarters (the Legion) is a national veterans' organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on Sept. 16, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Organization 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."

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles 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, gain, and losses and other changes in net assets during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

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). All material interorganizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes and Partners Communications Inc., an Indiana corporation, engages in the creation and management of accountable and measurable direct response advertising and marketing strategies. HPC's wholly owned subsidiary, Promotion Management Inc., provides targeted communications, computer services and direct response analysis to not-for-profit organizations, financial institutions, governmental offices, retailers and other entities engaged in direct marketing activities. The majority of their sales are to the Legion. The remaining sales are made primarily in the State of Indiana.

Accounts Receivable

The direct charge-off method is used to account for losses in collection of accounts receivable. An allowance for uncollectible accounts receivable is considered unnecessary by the Legion and HPC because all significant accounts expected to be uncollectible have been written off.

Unbilled Production Costs

HPC records time incurred on approved projects each day at standard billing rates (based on the employees' years of experience, job quote, market conditions, etc.). Production time is accumulated daily and is recorded as either unbilled production time, accounts receivable (when billed) or written off as uncollectible. Production costs also include the cost, plus a standard mark-up, for purchases from outside vendors.

Inventory

Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale and magazine paper and publication rights and are stated at the lower of cost or market. Supplies which are not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments

Investments are carried at fair value. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statement 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 are capitalized at cost. The Legion provides for depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designed to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation on the Washington, D. C. building is computed on the straight-line method using a 30-year life.

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.

Income

Dues are recognized as income in 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 the direct membership solicitation is recognized in the applicable membership period (calendar year) and the expenses incurred to obtain these memberships are deferred and written off in the period in which the income is recognized.

The Legion is involved in various revenue enhancement programs. The revenue and expenses related to the programs are recognized in the periods to which they apply.

Income from The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation is recorded when received. These receipts are for projects and programs conducted in the year of receipt.

Accounting Changes

The Legion has adopted the provisions of Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 124, *Accounting for Certain Investments Held By Not-For-Profit Organizations*. SFAS No. 124 requires that investments in equity securities with readily determinable fair values and all investments in debt securities be reported at fair value with gains and losses included in the statement of activities. The cumulative effect of this accounting change was an increase to net assets at the beginning of the year totaling $4,242,813.

INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

During 1994, the Legion in conjunction with approximately 80 other organizations created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA, Inc.) for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

To support these efforts, the Legion invested $4,200,000 in the program during 1996, and CFA, Inc. recognized a net loss of $4,216,556 during 1996, and, accordingly, the Legion's investment in the affiliate has been reduced by this amount, and a corresponding charge has been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets.

INVESTMENTS

	Segregated for Designated Fund	Segregated for Washington, D.C. Building	Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	Paid-Up For-Life Fund	Other
			Market		
U.S. Government obligations	$13,393,464	$941,912	$890, 863	$9,556,988	$8,957,284
Corporate bonds					242,305
Common and preferred stocks				12,818,213	
Mutual funds					3,349,927
Nongovernment obligations				4,185,470	
Money market accounts	272,474			2,043,193	6,444,059
Certificates of deposit					935,099
Accrued interest	128,968	16,940	14,398	258,926	129,590
	$13,794,906	$958,852	$905,261	$28,862,790	$20,058,264
			Cost		
U.S. Government obligations	$13,357,766	$945,477	$893,316	$9,471,049	$9,183,223
Corporate bonds					246,423
Common and preferred stocks				8,163,728	
Mutual funds					3,248,005
Nongovernment obligations				4,187,736	
Money market accounts	272,474			2,043,193	6,444,059
Certificates of deposit					935,099
Accrued interest	128,968	16,940	14,398	258,926	129,590
	$13,759,208	$962,417	$907,714	$24,124,632	$20,186,399

	Market	Cost
Unrestricted	$10,219,271	$10,411,779
Unrestricted–designated	47,710,484	42,929,458
Temporarily restricted	1,650,317	1,599,133
Permanently restricted	5,000,000	5,000,000
	$64,580,072	$59,940,370

RESTRICTED AND RESERVE FUNDS

The Restricted Fund, a designated fund, is restricted as to use by action of the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. Earnings of the Fund, as well as principal, can be expended only on the 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 American Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income to the Restricted Fund. There were no transfers in 1996.

The Reserve Fund, a designated fund, also is restricted as to use by action of the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. Earnings of the Fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion, but the principal can be expended only: (a) By action of the Legion at its national convention, or (b) By two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

OVERSEAS GRAVES DECORATION FUND

The earnings of the Overseas Graves Decoration Fund are being used to honor, preserve and decorate the graves of those who served in the United States armed forces who are buried overseas. The Fund is to continue at the will of the National Convention of the Legion or the National Executive Committee. The Fund's trust agreement may be amended, changed or succeeded at the will of the National Executive Committee, provided that the purpose for which the Fund was created is retained.

PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP

In October, 1974, 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 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.

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 will be administered by the Legion.

AMERICAN LEGION ENDOWMENT FUND CORPORATION

The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (the Endowment Fund) was incorporated in 1925 as a not-for-profit corporation with perpetual existence to act as trustee for the American Legion Endowment Fund, which was created to provide permanent funding for rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans. In August, 1946, the Legion transferred securities having a market value of $2,001,000 to the Endowment Fund. The assets transferred have been held segregated by the Endowment Fund and the principal related to the 1946 transfer, which had a market value of $2,099,295 at December 31, 1996, may be withdrawn by the Legion, if needed, for rehabilitation of veterans or assistance to orphans of veterans.

Income earned on the investments of the Endowment Fund, net of administrative expenses, is payable to the Legion to support its programs for the above-mentioned purposes. Income from the Endowment Fund amounted to $524,339 in 1996.

LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

In connection with The American Legion's Life Insurance Plan, the Legion had created a Trust to which the First National Bank of Kansas City, Missouri, as Trustee, held legal title. During October, 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Life Insurance Trust. This dissolution occurred during April, 1993. On the date of dissolution, funds remaining in the Plan totalling $4,285,984 were transferred to a non-trust sub-account (The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion for the use of youth programs. The American Legion Life Insurance Plan is included with the restricted funds in the accompanying financial statements.

Subsequent to the dissolution of the Trust, the funds of The American Legion Life Insurance Plan are used primarily for youth programs. The Legion's National Executive Committee has approved partial funding of the Oratorical contest, Boys' Nation, American Legion Baseball, and other programs of the Legion. By December 31, 1996, $1,100,000 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs in 1997.

LINE OF CREDIT

HPC has a 250,000 line of credit expiring in July, 1997. at December 31, 1996, there was $94,815 borrowed against this line. The line is collaterized by substantially all of HPC's assets. Interest is charged at 1.2% above the bank's prime rate, which was 8.25% on Dec. 31, 1996 and is payable monthly.

LONG-TERM DEBT

Long-term debt consists of the following:

Note payable—9.45% (bank's prime rate plus 1.2%) payable in monthly payments of $4,167, plus interest, final payment due February, 1999, collaterized by substantially all assets of HPC.	$154,721
Note payable—13.46% payable in monthly payments of $329 including interest, final payment due February, 1997.	659
Obligations under capital leases	380,069
	$535,449

Maturities of long-term debt are as follows:

Years Ending December 31	
1997	$ 360,574
1998	120,154
1999	50,000
2000	4,721
	$ 535,449

$188,000 of notes are guaranteed by the Legion.

LEASES

The Legion is obligated under a capital lease for computer equipment that expires during 1998. The gross amount of equipment and related accumulated amortization recorded under capital leases are as follows:

December 31, 1996	
Computer equipment	$1,006,050
Accumulated amortization	(625,832)
	$ 380,218

Amortization of assets held under capital leases is included with depreciation expense.

The Legion and HPC also have several noncancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, copiers and cash registers, that expire over the next four years. Rental expense for these leases totaled $784,713.

Future minimum lease payments under operating leases and the present value of future minimum capital lease payments are as follows:

Years Ending December 31	Capital Leases	Operating Leases
1997	$335,347	$596,787
1998	75,006	322,870
1999		305,714
2000		300,962
Total minimum lease payments	410,353	$1,526,333
Amounts representing interest	(30,284)	
Present value of net minimum capital lease payments	$380,069	

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through November, 1997. According to the terms of the lease, in lieu of rental payments the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, as well as provide adequate insurance on the building. The cost of maintenance approximated $372,000 in 1996. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

INCOME TAXES

No income tax expense was recorded in 1996 and 1995.

The following is a reconciliation of income taxes at the federal statutory rate to actual income tax recorded by HPC.

December 31, 1996	
Federal statutory income tax at 34%	$ 129,051
Graduated tax rates	(11,250)
Decrease in valuation allowance	(117, 801)
Actual tax expense	$ 0

At December 31, 1996, HPC has utilized all of its operating loss carryforwards remaining for financial reporting purposes.

FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

December 31, 1996	
Program Services	
Veterans Affairs	$27,624,299
Children and Youth Activities	3,058,071
Flag Education and Legislation	4,216,556
Direct Response Advertising and Marketing	817,830
	35,716,756
Supporting Services	
Management and General	12,100,746
Membership	5,348,617
Fundraising	1,267,243
Total expenses	$54,433,362

TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Temporarily restricted net assets are available for the following purposes or periods:

December 31, 1996	
Veterans Affairs	
Disaster relief program activities	$ 529,285
Overseas Graves Decoration fund activities	968,235
Samsung scholarships	315,767
Children and Youth Program activities	451,668
	$2,264,955

NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of either events specified by donors.

Purpose restrictions accomplished	
Relief Programs	$ 277,000
Overseas Graves Decoration	51,388
Baseball Programs	1,123,634
Korean War Memorial	9,149
Other	9,798
Total net assets released from restrictions	$1,470,969

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 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 Dec. 31, 1996.

December 31, 1996	
Actuarial present value of benefit obligations	
Vested benefit obligation	$ (15,747,029)
Nonvested benefit obligation	(600,259)
Accumulated benefit obligation	$ (16,347,288)
Projected benefit obligation for service rendered to date	$ (17,891,331)
Plans assets at fair value, primarily listed stocks bonds, and U.S. securities	34,052,451
Plan assets in excess of projected benefit obligation	16,161,120
Unrecognized net gain	(7,686,830)
Prior service cost not yet recognized in net periodic pension cost	1,054,239
Unrecognized net asset at end of year	(1,386,346)
Prepaid pension expense	$ 8,142,183

Net pension benefit included the following components:

Service cost-benefits earned during the year	$ 651,038
Interest cost on projected benefit obligation	1,262,654
Actual return on assets	(1,286,223)
Net amortization and deferral	(1,478,888)
Net pension benefit	$ (851,419)

Assumptions used in accounting for the pension plan were:

Discount rate	7%
Rate of compensation increase	3
Expected long-term rate of return on assets	7

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.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

RECONCILIATION OF AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS TO INTERNAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

Year Ended December 31	1996
Change In Net Assets— Internal Financial Statements	$4,692,913
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses) not included in internal financials	
Unrestricted designated	(3,639,751)
Temporarily restricted	425,215
Permanently restricted	5,000,000
	6,478,377
Net unrealized gains (losses)	
General	(192,798)
Unrestricted designated	550,137
Temporarily restricted	39,551
Change In Net Assets— Audited Financial Statements	$6,875,267

American Legion Endowment Fund

American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation

Foreseeing the necessity of a recurring income source for funding its war veterans rehabilitation and child welfare programs, The American Legion conducted a national campaign in 1925 which raised approximately $5 million for this purpose. The funds contributed were entrusted to the custody of the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation.

The Corporation was incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware in 1925 and a trust agreement between The American Legion and the Corporation was signed in accordance with which the funds are administered by the Corporation with the annual net investment income being paid to The American Legion for use in the two programs involved.

The operations and financial condition of The American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation for each of the last five years are summarized below (taken from the annual audit report prepared by Geo. S. Olive & Co. LLC, Indianapolis, Indiana).

December 31	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992
Total assets (1)	$8,694,667	$8,162,289	$7,846,801	$7,867,425	$7,802,473
Investments (1)	$7,830,853	$7,991,301	$7,644,325	$7,665,491	$7,595,545
Interest income	$539,900	$575,688	$550,155	$568,759	$652,342
Contributions	765,598	7,552			
Net realized gains	48,948	60,891			
Net unrealized gains (losses)	(258,531)	424,307			
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and Children and Youth Programs of The American Legion National Headquarters (2)	(500,367)	(496,538)			
Other expenses	(39,533)	(48,226)	(46,472)	(26,594)	(32,304)
Change in net assets	$556,015	$523,674	$503,683	$542,165	$620,038
Funds transferred to The American Legion (3)	$524,339	$550,057	$537,035	$544,071	$547,467
Average yield on value of investments	6.83%	7.42%	7.85%	7.37%	7.78%

(1) For 1995 and 1996, investments are included at fair value in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 124, contributions are recorded in accordance SFAS 116, and the financial statements are prepared in accordance with SFAS 117.
(2) Accrual basis
(3) Cash basis