108th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 108–157

PROCEEDINGS OF 85*th* NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

St. Louis, Missouri

August 26–28, 2003

2003 : 85th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 2003

108th Congress, 2d Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 108–157

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 85TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION PROCEEDINGS OF THE 85TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI FROM AUGUST 26, 27, AND 28, 2003 AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

FEBRUARY 4, 2004.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, February 4, 2004.

Hon. DENNIS HASTERT,
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 85th annual National Convention held in St. Louis, Missouri from August 26, 27, and 28, 2003 and a report on our organization's activities for the year preceding the convention.

Sincerely,

STEVE A. ROBERTSON,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

CONTENTS

	Page
National Conventions and Officers of The American Legion, 1919–2003	IX
Tuesday Session—August 26, 2003	
Call to Order—National Commander Ron Conley	1
Invocation—National Chaplain Rev. Norris A. Keirn	1
Remarks—National Commander Ron Conley	2
Address—Elsie Bailey, National President, American Legion Auxiliary	2
Presentations:	
Spirit of Service Awards	5
The American Legion Youth Champions	7
Addresses:	
MG Michael D. Rochelle, Commanding General, U.S. Army Recruiting Command	10
Honorable Bob Holden, Governor of the State of Missouri	11
Honorable Francis G. Slay, Mayor of St. Louis, MO	13
Clark E. Pointer, Commander, Department of Missouri	13
James F Mareschal, President, American Legion Nat'l Convention Corporation of Missouri	14
Special Presentation—To Tom Lowe, President, First American Financial Services	14
Addresses:	
Honorable Robert R. Simmons, U.S. House of Representatives	15
MG John Herring (USA Ret.), Secretary, American Battle Monuments Commission	17
National Commander's Convention Report	18
Address: Honorable Christopher Bond, United States Senate	25
Reading of Convention Call—National Adjutant Robert Spanogle	27
Presentation—Plaque of Appreciation to Charlotte, NC for hosting 84th Convention	29
Address—Neal Warnken, National Commander, Sons of The American Legion	29
Greetings:	
Raymond Musgrave, President General, National Society, Sons of the American Revolution	30
Bob Cassels, Dominion President, Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada	30
Jack Frost, Dominion Vice President, Royal Canadian Legion	32
Reports of Committees:	
Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I	33
Legislation and Rules	35
Finance	36
Address—Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United States	37
Wednesday Session—August 27, 2003	
Call to Order—National Commander Ron Conley	43
Addresses:	
Vice Admiral James Metzger, Asst. to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff	44
Honorable Christopher Smith, U.S. House of Representatives	47
Honorable Jim Marshall, U.S. House of Representatives	51
Honorable Timothy Murphy, U.S. House of Representatives	55
Awards:	
Garland E. Murphy, Jr. Award	58
Child Welfare Foundation Legacy Award	58

Page

Addresses:
Honorable Ciro Rodriguez, U.S. House of Representatives 59
Honorable Anthony Principi, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs 62
Mike Shannon, Co-Founder/CEO, Children's Miracle Network 66
Presentation—American Legion Distinguished Service Award to Drs. Jeanne and Steven Stellman 67
Report—Major Gen. Patrick Brady (USA Ret.) Chrman, Citizens Flag Alliance 68
Addresses:
CPT Richard Stratton (USN, Ret.), Former POW 72
Gen. Teng Tsu-lin, Chairman (Ret.), Veterans' Affairs Commission, Republic of China 73
Report—Committees on Employment and Veterans' Preference and Other Economic Matters 75
Presentations
Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans 78
Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year Award ... 79
Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) of the Year Award 79
Employment Service Officer of the Year Award 80
Addresses:
LuWanda Ford, Founder, Pocket Flag Project 80
Rex Loesby, President, Colorado Yule Marble 82
Report—Committee on Americanism 83
Presentations:
Frank N. Belgrano Jr. Trophy 85
Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy 85
William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy 85
The American Legion National Law Officer of the Year Award 85
Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion 86
Report—Committee on Children and Youth 87
Addresses:
Honorable Anita Yeckel, Missouri State Senate 88
Honorable Russell Carnahan, Missouri House of Representatives 89
Report—Committee on Credentials and Other Membership Matters, Section III 89
Presentation—Department Membership Awards 90
Report—Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation 91
Presentation—William F. Lenker National Service Trophy 102
Reports:
Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II 102
Committee on Constitutional Amendments 105

Thursday Session—August 28, 2003
Call to Order—National Commander Ron Conley 107
Presentation—Fourth Estate Award 107
Statement of Support—Craig Duehring, Principal Deputy Asst. Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Employer Support of The Guard and Reserve ... 108
Reports:
Committee on Foreign Relations 109
Committee on National Security 114
Final Remarks—National Commander Conley 129
Address—Letter from Honorable Tom Daschle, United States Senate 131
Presentation—National Vice Commanders to Outgoing National Commander . 132
Election of National Commander 133
Address—National Commander, John A. Brieden, III 140
Election of National Vice Commanders 144
Greetings—Katherine Morris, President, American Legion Auxiliary 149
Benediction—Outgoing National Chaplain, Rev. Norris A. Keirn 150

Appendix

Annual Awards 151

The American Legion 85th Annual Report

Forward, National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle 159
Excerpts from the Constitution of the Amerian Legion 160
National Executive Committee 163

Page

Reports of National Vice Commanders:
- Jefferson P. Luginbuel, Jr., Colorado 164
- Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana 165
- Robert M. Johnson, Maryland 167
- Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire 168
- Donovan Ray Mason, South Dakota 170

Reports:
- National Chaplin 172
- National Historian 173
- National Judge Advocate 174
- Administrative Services 184
  - Library and Museum 185
  - Internet Operations 187
  - Information Technology 188
- Americanism Commission 188
  - Counter-Subversive Activities Committee 192
  - National Committee on Education 193
- Children & Youth Commission 195
  - American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc. 207
- Convention Commission 209
  - Economic Commission 210
  - Employment Committee 213
  - Veterans Preference Committee 214
- Finance Commission 215
  - Emblem Committee 215
  - American Legion Insurance Committee 216
- Foreign Relations Commission 218
- Internal Affairs Commission 222
  - Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee 222
  - Resolutions Assignment Committee 223
  - Constitution and By-Laws Committee 223
  - Membership and Post Activities Committee 223
  - The Sons of The American Legion 225
- Legislative Commission 227
  - National Security Commission 255
  - Aerospace Committee 260
  - Defense Civil Preparedness Committee 260
  - Law and Order Committee 261
  - Merchant Marine Committee 262
  - Military Affairs Committee 262
  - National Security Council 263
  - Naval Affairs Committee 263

Public Relations Commission 263
American Legion Magazine Commission 265
Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission 266
Report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary 291
Consolidated Financial Statements with Supplementary Information 295

FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive resumé, in as small space as possible, of what took place at the Eighty-fifth Annual National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26-28, 2003.

The final report of the National Organization, for the period ending December 31, 2002, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2002 and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002 are included in the Summary.

To make a quick distribution, speed has been necessary. Every precaution has been taken to avoid errors, but some may have occurred in the rush of Convention events and the haste of editing and printing.

Permission is hereby given to quote from this Summary without further consent. However, because of the nature of our resolution process, I urge that the full text of any or all *resolve clause(s)* is used when a quotation from a resolution is required for publication.

Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutamt

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Jefferson "Jeff" Luginbuel, Colorado; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana; Robert M. Johnson, Maryland; Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire; Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS
THE 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 CONVENTION
Cleveland, Ohio, September 27 to 29, 1920
Commander: Franklin D'Olier*, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: James O'Brien*, California; Allan A. 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
Judge: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

3rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Missouri, October 31 to November 2, 1921
Commander: Frederic W. Galbraith, Jr. *, (died 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 P. 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 F. Albert*, Idaho; Celora M. Stoddard*, Arizona; William B. Healey*, Pennsylvania; F. Ryan Duffy*, Wisconsin;
Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington Resigned 2-1-24; 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;
Judge 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; Dr. 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 F. 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 to 6-24-31 Succeeded by Acting Judge Advocate: 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. Harris 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 E. Easterwood, Jr.*, Texas; John J. Maloney*, Maine; Chas. A. Mills*, Florida
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Irwin Q. Wood*, Idaho
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, 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. Msgr. Thomas D. Kennedy*, Missouri
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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 A.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, D.D.*, Texas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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 Commanders: Drury M. Phillips*, Texas; Phil M. Conley*, West Virginia;
Harry M. Johnson*, Montana; James F. Daniel, Jr.*, South Carolina;
James R. Mahaffy*, Hawaii
Adjutant: Frank E. Samuel*, Kansas
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank J. Lawler*, Illinois
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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*, Nebraska
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Patrick N. McDermott*, Iowa
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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 R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

24th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Kansas City, Missouri, September 19 to 21, 1942
Commander: Lynn U. Stambaugh*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: W.C. Sawyer*, Arizona; William DeLacy 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 R. 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: Dr. Paul De Forrest Mortimore*, Idaho
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

26th NATIONAL CONVENTION
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 Al Mulrooney, Delaware; Hector G. Staples*, Maine
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John F. McManus*, Kansas
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. 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 R. 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 R. Ruddick*, Indiana, (died 7-13-45) Succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

29th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, August 28 to 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'Neil*, New Hampshire
Vice Commanders: LeRoy William 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 Commanders: Milton G. Boock*, Minnesota; David H. Fleisher*, 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 H. 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 28, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*, Massachusetts;
Thomas E. Paradine*, New York; Oscar B. Rohiff*, 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 September 3, 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. Duffy*, 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*, Louisiana; 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 Advocate: 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 E. Stay, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. 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; Leo A. Lemos*, Rhode Island; Isadore E. Levine*, Indiana
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. 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 to 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: William 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: 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 H. Kretzler*, Washington; R. C. Godwin*, North Carolina
Adjutant: E .A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*, Tennessee
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Las 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: William 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

46th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Dallas, Texas, September 18 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. Fr. John J. Howard*, Virginia
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

47th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Oregon, August 20 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., August 30 to September 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 (died 4-21-67) Succeeded by Ernest N. Schmid 5-4-67 to 8-31-67
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, August 25 to 31, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich, Texas;
Harry V. Klein*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts;
James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William 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: Coleman Nolen*, Oklahoma; Louis R. J. Malo, Rhode Island;
Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edwin 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: William 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: William 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: William 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 Commanders: 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

54th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Chicago, Illinois, August 18 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. Fr. Paul J. Schwaab,* Nebraska
Historian: G. Greer McCallister*, Ohio
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

55th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Honolulu, Hawaii, August 17 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

56th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, August 16 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

57th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 15 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

58th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Seattle, Washington, August 20 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

59th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colorado, August 19 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: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

60th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, August 18 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: Frank C. Momsen*, Minnesota
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Walter D. Power*, Maryland
Historian: Arnold J. Stockstad*, North Dakota
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

61st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, August 17 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 15 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; Lawrence 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, August 28 to September 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: 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 20 to 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 19 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; Leo 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: James Clay McKee, Utah
Historian: Herberta T. Stark*, New Hampshire
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

67th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23 to 28, 1985
Commander: Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Robert S. Turner, Georgia; Harold E. Collett*, Idaho; Ronald D. Birk*, Kansas; Stewart Kunde*, Minnesota; Stephen J. Mikosky*, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Charles G. Rice, Jr.*, New York
Historian: Roy B. Mahoney, Florida
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

68th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Cincinnati, Ohio, August 29 to September 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. 'Sparky' 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 21 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, Sr.*, 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. Caouette, 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. Roý, 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 3 to 9, 1993
Commander: Roger A. Munson*, Ohio
Vice Commanders: Joseph V. Adams, Pennsylvania; Paul Andrejewski, Minnesota; Robert E. 'Jack' David, South Carolina; John William 'Bill' Murphy, Arizona; Louis A. 'Tony' Santillanes, New Mexico
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. James R. Wagner, Mississippi
Historian: Delfo Barabani, Massachusetts
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, Massachusetts; K. W. Ohl, Indiana; Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: 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, South Carolina
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey*, Nevada, (died 10-7-94) Appointed at 1994 Fall Meetings, Carl S. Wipperman, Washington
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, August 30 to September 5, 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, Tennessee
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds, Texas
Historian: R. Paul Tenney, Vermont
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

79th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Orlando, Florida, August 29 to September 4, 1997
Commander: Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
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 'Bobbe' Stuvengen, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, September 4 to 10, 1998
Commander: Anthony Jordan, Maine
Vice Commanders: Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm, Idaho; Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L. Moore*, Ohio; Robert E. Vass, West Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Henry E. Eisenhart, Pennsylvania
Historian: Tommy Mills, Mississippi
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Anaheim, California, September 3 to 9, 1999
Commander: Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Leo P. Burke, California; Roger L. Tingler, Georgia; James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando M. Goulart, Rhode Island; John D. Morris, Texas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. Sweeney
Historian: Robert L. Klipstine*
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 1 to 7, 2000
Commander: Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Vice Commanders: James F. Fraughnaugh, Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan; Robert Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert F. Neville, New York; L. Harry Easley, Washington
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David R. Brown, Louisiana
Historian: Robert Mead, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, August 24-30, 2001
Commander: Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdell, Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana; Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C. Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly, South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

84th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27-29, 2002
Commander: Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Vice Commanders: Russell H. Hanseter, Wisconsin; Charles R. John, Oklahoma; Terry D. Lewis, Pennsylvania; James F. Mareschal, Missouri; Dale R. Salmen, Nevada
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Dr. David F. Russell, Virginia
Historian: Walter L. Davis, Michigan
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

85th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Missouri, August 26-28, 2003
Commander: Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania
Vice Commanders: Jefferson "Jeff" Luginbuel; Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana;
Robert M. Johnson, Maryland; Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire;
Donavon R. Mason, South Dakota
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana
Historian: Donald F. Simons, Texas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

85TH ANNUAL Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 26, 2003

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

...At 9:17 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the 85th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Before we begin our program please join me in a round of applause for Peter Ole.

The 85th National Convention will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen please rise as the National Champion Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, Maryland presents the Colors. Please remain standing for the singing of the National Anthem, by Brenda Williams. Please stand. Color Guard.

...Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, Maryland presented the Colors, followed by the National Anthem, sung by Brenda Williams.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: For the Invocation, I call on our National Chaplain, Rev. Norris Keirn of Post No. 139, Sullivan, Indiana. Ladies and Gentlemen please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana, National Chaplain

Let us be in the spirit of prayer. Eternal and gracious Father, this indeed is the day that You have made. We shall rejoice and be glad in it. We come here this morning to give You glory and to express our thanks for blessing us with this great nation, and blessing our comradeship in The American Legion family.

We pray that You would send forth Your spirit upon us this day to touch hearts and minds making us one with You and one with another, that in all that we do and say this day. You will receive great glory. For it is in the honor of Your name that we pray. Amen.

As we gather for Convention we do so with a heavy heart. One of the men who has served The American Legion as National Commander has transferred to Post Everlasting. Frank I. Hamilton, Department of Indiana, National Commander 1979 to 1980, passed away August 17, 2003. Our time on earth is short. Commander Hamilton like many others lived to serve his fellow veterans. Through that service to America, they influenced the future.

Turn with me if you will to my right, your left, as we unveil a portrait of Frank I. Hamilton in his honor and memory.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Ladies and gentlemen please join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

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

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
Robert S. Turner, Georgia, Past National Commander
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado, Chairman Foreign Relations Commission

NATL COMDR CONLEY: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from World War II, Korea and Vietnam. We and The American Legion will never forget them. We will not ease the pressure on our government to do the right thing and to continue to work for an accounting of all those missing.

I ask Past National Commander Bob Turner, Chairman of the Special POW/MIA Committee and Tom Bock of Colorado, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission to place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty chair.

...At this time, the POW/MIA flag was placed on the Empty Chair.

Preamble To The American Legion Constitution
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

Please cover. Join me in reaffirming our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our great American Legion was founded by reciting the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.

...At this time, the Delegation recited the Preamble.

National Commander's Remarks
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania

Welcome to everybody here. I know it was a challenge to get through the security but it's going to be a longer day. Just so you're aware of it, if you do leave the hall and go back out past the secured area, you're going to have to then come back through the monitors again and be checked out. So be aware of that

We've had an opportunity to visit with all of you and we'll get in our speech a little bit later, but I want to thank you on behalf of my family for the great hospitality that everybody has extended to us over our visits this year. In case you wanted to know, I was trying to tap dance until madam President arrived. So I hope I did a good job. I'm not quite like Al Jolson, but I was trying to work at it.

During the past 12 months it's been an honor to serve side-by-side with our next guest. This inspiring woman was elected the 82nd National President of the American Legion Auxiliary in Charlotte. Throughout the year she has traveled extensively, telling people that America is pure in gold, and raising over $38,000.00 for the veterans Pot-of-Gold. All proceeds benefit various veterans' programs. She has held many offices in her years of volunteer service in the American Legion Auxiliary. Welcome the leader of the Nation's largest patriotic women's organization, member of Stevenson D'Alessio Unit 12 Department of New Jersey, National President, Elsie Bailey.

Address: Elsie Bailey
National President, New Jersey, the American Legion Auxiliary

To you wonderful Legionnaires, marvelous veterans, it is my pleasure to be here to address you this morning. To say hello to you, to have friendship for the next few days and forever and ever thereafter.

I want to commend you on the leadership that you elected this year. Your National Commander has been a true Legionnaire. He is the tallest advocate for veterans' benefits that I've ever seen in my life. We presented him with a hat yesterday that made him three feet taller! I thank you so much for giving him to me for a year to work with. I enjoyed meeting him, traveling with him. I enjoyed meeting his family. I think we've become forever family and forever friends.

I commend you for the work that you have been doing for God and country. When you served in the military service, you gave so much of yourselves, and as Legionnaires, you are still giving for God and country, for our kids and our veterans and I congratulate you. I am very proud to be a part of your family. I thank you for all that you have done throughout your life to help America.

My theme is "America, Pure Gold" and because of you, America really truly is pure gold. Thank you for the treatment you have given to me this year, the many courtesies. You've treated me like a queen. As I tell everybody, I've learned the queen's wave. I can do that wave for two more days and then I'm finished. I will be replaced by another marvelous lady who will lead our organization with pride and dignity. I wish you, Commander, lots of good luck in all of your future endeavors. I know you're not stopping and that when this week is over, you'll probably go on to bigger and better things.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Taller. I have a hat now, it makes me taller.

NATL PRES BAILEY: I'm so proud that I was able to make you three feet taller.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: You've made the organization three feet taller. I can't really say enough. We had a lot of fun. What was unique was our visit with Secretary Colin Powell. And this lady became star-gazed. When we flew in a helicopter over the Corregidor, I had to get my arm taken care of when we got back because she cut off the circulation in it. Other than that, we've had a pretty good year. She's very dignified, but she's very humble. And that's what's really great about her.

NATL PRES BAILEY: You mean I'm very chicken.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Humble. *Laughter.*

NATL PRES BAILEY: I did. He saved my life as we went across the Manila Bay but part of it was his fault. The helicopter doors never closed and at one particular moment the helicopter was kind of leaning. He said to me, "Look out down there." I don't know what he wanted me to look at. I didn't even know him very well but I grabbed his arm. I didn't care who he was and we became immediate friends. When he got out of that helicopter, he just shook his arm because the blood circulation was stopped. I didn't let go. But it was an experience to remember.

Colin Powell is another story. He just threw me for a loop when I met him. I was totally prepared not to be too impressed because I thought, well there are many important people who just tolerate you. But he didn't, he really cared what we had to say. I just totally fell apart. I couldn't hear him speak. I was just standing two feet from him and I didn't know what he was saying, and your National Commander had to take me back to life.

...Standing applause.

Remembrance

PREVIOUSLY RECORDED SAM GRAVES, Honoring the Fallen of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

ANNOUNCER: "For God and Country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes." How many times in our American Legion lives have we recited those opening words to the Preamble? In today's management terms, we call that a vision statement. Our Preamble, adopted right here in St. Louis, in May of 1919, provides a clear vision. Generations of American veterans, men and women alike, have joined to share the common bond of service and that continuing vision. The United States of America once again finds itself involved in a war, a war against terrorism. This time in our national history challenges us to preserve freedom for the citizens of our great Nation and to help freedom loving people in other lands break the shackles of tyranny and oppression. Yes, today, as in generations before, it is the blood of patriots purchasing an opportunity for others to experience what so many in our blessed land simply take for granted.

On March 20, 2003, the first Americans fell as our forces moved into Iraq. By the time President George Bush declared the end of combat operations just 42 days later, on May 1st, 139 American military men and women had given their lives.

Now during the opening moments of this 85th National Convention of The American Legion, let us remain seated in a mood of reflection as we remember each of those 139 brave Americans by reading their names and placing a red carnation at the Soldier's Cross. Listen to the names, their ages, their hometowns and remember.

...At this time the 139 names were read to the Delegation.

Continuing the Tradition

NATL CHAPLAIN KEIRN: Would you be with me in prayer. Lord, it's me again. As You can see, I'm here with a few of my buddies. Oh God, we stood before too many of these steel crosses. Why You took our buddy and You left us, we'll never know. We're here today because of this sacrifice. From the beginning of our organization, we stood before these steel crosses at the Meuse Argonne at Belleau Woods. We stood there in North Africa and Italy, Normandy and Berlin, Wake, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. We stood there at Inchon, the Pusan and the Chosan Reservoir. We stood there in Saigon, the Mekong Delta, the Central Highlands and we stood there at Khe Sahn. We stood there through Beirut and Lebanon, Grenada, Panama. We stood there through the storm. We stood there through the aggressions and the hostilities of the 90s and now, we stand here again.

Each of us in our own era, Lord, hoped and prayed, fought, sweat, died with the hope that this wouldn't happen again, that this would be the end. But You have foretold us that there would be wars and rumors of wars. And, Lord, all we can say is we're so thankful. We're so thankful of these brave young men and young women who love life so much that they gave it freely for the sake of this nation and for the nations' of the world.

Touch the hearts and the minds of the families that have been left behind. Send forth Your comforter to strengthen and to guide them. Help those of us who You've brought back to continue to hold high that torch that has been passed to us by these our brothers and sisters, that we may carry on the good work that You have commissioned us to, and continue to give Your glory. Give them peace and the wonders of Your heaven. We ask it in Your holy name. Amen.

...At this time "My Buddy", sung by Brenda Williams. *Applause.*

ANNOUNCER: Among those taking part in the remembrance of those who have given their lives in Iraq, were young men and women who are now ready to continue the tradition in serving in the United States Armed Forces. At this time the candidates for military service are seated on our stage and prepared to take the Oath of Enlistment. We are honor to have the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Major General Michael Rochelle with us to administer the Oath of Enlistment.

MAJ GEN ROCHELLE: It's my honor to administer the Oath of Enlistment today to these 41 individuals, men and women, who are about to embark on service to our great nation. In honor of the solemnity of the oath they are about to receive, I respectfully request that the members of the Dais please stand. I'm going to also request that all the members in the audience please stand as well.

Raise your right hand and repeat after me.

...At this time the new enlistees repeated the Oath of Enlistment.
...From the floor Applause.

ANNOUNCER: *As General Rochelle and Commander Conley offer their congratulations to the enlistees, we recognize that these young men and women will very soon be eligible for membership in the largest veterans' organization in the world. Accompanying the Commander and General Rochelle is the Chairman of the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, Marty Conaster of Illinois. He is presenting the recruits with an envelope. The envelope is labeled "Do Not Open Until 24 Hours After Active Military Service Begins." Because we know these are honorable men and women, we are confident they will not open the envelope until that time has come. Inside the envelope they will find a service pin and their membership card for The American Legion.*

Presentation of Blue Star Service Banners

ANNOUNCER: Next in the process of bonding with these new members of the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, we turn to their families, presenting them with a Blue Star Service Banner to display in their homes, a symbol of their

pride in these men and women. National Commander Conley and General Rochelle are now presenting a Blue Star Service Banner to a representative of these new service members families.

Since World War I, a Blue Star Banner displayed in the front window of a home told others that a family member was serving in the Armed Forces. As Legionnaires, we believe displaying a Blue Star Service Banner by families of service members, shows a family's pride in the service of their loved one. The Blue Star Service Banner honors and recognizes our men and women in uniform, and demonstrates to all Americans how many families have a personal stake in this war. Banners can be displayed for any relatives serving in the Armed Forces, not just sons and daughters. Today, Banners are displayed honoring husbands and wives, brothers, sisters, in-laws, cousins, mothers, fathers and grandchildren serving in the military, including activated members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Please accept these Blue Star Service Banners as a symbol of our commitment to you and those you bid farewell to today. Our Family Support Network is ready to help at home if needed. Our Service Officers are ready to help when those who serve return home.

For those who call themselves Legionnaires, this commitment to those in uniform brings quiet hometown efforts that make a difference.

Men and women who have returned from war inevitably come back changed. Some more that others. When they are wounded or disabled they and their families need help. That was our call to action in 1919. It remains a cornerstone of The American Legion today. We understand the need to take care of our comrades, our buddies.

Army PFC Sam Ross, 20, of Dunbar, Pennsylvania was severely injured in Iraq this past May. His left foot was amputated, he lost his sight in both eyes and suffered numerous other serious injuries. Healing will be a long process. But he will not be alone thanks to the Blue Star Banner Program. Pennsylvania Legionnaires found out about Sam through the Banner Program and were there to help bring his family to him when he was hospitalized. Legion Riders and other members of the Department helped raise money, and they stood by Sam and his family, and they plan to stick with him throughout his long recovery process, offering help and encouragement in any way they can.

And from now until forever, he shall be our comrade, our buddy. PFC Ross is like so many other heroes returning from this and other wars. Whether members of The American Legion or not, we have a responsibility to care for them, for their families and for their wonderful nation, this "One Nation Under God."

Presentation of Spirit of Service Awards

ANNOUNCER: It's now time to recognize five active duty military members for their off duty volunteer work. The American Legion's Spirit of Service Award honors a member of each branch of the military. The men and women receiving this award demonstrate the very heart of every Legionnaire, a heart for serving others. To receive this recognition the individual must be an outstanding military professional and be actively involved in volunteer projects in the community during off duty hours.

Volunteerism is at the heart of what The American Legion does. And it is the dedication to community volunteerism that keeps the Nation's largest veterans organization growing.

Joining National Commander Conley for the presentation of the 2003 awards is General Rochelle.

We begin the presentation by recognizing a man who has what his commanding officer calls, infectious enthusiasm for helping others. He has volunteered with Special Olympics in Louisiana the past three years. He is a volunteer with the Southern University Law Center. He is a mentor for young men at Baton Rouge Youth, an organization for at risk kids. He is also involved with the East Baton Rouge Parish Operations Sunshine bringing a message of hope to kindergarten children.

Finally, even in uniform, his volunteer spirit is obvious. During an extended deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, he volunteered to work with the Polish engineers in mine clearing even though he had never been trained. He became a battalion expert. The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Army goes to a member of the 769th Engineer Battalion Combat Heavy of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Staff Sgt. Jacob Lee Witte.

SGT. JACOB LEE WITTE: I thought I was going to be nervous getting up here but after standing at attention that long, this is a piece of cake. First of all, I want to thank The American Legion for bestowing this honor on me and my comrades. It is a great honor and I appreciate it. Second, I thank my mother, Teresa, not to be confused with Mother Teresa, but often in my eyes the same caliber of woman. And I thank my father, Bud Witte, who's up in heaven these days. He was also a retired military man and former Commander of Post 120, Wichita Falls, Texas. Finally and most importantly, I'd like to dedicate this award to a few hundred thousand soldiers, men and women who are over there doing their ultimate service for us, something they volunteered to do for us. I want to show them my appreciation.

ANNOUNCER: Our next honoree is a native of San Rafael, California. Her volunteer spirit began developing in high school. When she joined the United States Navy less than two years ago, it was just a natural extension of her commitment to others. She has been involved with the veterans' home in Yountville, California, and has visited veterans in other nursing homes to hear their stories.

After enlisting, she worked with perspective sailors in an effort to help them to achieve high scores. She even volunteered to work with others facing the physical fitness test and the rigors of boot camp. Now that she has completed technical school and is settled into a full-time billet, she can be found at the USO preparing care packages for overseas personnel and every Saturday, she greets visitors at the U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center in Washington, D.C.

The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Navy is presented to Crytologic Collection Technician, 3rd Class, Alysha Haran. Applause.

TECH 3RD CLASS ALYSHA HARAN: I'm very grateful for this award. Many of my shipmates and fellow service members around the world volunteer as much time and effort touching the lives of the people around them, as I. I am simply just the one being recognized today. So, I accept this award on behalf of them wherever they might be. It is an honor for me to be here amongst the living part of our history. We learn so much from you. Representing the current generation of the Navy as proudly as I can means nothing without the service and the sacrifice every past generation has made for this country for over 200 years. I believe in our veterans and that they are the heart of our armed service, and we the active duty members are the spirit. One cannot live without the other, because the heart ceases to exist without energy from the spirit and the spirit is lost without direction from the heart. It is an honor to serve in your footsteps that you bravely placed so many years ago.

ANNOUNCER: The 2003 Spirit of Service recipient for the United States Marine Corps is involved in a variety of volunteer activities. He gives his time to Special Olympic chapters in New Bern and Havelock, North Carolina. In Havelock he coordinated a bowling league for these special children. This motivated volunteer also spearheaded an effort to raise more than $4,200.00 for the American Cancer Society in the 2002 "Relay For Life." And in a little publicized activity, he has helped to place over 550 pets into temporary care for deploying service members as part of the Semper Fido program. His efforts include working with local merchants for donations of food and pet supplies for the adopted animals. The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Marine Corps goes to Sgt. Joseph M. Shamay, Jr., of Cherry Point, North Carolina.

SGT. JOSEPH SHAMAY: When I first started volunteering, I never thought of myself, I always thought of the children and everybody whom I was helping. It was something that was distilled in me from a young age starting from my father and my mother. I never really thought much of how much I put into it, I just took the extra time to see smiles and loving faces of these kids and adults that I helped with the special Olympics. And to receive this honor from the veterans and the community out there, is just something that, it's just unbelievable. It's all because of you, that's the reason why I'm here. Because if you didn't lead the footsteps and have something for me to step into, I don't know how I could have reached these goals.

ANNOUNCER: The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Coast Guard recognizes a man who has a positive influence on young kids. In less that 18 months, this Information Systems Technician stationed in Miami Beach, gave his off-duty time to work with Habitat for Humanity, the Coast Guard Mentor-In-School Program, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and the Riverside Baptist Church. His mentorship in various schools and church environments encompasses assisting in kindergarten class to working with 9th grade students. Because of his efforts with one particular student, her skills improved and she vowed to stay in school, graduate and attend college. For his church he is busy mentoring 15- to 19-year olds and gets his hands dirty helping construct staging for the Christmas pageant. Finally, he even took leave so he could chaperone a week long retreat at the West Palm Beach University for the youth department of his church. The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Coast Guard is awarded to Information Systems Technician 2nd Class, Rick C. Carroll.

IT2 RICK CARROLL: I always thought of the success of the programs that I was involved in would be all the things that I would get. The receipt of this award is more gratitude than I ever expected for my efforts. I feel a great honor and privilege to receive this award from this organization.

ANNOUNCER: The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Air Force recognizes a man who takes volunteer service to a new level. During his time at Yokota Air Base, Japan, he has consistently been involved in volunteer efforts that make a difference. He was the representative from Yokota for the "Love Save The Planet" telethon raising money for the hearing impaired. He learned Japanese sign language to communicate with those who benefit from the telethon. He spearheaded the $1,000.00 National Defense Transportation Association fundraiser to sponsor a visit for 50 Japanese orphans to Tokyo Disneyland. And he has served as the chairperson of the Yokota Special Olympics pulling together more than 200 military volunteers. The 2003 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Air Force is awarded to Technical Sgt. Daniel F. Shirley.

SGT. DANIEL SHIPLEY: What an honor. It's kind of hard to get recognized like this. I feel privileged to be able to do what I do. Every morning when I wake up I say thanks for being able to do what I do, so to get recognized for that is really awesome. But where the honor really lies is being able to spend the past week with you all, the true patriots and heroes of our country, and I thank you for that opportunity.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2003 Spirit of Service Award winners.

There is another proud military member seated on stage this morning. Everyone here has seen him. You saw him but what captured your eye was what he did. Now you get the opportunity to greet him and thank him for what he has done for America's positive and patriotic image. From the Lieutenant B.R. Kimlau Chinese Memorial Post 1291 in New York City, please welcome Sgt. Edward (Ed) Chin, United States Marine Corps.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: What emotions were going through his mind when he covered the face of the tyrant with Old Glory? We'd like to now hear from Sgt. Chin.

SGT. EDWARD (ED) CHIN: I was just thinking to get the job done and taking down Saddam and his regime of terror, liberating the people of Iraq. I'm so proud and happy to be able to be part of The American Legion family now.

The American Legion Youth Champions
2003 Boys Nation President
Robert C. (Charlie) Walker, Decatur, Alabama

ANNOUNCER: Legionnaires do have faith in those who served in uniform today and since our founding days in this city, we continue to have faith in the youth of America. They are young men and women influenced by participating in programs of The American Legion. Through these programs they receive a foundation in the principles of justice, freedom and democracy. Principles essential for them as they will be responsible for preserving these

same values in the future.

Our first Youth Champion is a senior at Decatur High School in Decatur, Alabama. He's a leader in academic achievement with a 4.2 GPA. He's been class president two years in a row. He participates in sports and his community. It should have come as no surprise that he was elected president of American Legion Boys Nation last month in Washington, D.C. His plans are to attend Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, after graduation looking to a career in medicine and politics. Please welcome this well-groomed leader for the next generation sponsored by Morgan County Post 15 of Decatur, the president of Boys Nation 2003, Robert C. (Charlie) Walker, Jr.

ROBERT C. (CHARLIE) WALKER, JR.: I can't tell you how honored I am to be here. I'd first like to start off with thanking Post 15 in Decatur, Alabama for all they've done for me. I also need to thank my family, especially my mom who's here with me today. Also, I need to thank my American Legion family who is here with me today. I am the product of a dream, a dream that I had starting out in Boys State and wanting to make a difference and The American Legion provides that opportunity for so many through Boys State and Boys Nation. You get to participate in government, to learn about government through the actual experience. And I appreciate that. I'm mindful of a young man who came up to me and said "after Boys State, after Boys Nation, he can now appreciate government." He didn't before that but now he understands what it's all about. I also need to thank you for what you stand for, God and country. I mean, what else is there, that's what it's all about.

I also need to thank you for your service to our country. It always amazes me about The American Legion because to you it's not enough just to serve our country in the armed forces. But you come back and you look to youth programs. You want to make a difference for the future. That just amazes me and I thank you for that as well.

Edmund Burke said, the only thing necessary for triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. And the men and women of The American Legion do so much more than nothing. You're making a difference for the present and the future with America's youth. And so on behalf of 28,000 Boys Staters, and 95 other senators from Boys Nation, thank you American Legion family.

2003 Junior Shooting Sports Champion
Charles Kempley, Reno, Nevada

ANNOUNCER: The next Youth Champion is also the most recent champion having earned his honor earlier this month in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This young man racked up a score of 2363 out of a possible score of 2509 in shoulder to shoulder shooting competition. He is a member of the Jedi Olympic Shooting USA Team sponsored by Duby Reed Post 30 in Reno, Nevada. A freshman at the University of Nevada Reno, please welcome the 2003 Junior Shooting Sports Champion in the Precision Category, Tarl Kempley.

TARL KEMPLEY: Because of my involvement with The American Legion, I can truly say that I have witnessed their dedication to our country firsthand, from my first moments with my sponsoring Post back home to the National Rifle Championship and all the volunteers, and finally the National Convention. It's really touched me and been a great honor to be a distinguished guest of such a great organization. I'd like to extend special thanks to my family, my sponsoring Post, Duby Reed Post 30 in Sparks, Nevada, and I hope for a long and prosperous life for The American Legion family and its programs.

2003 Eagle Scout of The Year
Aaron Allen, Irvine, California

ANNOUNCER: Out next Youth Champion is the 2003 Eagle Scout of the Year. A young man who attends Hawaii Preparatory Academy in Kamuela, Hawaii where he is a senior. His college plans will find him journeying from the shores of Hawaii to an ivy league college where he will study for a career in government service. He is a member of Boy Scout Troop 316, and his father is a member of American Legion Post 291 in Newport Beach, California.

Please welcome the Eagle Scout of the Year, Aaron Allen.

AARON ALLEN: I take the list of names on war memorials and I run down it. Name after name, names which may just be names to many, but names to many others who cannot be heard without emotion. It must seem like yesterday that our fallen heroes fell doing their duty to God and their country. Yet I cannot help myself but think, if these men were still alive, would they say where is the patriotism and where is the keen sense of duty that we died for in this country? Well, I can tell you where it is. It's in our hearts and it's in the hearts of millions of Boy Scouts across the globe.

Yet there have been so many attacks recently on the Boy Scouts and it hurts my heart a lot, and I can't help but think if those fallen heroes were still with us today, would they approve. I know that those fallen heroes have a voice and it's right here in the hearts of The American Legion. So, thank you to The American Legion from millions of Boy Scouts across the globe and myself for fighting for us through all these attaçks.

2003 National High School Oratorical Champion
Henry (H.J.) Shea, IV, Wayzata, Minnesota

ANNOUNCER: Our next Youth Champion is a freshman at Georgetown University where he is enrolled in the School of Foreign Service. He graduated in June from Benilde-St. Margaret's High School in Wayzata, Minnesota. As the 2003 National High School Oratorical Champion, he spoke of the rights and responsibilities of all citizens. And he was firm in explaining "freedom is anything but free." Sponsored by Frank Lundberg Post 282 in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, please welcome the National High School Oratorical Champion, Henry (H.J.) Shea, IV.

HENRY (H.J.) SHEA, IV: It is both an honor and a privilege to be here today to thank an organization which has served our country with such dedication and bravery, both in the armed services and now afterwards in The American Legion youth programs. As well as being truly grateful to The American Legion, I need to specifically thank my sponsoring Post number 282, the Frank Lundberg Post from St. Louis Park, Minnesota, and I need to thank a few individuals. First of all, my family and my dad who have been there with me all along the way, but also some individuals here today, Mr. Tom Schottenbauer, Todd Lee Hallison from St. Louis Park, both from my sponsoring Post and our state oratorical chairman Al Davis, and our former State Commander, Don Hayden.

And after participating in American Legion youth programs both at Boys State, Boys Nation, and now at the Oratorical Contest, and after meeting so many youth from across the country, I know that I can say with a great deal of confidence, rest assured, our generation will carry on the American tradition, and we will never forget that freedom is not free.

2002 Baseball Player of the Year
Ty Henkaline, Minster, Ohio

ANNOUNCER: *Baseball is his passion and becoming a psychologist is his goal. The 2002 George Brulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year is selected not just on the basis of his playing skills, but his academic achievement and community involvement as well. This man now attends Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana where he completed his first year with a 4.0 grade point average. His American Legion Baseball experience came with the team from Sidney Post 217 at Sidney, Ohio. He is looking forward to playing baseball with the Ball State team this year, after being red-shirted it for his freshman year. His community service has included volunteering in a soup kitchen and helping conduct Little League baseball camps. Please welcome our 2002 Baseball Player of the Year, Ty Henkaline, of Minster, Ohio.*

TY HENKALINE: It is an absolute honor to be here. First of all, I'd like to thank you for having me and my fellow youth champions this weekend. It's been a great experience, definitely one that I won't forget. I'd also like to thank you for American Legion Baseball. The program continues to set the standard for all the youth programs nationwide. American

Legion Baseball, to the players of American Legion Baseball is more than just baseball. It's playing for you, playing for the veterans of our country. It's playing for what our country means and what our country stands for. So on behalf of over 90,000 American Legion Baseball players nationwide, I thank you for your support and your effort.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen The American Legion Youth Champions.

This has been an emotional beginning to our 85th National Convention. True to our founders' vision, we remembered comrades who fell in battle. We watched as young men and women took the Oath Enlistment, we honored their families with Blue Star Service Banners, we recognized the best community service volunteer of each branch of the military. We met a man who caught the world's attention with Old Glory. And we heard from young men and women who have been touched by youth programs of The American Legion, programs that will help them make important decisions for the rest of their lives. As we began, we reflected on the words of the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution and the clear vision that it provides, a timeless vision that has spanned the generations from World War I to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The men and women who join the military today are the future American Legion leaders. We have an obligation to support them and their families, to fight for their benefits, to care for them in countless ways as they serve to protect and defend the United States of American. To prepare a place for them when they return home to this wonderful nation that has been celebrated in poetry and song for generations. A nation celebrated today by Tim, Tom, John and Mike. Ladies and gentlemen the Wright Brothers.

...At this time the Convention Delegation was entertained by the Wright Brothers singing: America the Beautiful *and* Coming to America.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: This morning a group of young men and women took the Oath of Enlistment right here on this stage. It is an honor for each of us to be a part of such an important event in their lives, an event that is equally important for each and every person who takes that solemn oath and ceremonies much smaller everyday. One man who plays a key leadership role in attracting men and women to the all volunteer force is the man who administered the oath of office this morning. In his more than 30 year army career, he moved from field artillery to the 101st Airborne Division, to the leadership role he commands today. He grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, attending Norfolk State University. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and obtained his Masters Degree in Public Administration from Shippensburg State University. Welcome Major General Michael Rochelle.

Address: Major General Michael D. Rochelle
United States Army Recruiting Command
Fort Knox, Kentucky

MAJ GEN ROCHELLE: First of all, let me tell you that I have a prepared speech, but with as stirring a day as I have had with you Legionnaires here this morning, frankly the speech no longer works. It doesn't work for me and I'm not sure it's going to work for you, either. So, I'm going to abbreviate my remarks and talk for just a couple of moments about some things that I believe are important and I will do that from the heart.

The young men and women who we enlisted today in the five services; the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps and the U.S. Coast Guard, are the future of America, not just in uniform but, frankly, they're the future of America in business. They're the future of America in politics. As I thought about what we have just done with the POW/MIA ceremony observance, as I thought about the honors that we rendered at the opening today to our fallen comrades, as I thought obviously of the swearing in of these fine young men and women who are the future once again, the Spirit of Service Awards that were presented and the Youth Champions, and as I listened to the trio sing just a few moments ago a song that I really admire a great deal, I thought about a couple of things.

First, I thought about service recruiters from all five services who labor day and night to build this all volunteer force, which, by the way, is only 30-years old as of last month.

The first of July, 1973 ushered in the all volunteer service. On the 30th of July, 1973, I had 14 months in uniform, fourteen months. I knew nothing except essentially the all-volunteer force even though there were still vestiges of the drafted force amongst us. So as I thought about the young men and women we enlisted today and the work that Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard recruiters do, I could not help but wonder where will they be 30 years from today. They may be standing here talking to a National Convention of outstanding Legionnaires. They may be members of this distinguished dais leading this great National Organization of distinguished veterans. They may be congressmen, congresswomen. They may be businessmen, businesswomen. Pretty profound thought. America the Beautiful, two stanzas of which you heard sung magnificently this morning. The third stanza—and I will simply conclude with this—is the one that I regard most highly. It says "Oh beautiful, oh beautiful, oh beautiful for patriots' dreams in liberating strife, who more than self their country love, and mercy more than life. America, America, may God thy gold refine; and all success be nobleness and every gain divine."

Welcome

NATL COMDR CONLEY: As we gather for the 85th National Convention in St. Louis, we are honored to have the man who leads this state join us this morning. Immediately following his inauguration, he lead efforts to provide a prescription drug plan for the Missouri seniors who could not afford the high cost of medicine. In his two years of public service, he has focused on serving the people who get up early, fight traffic, do the dishes and pay the bills. He is a graduate of Southwest Missouri State University with a degree in political science, and attended the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Please welcome the Governor of Missouri, the Honorable Bob Holden.

Address: The Honorable Bob Holden
Governor of the State of Missouri

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you back to St. Louis for the 85th American Legion National Convention. On behalf of the citizens of the State of Missouri, I say welcome back, because St. Louis has a long standing relationship with The American Legion that dates back to the very beginning of your distinguished organization. It is here in 1919 that the first United States caucus of The American Legion was held. And I hope along with all the other great attractions that you're here to see in St. Louis, you'll take a minute to go to the corner of Olive Street and Tucker Boulevard and see the plague that commemorates the site of the first Caucus meeting at the Hubert Theater. Sadly, the Hubert itself no longer exists, but out of those promising beginnings has grown a tremendous veterans' organization of nearly 3 million members that come from all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico and the Philippines.

Communities worldwide benefits come from the service project that almost 15,000 Legion posts and their volunteers work every year to make successful. I know, for over 20 years I've been a dean and a teacher at The American Legion Missouri Boys State Program. Thank you Legionnaires for your commitment to the youth of this nation.

We are very proud to have you in St. Louis and Missouri. It was 50 years ago that St. Louis had the privilege of hosting this convention before and even though I'm certain there was much for Legion members to see and do then, that can't compare with the spectacular offers this city has for all of you this time. And I know the mayor will second that and make his comments.

Two sides of particular interests to you in this great city will be the Ulysses S. Grant Historic Site and the Soldier's Memorial Military Museum. And for those of you not familiar with Missouri, this is just one example of the historic offerings our State has of interest to veterans. We have the Liberty Memorial in Kansas City commemorating World War I veterans, and the General John J. Pershing historic site and boyhood home in Laclede.

Here in Missouri we have a strong commitment to honoring our 570,000 state veterans because we realize we would not be here today enjoying the freedoms we enjoy if it were not for your noble sacrifice. In Missouri, we want to see that veterans receive the benefits and recognition you richly deserve.

We have seven Missouri veterans homes and two veterans cemeteries with two more under construction to open later this year. With these two new cemeteries our veterans and their dependent children will be eligible for final resting place at no charge in all four sections of our state. Last year, I was pleased to increase funding for our veterans trust fund that supports these homes and cemeteries. As Governor, I have also supported laws authorizing honorary diplomas for our veterans of World War I, World War II and the Korean War, who chose to leave school before graduation to serve in our armed forces. We're one of the first states in the nation to establish a military funerals honor program, five years ago so our brave men and women who have served in the armed forces could be laid to rest with the military honors they are entitled to.

We also have a statewide World War II Veterans Recognition Program that has awarded over 41,000 awards and medals of distinction in its two years of operation. We'll be starting a similar program for our Korean War veterans in January. One of the most recent efforts to help veterans has been our administration's aggressive outreach to make certain veterans are receiving the full benefits they are entitled to. Our research from a Veterans Benefit Awareness Task Force led by Lt. Governor Joe Maxwell, indicated that more then 32,000 of our state's veterans were not receiving the compensation and pension benefits, either because they were unaware that they were eligible, or because they were unaware of the full range of benefits available to them. To address this problem, we've been holding supermarkets of veterans benefits since last year across the state where veterans can receive information in one place about the full range of benefits, services and organizations open to them. We've had 12 of these so far and they were so successful that we have more in the works.

Lt. Governor Maxwell and I also pushed for funding for a toll-free phone line that puts our veterans in touch with a real person, with a real person, to get information about benefits and services they can receive. In only a year in existence, that phone line has already responded to 4,500 phone calls. And we've done something that the Congress so far has failed to do. And that's to pass legislation to provide prescription drug benefits to our low income and needy seniors. It's time Congress come on board.

I hope this brief overview gives you some idea of how much we appreciate veterans in Missouri. And I want you to know what an honor it is for me to have you here this week in our State to give me the opportunity to say thank you on behalf of all Missourians everywhere for your devotion to our democracy. No matter what the sacrifice or potential for harm, you accepted the vow of defending this nation and preserving our way of life. We have our life and our liberties because you had the courage and the will to live up to the promise you made to this nation.

And lastly, I want to say thank you for your willingness to stand up and give our troops the support that they need. They're fighting overseas as we speak, whether it be in Iraq, Afghanistan, or wherever, some of them giving their lives. Your support, your encouragement, your thoughts and your prayers go a long ways to help all of our young men and women. May God bless you as you have blessed America.

If Commander Conley will come forward. I will not read the entire proclamation, but I did want to offer a Proclamation Day on behalf of all the citizens of the great State of Missouri. "Now therefore, I, Bob Holden, Governor of the State of Missouri, do hereby honor and commend The American Legion and its members for their valiant and dedicated service to our nation and extend our best wishes on a successful and enjoyable convention." Congratulations to you all.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Our next guest also we would like to extend a warm welcome. He was elected Mayor of St. Louis in 2001. He is committed to fulfilling his dream of making a difference in the city of his birth. His service to the community began in 1985 with his election to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen. He since served two terms as President of that body. He was a partner with the prestigious firm in St. Louis specializing in business law and commercial litigation. A warm welcome to the Honorable Francis Slay, Mayor of St. Louis.

Address: The Honorable Francis G. Slay
Mayor of St. Louis, Missouri

We're so excited to have you back in St. Louis after 50 years and on behalf of the citizens of St. Louis, I want to welcome you, the largest veterans organization in the world, back to St. Louis, the birthplace of The American Legion where as the Governor said, 84 years ago this organization's founders adopted its name The American Legion, and also approved the draft Constitution. I am pleased to be here this morning to bring you greetings and best wishes, and also to express gratitude to all of you who have so nobly served in the armed forces of the United States of America. You overcame long odds and stood up to and defeated the most powerful military machines ever assembled. And you did it for your country and your fellow man. All of us enjoy the benefits of your sacrifices.

Throughout history the true source of military strength cannot be found in a weapon no matter how sophisticated or destructive. Nor can it be found in technology no matter how advanced. We all know that the true source of military strength is in the people in uniform. It is indeed entirely fitting that when *Time Magazine* named their Man of the Century, their choice for that honor did not go to a world leader, or to a doctor for a medical breakthrough, or even to Albert Einstein for his theories of time and space. Their choice for that great honor went to the American G.I. men and women of skill and courage that recognized their duty and did it.

On behalf of the people of St. Louis and on behalf of a generation that has reaped the rewards of your bravery, I want to say thank you. Thank you for fighting for our freedom. For freedom is the result of your victories over tyranny and the forces of evil. The United States and the entire world are better places because of all of you.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: This gentleman is no stranger to hard work. He is a 34-year member of American Legion Post 370, Louisiana, Missouri, and has held offices at that post, district and department levels. He is the Presiding Commissioner of Pike County, Missouri. A member of Mark Twain Council of Government, Mark Twain Waste to the Energy Board, Pike County Development Board, Northeast Workforce Investment Board and Missouri Association of Counties. Welcome the immediate Past Department Commander of Missouri and my friend, Clark Pointer.

Address: Commander Clark E. Pointer
Department of Missouri

On behalf of the more than 60,000 Legionnaires it is my pleasure to welcome you to Missouri and the 85th National Convention here in St. Louis. St. Louis welcomes you home where the first United States Caucus of The American Legion was held in 1919. The American Legion adopted its official name. The last convention in St. Louis was 50 years ago. Please don't wait another 50 years to come back.

The American Legion Convention Corporation of Missouri has worked hard to make this one of the best and most convenient conventions ever. You will see that our hotels are some of the best in the world. No hotel is far from the Convention Center. St. Louis is a historical city. It may take more than a week to see everything that St. Louis has to offer. Missouri also has the largest military base in the United States, Fort Leonardwood. I'm sure some of you spent some time there. We also have the home of the B-2 bomber at Whiteman Air Force Base in Knob Noster. Again, welcome to Missouri, the "Show Me" State. We want this to be the best convention ever. If you need help in any way, please contact a Missouri Legionnaire, you will see why we're called the 'Show Me' State.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: As far as 'Show Me' State, I think it's the other way around. The delegation from Missouri has shown us the true friendship at this Convention.

Our next guest is not an unfamiliar face. He's held many offices in The American Legion including National Vice Commander in 1991. He's a member of the Florissant Valley Memorial Post 444, and we had an opportunity to visit that beautiful Post the other day. Give a warm Legion welcome to our comrade and friend, the President of the National Convention Corporation, James F. Mareschal.

James F. Mareschal, Missouri, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation

As if you haven't noticed from the last three speakers, we're very proud to be a Missourian. We're very proud that this great organization was born in the city of St. Louis. There's been many factors going together to put this convention together. They say, "You have to raise money"—we've done that. They say, "You have to have hotel rooms"—we've got them all right downtown here for you. Then they say, "You need the volunteers"— and that's where my problem comes in. My problem is I've had everybody from the Department of Missouri volunteering. I've got more people than I know what to do with sometime. So that has been a problem that has been a joy to work with.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a couple people who have worked very hard for your national organization. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes that you don't see. It takes a lot of meticulous work to put this convention on for each of you. And I'd be amiss if I didn't say a great 'thank you' to Mr. Dick Holmes who is the Convention Director and his assistant Miss Jennifer Zellers. They've done a great job.

We hope you have fun in the city of St. Louis. There are many things for you to do and see. Enjoy yourself and thank you for coming back home, to the birthplace of the Legion.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: For those who came here to welcome us, I say 'thank you' on behalf of all the members of The American Legion family in St. Louis. St. Louis reminds me of my home in Pittsburgh, it's just missing an extra river and the Pittsburgh Pirates. We're glad to be here and we thank you and all your work to make this a successful convention.

Now I call on Tom Lowe, the President of First American Financial Services and Joe Thrash, the Vice President of Marketing for First American, for the purpose of a special presentation.

Special Presentation
Tom Lowe, President
First American Financial Services, LLC
and
Joe Thrash, Vice President of Marketing
First American Financial Services, LLC

MR. TOM LOWE: Earlier this year, our company was searching for a way to tangibly express our appreciation for what our military does and the sacrifices they make. Our owner is a veteran and he suggested that we contact The American Legion, which we did. We're thankful for what you do for the country, for the youth and most importantly for the children of your comrades who have fallen in service for our country. We are thankful for your suggestion that we could make a tangible gift to your scholarship fund that goes to assist children of deceased military personnel to go to college who died in the line of duty. We are humbled and we are honored that you allowed us to make that gift.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Tom, before you leave, The American Legion has something for you. It is a bronze eagle that we hope will look great in your office in Cleveland, Tennessee. We thank you for your support of our military family. We look forward to working with the First American Financial Services in the future. I'd like to present this bronze eagle to you for display.

Our next guest is among the strongest voices on Capitol Hill for veterans. That could be because he is one of us. A veteran of the United States Army serving 19 months in Vietnam, earning two Bronze Star Medals, and retiring from the Reserves with the rank of Colonel. Today, he serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the Veterans Affairs Committee. Before I introduce him, he has provided a video presentation.

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

ANNOUNCER: Legionnaires welcome a congressman who is working hard for America and for all veterans. Congressman Rob Simmons.

Address: The Honorable Robert R. Simmons
United States House of Representatives

I'm proud to be a Vietnam veteran.

I'm proud to have served 37 years, 7 months and 24 days in the United States Army. And I'm very proud to be a life member of The American Legion.

I'm especially proud to be here today to speak to you. Four years ago I made a difficult choice. I decided to run for Congress. It was difficult because I was running against a 20-year incumbent. It was difficult because he was well known and he could raise lots of money. It was difficult because incumbents usually win. Ninety-eight percent of incumbents usually win. But, I was motivated to run because I wanted to help veterans, I wanted to keep the promise to our veterans and to raise my voice for veterans all across Connecticut.

And you know what happen? With the moral support of the people in this room and the votes of the good people of Connecticut, we won. We won! We won that race. I want to ask my Connecticut comrades if they would please stand. With your help, I can speak now for more than just the veterans of Connecticut, but for the veterans of America. With your help, we can keep the promise. With your help we can work in a bipartisan fashion to accomplish good things for veterans. In the past year, we have accomplished good things, new homeless programs so that our veterans can address the issues that plague their minds, as well as to find a decent place to sleep and to live.

We've allocated $1.1 billion dollars for VA medical facilities to sustain and expand an aging infrastructure, and we've encouraged the VA to establish an interim pharmacy program so that any veteran waiting more than 30 days can get their prescription filled before their health problems become an emergency room crisis.

We have successfully fought additional co-payments and fees. And we've almost doubled funding for veterans' health care over the past decade, but there is a looming crisis in veterans health care that has not been resolved. And it's all about money.

Earlier this year the House Veterans Affairs Committee reported to the budget committee that we needed an increase of 12.9 percent in discretionary spending if we were to provide adequate health care in the coming year. It was 2.1 percent below what we wanted but it was adequate. It was $1.8 billion dollars above the Administration mark. That was not adequate. A bipartisan group of members of Congress fought hard for this increase and we were pleased when the Chairman of the Budget Committee told us that veterans spending will increase rapidly and they would restore the $1.8 billion dollars for veterans health care. Given this promise, you can imagine our surprise, you can imagine our outrage, when the Appropriations Committee reversed the Budget Committee's Conference Agreement and reduced discretionary spending again by $1.8 billion dollars. This is not keeping the promise. This is breaking the promise and we should not stand for it. *Applause.*

We have a great Secretary of Veterans Affairs in Tony Principi. He's worn the uniform. He served in Vietnam. He was decorated for valor in service. He's devoted most of his adult life to national defense in veterans affairs. He's a good man and he has a good heart. But the Secretary needs to be reminded that a $1.8 billion dollar cut is totally inadequate. If he supports veterans health care, show us the money! We have a great Commander-in-Chief in George W. Bush. He, too, has worn the uniform. He comes from a distinguished family of public servants, veterans, war heroes. He's rebuilding our military, improving pay, restoring pride to those who serve, and he's leading us with moral courage and conviction against terrorists who would kill our citizens, take our freedom and destroy our democracy. But the President needs to know that a $1.8 billion dollar cut is totally inadequate. If he supports veterans health care, show us the money!

Some of my colleagues in Congress want to know why are veterans dissatisfied when funding for veterans health has gone up dramatically over the past 10 years. They point to the fact that in 1993, the President requested $14 billion, whereas this year the President requested over $25 billion. The facts are correct, but it is also correct that while funding for veterans health care has doubled, those seeking health care have increased by almost 70 percent. Let's do the math. A 70 percent increase in enrollment with a 50 percent increase

in funding leaves a deficit, a 20 percent shortfall. Individual veterans are not asking for larger benefits. A larger number of veterans are looking for equal benefits. And these benefits were promised by Congress in 1996. Let's remind the representatives and senators that seven years ago Congress passed the Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act which authorized the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish hospital care and medical services to all veterans. Not just service-connected or the poor, to all veterans. The House vote on this bill was 416 to zero. The Senate voted by voice vote unanimously and the President signed the bill into law. This is the policy that the Congress authorized unanimously. This is the promise that the Congress made unanimously. This is the bill that the President signed and now it is up to the Congress and the Administration to keep the promise. This is Missouri, the "Show Me" State. Show us the money!

I carry with me the dog tags issued by the United States Army in 1965. They contain my name, serial number, blood type and religion. They do not contain my party affiliation. Party affiliation didn't matter then and it doesn't matter now. What matters is that all members of Congress and the Administration regardless of party affiliation join with us to keep the promise and show us the money!

We live in a new age with a new outlook and we have a new policy which says that all veterans are equal. All those who served with honor should be honored for their service. Commander Conley spelled it out last month in his Special Report titled "A System Worth Saving." And he said, "Rich or poor, disabled or not, from Florida or from Alaska the risk was the same. A veteran is a veteran and they all need equal access to Veterans Administration medical health care."

My fellow Legionnaires, over 30 years ago at Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, I was told that an officers word is his bond. When you say you will do something, you do it. I've carried that principle over 37 years in the U.S. Military, 10 years with the CIA, 3½ years in a war zone and 2½ years in the Congress of the United States of American. An officer's word is his bond. Seven years ago Congress promised open eligibility for health care to all veterans. But we have not kept this promise, because we have not appropriated the dollars to accomplish the mission. In the coming year we need an additional $1.8 billion dollars. We're all Legionnaires. We're proud of our history of service to our fellow veterans. Now we must band together like the Legions of old and determined that we will restore $1.8 billion dollars for veterans health care. Let's carry this message back to Washington, D.C. Let's carry the message back to our nations capitol. We want the Congress to restore the $1.8 billion dollars in appropriations for veterans health care. Let's spread the word loud and clear that if you support veterans health care, you will keep the promise, you will show us the money.

...Standing applause.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: You know what a tremendous honor to be able to meet an individual the caliber where you can walk up and discuss a problem and he gives you his word, and you can leave there feeling so good that you know that he's going to fulfill that promise. During debates just a couple of weeks ago, dealing with the removal of the $1.8 billion, the Congressman spoke about the word and the word being his bond. But he is a former Adjutant of an American Legion Post in Connecticut and he walked the halls of Congress button-holing is fellow Congressmen wearing his American Legion hat, trying to get them to go along with health care.

It's a great honor today to give the Congressman an award presented to the Hon. Robert R. Simmons, United States House of Representatives for his outstanding leadership, contributions and dedicated service to America's veterans and their families to maintain a strong veterans health care system, "A System Worth Saving." He remains faithful to those with whom he has served, his word is his bond. Presented by The American Legion, August 26, 2003, the 85th National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri. Congressman, please accept this with heart felt thanks.

Our next guest is a graduate of the University of Scranton. He had a distinguished military career spanning 35 years, including two combat tours in Vietnam. Since his retirement he continues his service by serving as the Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Please give a warm welcome to a member of Springfield Post 176, American Legion, in Springfield, Virginia, Major General John P. Herring, United States

Army, retired.

Address: MG John P. Herring, USA (Ret.)
Secretary, American Battle Monuments Commission

It's always a pleasure to attend this Convention to see old friends and fellow veterans and to share with you our progress on a very important national project, the National World War II Memorial.

For years now, we've been saying it's coming, but we need your help to get over one more hurdle. There always seems to be one more hurdle. We've received hundreds of letters from World War II veterans asking when is this memorial going to be finished. Well, today I bring a simple message. The National World War II Memorial is on schedule and only 28 weeks from completion. After nearly nine years of public hearings, fund-raising, designing, construction, court appearances, the memorial will be completed in March of next year and it will be open to the public in April. It's been a long up hill battle to get to this point as many of you know. And we couldn't have gotten this far without the help of the extended American Legion family. And for your strong and steady support, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) is sincerely grateful.

A lot of work has been done on the construction site since our report to you last year. And in keeping with the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, I've brought a short video that I will show to you in a minute, and you can see the first hand progress we've made on the memorial. But before I do, I would like to remind you that the American Battle Monuments Commission is responsible for the operation and maintenance of 24 military cemeteries around the world. Fourteen of those 24 are World War II cemeteries where 91,000 American service men and women are buried. They're beautiful tributes to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of freedom. ABMC is honored to have been entrusted with the care of American war dead in our overseas cemeteries. And it was with the same spirit that we welcomed the Congressional challenge of establishing the National World War II Memorial. A long overdue tribute to the generation who fought and won the greatest armed conflict in history. Thanks to nationwide support we raised approximately $190 million dollars, more than enough to cover the estimated project cost. This is a remarkable achievement and a real tribute for the appreciation of the American people to those who sacrificed so much during World War II. The American Legion family was one of our top contributors donating nearly $5 million dollars to the campaign.

Now let's see how that money is being put to use. Could we have the video please.

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

When we dedicate the Memorial it will mark the end of a long road to victory. I want to take a moment now to recognize those whose service this memorial commemorates. Would all the World War II veterans in the audience please stand and be recognized.

We salute your service and thank you for all you've done to make the United States of America the greatest nation on earth. We build this memorial in your memory and in your honor. We build it so that future generations will never forget those who preserved our freedom during democracy's darkest hours. All who have been involved in this historic project eagerly await Saturday, May 29, 2004, when we at long last dedicate the National World War II Memorial.

It is no surprise to us that The American Legion again stepped forward to help honor our World War II veterans across the country by encouraging community celebrations to coincide with the dedication ceremonies in Washington. It truly will be a national 'thank you' to America's World War II generation.

Before I close, let me endorse Senator Dole's comments regarding the World War II Registry. It's an opportunity for all who served during the war at home or overseas to have their names permanently associated with the Memorial that honors their service. Thank you for your generous support and for allowing me to share a few minutes with you today.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Before I get started though, normally you do this on the last day of the convention, but many people will be missing and heading home. To serve a year

as National Commander you put a lot of time on the road. As you enjoy and reap the benefits of traveling and seeing the United States and the world and the great hospitality, there are people who are always left behind and sacrificed. But they've sacrificed for 37 years because of my involvement in The American Legion. And they're here this morning to support me as they've done everyday of my life. I'd like you to recognize my family who are sitting in the first row here.

The other group of people who have supported and gave me opportunities to serve The American Legion in many different positions are those in the Department of Pennsylvania. Please recognize those members from Pennsylvania and particular our Commander last year, Gerald Zorn, and our new Commander Bob Shalala, and our Adjutant Kit Watson, and the rest of the Delegation from Pennsylvania.

Report: National Commander
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

This is probably one of the most toughest speeches I'll give because it will be kind of emotional. I'm not nervous, I just get sometimes a little bit emotional.

Since our last convention, many brave men and women, young Americans have gone in harm's way. At this moment they are defending our national interests in over 130 countries throughout the world. Thanks to them, the people of Iraq have been given the opportunity to experience that which too many of us take for granted these days, the most precious gift of all, freedom. Just last week, after the U.N. bombing in Iraq, a reporter asked me if it was time to pull the plug and bring our troops home. I told her without hesitation, absolutely not. Our country did that in Vietnam, we did that in Beirut and the terrorists are banking that we're going to do it again.

But now we are engaged in a world war. If terrorism is not stopped wherever it occurs, it will surely reach out and strike our soil again. The American Legion is committed to staying the course until the last root of evil is destroyed. We shall maintain our commitment to support our troops wherever they are engaging the enemy of America and civilized society as we know it. Thanks to them, an evil tyrant has been destroyed. Terrorism was met head-on and stopped in its tracks by the world's best fighting forces the United States military.

The reporters and people talk about weapons of mass destruction and they want to concentrate on maybe one sentence or a couple of words that were given to the nation during the State of the Union Address. But if you saw the pictures this morning, where the soldier was standing in front of those young kids in Iraq, were giving them an opportunity to decide how to have their country and how they want to see their future. If you walked several miles away, where the troops uncovered not weapons of mass destruction, but sights that are unbearable to witness, mass graves of hundreds of thousands of people who were slaughtered and killed. We're giving them an opportunity.

And our young men and women in the military today are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, grandsons and granddaughters who have proven their courage on the field of battle. They are America's best, and we are proud of everyone of them. They are our nation's newest veterans, they are our legacy, they are our comrades, they epitomize honor, courage and commitment. Regrettably, far too many of them have had to make the ultimate sacrifice. They shall be forever in our thoughts and in our prayers. Yet, many more return with wounds both physical and mental, and they will impact our lives forever.

In July, I visited the military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany where there were three plane loads of wounded veterans coming in everyday. Last month, I visited the wounded soldiers in Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. I've never met such patriotic, dedicated and committed young men and women. Each wanted to be back in Iraq with their buddies, with their units.

When I was in Landstuhl the first soldier we saw was missing his leg. He was heavily sedated so he didn't know we were there and he possibly didn't even know he was missing his leg. But the next soldier I met had his foot crushed and we spoke to him. He was in a convoy that was ambushed. He got out of the tank but it didn't stop in time and crushed his foot. He was in the hospital and was depressed. But he wasn't depressed because his leg was crushed, he was depressed because he was the medic in that squad. He wasn't going to be

able to be there in Iraq to protect his buddies. He wanted to go back to Iraq.

The next soldier we met again was missing a limb, and wanted to go back. The next soldier was coming back to the states for an operation. He was a young man in his twenties and had cancer and had to come back for his radiation and therapy.

In Walter Reed Hospital I met Sgt. Jackson. He was in the platoon with Jessica Lynch, the high profile POW. Sgt. Jackson was in there trying to get physical therapy. He received some medals because he fought his way out during that ambush, saved some of his fellow soldiers' lives. He said, "Commander, I'm going back to Iraq to be with my buddies even if I have to pay for the plane ticket myself." What dedication the young men and women who are in the military today, to make sure that they want to be part of that family. They're not worried about their lives. When they stood up here this morning, they took the oath to defend this country and our constitution, and they form a bond in the military.

I saw another soldier who had a cold stare. I talked to his father and to the therapist who was there. They told me he was in pretty good shape. He had a stare that just keeps penetrating through me each and everyday. He came from a small pacific island, Micronesia. He was laying in bed with no legs and one arm missing. What kind of future does he have? Whose going to take care of him in that South Pacific island in Micronesia? He went to that war as a whole person and now he's a triple amputee.

I went to see the young soldier you saw the video of, Salvador Ross. But he already went home. I'm concerned about it. I know how everybody talks about when you're with your family that's the best physical therapy, but he lives 60 miles away from a VA hospital. These people haven't even begun their processes as far as receiving their disability yet. He's blind, he's missing part of his leg, he's missing part of his hand. The VA scheduled him to see doctors and appointments, but he's got to travel over 60 miles to go there. He kind of came from a dysfunctional family because his father's in prison for life, for murder. His 'family' was the men and women with whom he served in the military and he's only 20 years old. What kind of a future is he going to have?

We always talk about the high profiles, and we're going to talk about them today. But it was mentioned that these young men and women might be back here at a convention 30 years from now. Are we going to still remember Ross? Are we going to still remember the soldier from Micronesia? Are we going to still remember Sgt. Jackson? Each of them, like thousands of their brothers and sisters in previous wars, have to deal with their difficulties today. They're going to join in the long, long waiting lines for care in a VA hospital because the system is underfunded. These men and women are not merely numbers. But they're considered statistics in Washington. They're the human toll of a war. We owe them first priority in any budget decisions made on behalf of the American people.

During this past year, I visited some 60 VA hospitals. My goal was to gather information and present it to the American people and give them an extensive report on the state of VA health care. I spoke with doctors, nurses, patients, administrators. I toured every possible kind of ward, asking tough questions, to get as much information as possible to include in this report. Among VA employees, I witnessed some dedication, professionalism and resourcefulness. Among patients I heard profound gratitude voiced for the quality of care they received. But from nearly everyone I talked with, I also found frustration over the lack of timely access to VA health care, overcrowding, inconsistent budgets—the list goes on about the VA health care. America's excellent VA health care system is consumed by fiscal neglect.

Last month, I presented a 212-page report to members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, along with a loud and clear message. The care veterans receive from VA facilities is some of the best in the world but until those facilities get the funding they need, their patients will continue to wait longer than they should for that care. Regrettably, as it's already been mentioned, on July 25th, the House of Representatives broke faith with our nation's veterans by removing $1.8 billion dollars from the VA medical spending bill it had agreed to in April. The blame is on both sides of the aisle. It's not Republican, it's not Democrats, it's not the Independents. They were all together when they voted to strip the $1.8 billion dollars. Nine Congressmen from the Democratic party got up and ranted and raved about how wrong this was, but when the vote came, they voted along with the others, stripping the $1.8 billion dollars out of the medical bill. Fifty-nine Republicans and 50 Democrats stood strong against the leadership. They defended the veterans of this nation and

they were paid back by having special projects pulled away from them. They were told there's no money in the budget to take care of their needs. But they said they didn't care because the veterans health is more important than special projects.

We've reported everywhere we went throughout the nation about the pork barrel spending that was put into this budget $20.5 billion dollars of pork barrel spending. One item that they talked about to was rebuild a statue of a Roman god in Birmingham, Alabama. I had a Legionnaire from Alabama come up to me yesterday and he said, "Commander, why are you picking on Alabama." I'm not picking on Alabama. Whoever heard of spending $33-some million dollars to refurbish a statue and the Federal government contributed three point-some million of it, for a Roman god versus the veterans of this nation. I have a hard time accepting that. It doesn't matter if that statue is in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. How can you go to Las Vegas and have a helicopter ride to perform a marriage by Elvis Presley impersonators. That has a priority over the veterans health care in this nation? I'm afraid not. We have money for a bike trail in North Dakota. The list goes on in every state. $20.5 billion dollars for pork barrel spending, but yet they can't come up with $1.8 billion for the health care of the veterans of this nation.

Our fellow Legionnaires, America's veterans are in danger, with dozens of developments occurring right under our noses that jeopardize the future existence of our excellent VA health care system. Secretary Principi is recommending closing seven VA hospitals under the CARES Commission. I have to understand how this process works. He appointed a CARES Commission and gave them the responsibility to go out through the nation and take a look at VA hospitals and see how they can restructure those hospitals to give the best care possible to our veterans. Nothing wrong with that. The American Legion supports that and we want to make sure the veterans get the proper care. But at the same time [Principi] appoints the commission, he hands them a slip of paper and says that he wants to close these seven, and to report back to him on what they think. What's that commission going to do? They're going to turn around sign their name to it and hand it back and say you're right, Mr. Secretary, we ought to close these seven hospitals.

Let me tell you what those seven hospitals are. They take care of the weakest members of our society, mental patients, dementia patients, Alzheimers patients. Four of those seven hospitals are going to deal with this difficult stage. In all the hospitals I visited, I found out one thing that all the doctors agreed upon, forty percent of the veterans being treated in a VA hospital have primary or secondary mental health problems. They're the things that don't show. You can look at Salvador Ross. You can see he's blind. You can see they're missing a leg, missing an arm, but you can't see what's in their mind. They need to take care of the veterans.

We have a tremendous system where we work with medical universities. We have a CARES process in Wynham Place in Chicago. I have a hard time understanding this picture. I went up to Chicago and visited that hospital. The VA is determined to close it. That hospital takes care of the poor and the indigent in Chicago. They went to Northwest University Medical Center. They want to close it. They figured they're going to get $100 million dollars for the building. As I was there, I went up to the fourth floor and walked across to the Prentise Women's Hospital. They have so many women having problems that the hospital has to expand, so they're building a new hospital right next door for $550 million dollars. The University owns the women's hospital that's there now built in 1972. They said we'll give you that hospital free, all you have to do is maintain it. We'll give you 300 doctors free, no cost, to help you keep your backlog of veterans down. But that's been rejected. They're going to close that hospital, the veterans are going to have to travel across the city of Chicago to get care. I have a hard time understanding how that priority came about.

Next month, the Senate Conference Committee will reconvene and following the advice of House Speaker Tip O'Neal, who said that all politics is local, it's absolutely vital that each of us personally contact our senators and continue the pressure on the House because it's a system worth saving.

Each of you were given this pamphlet as you entered this hall. It's call *A Veteran is A Veteran*. It states the case for mandatory funding. On the back there is "May be printed without permission." In case you don't understand what that says, that's the hammer to let you know we want you to get this word out and print it as many times as you want. I want

you to make those copies. I want you to put them out in stores, neighborhoods, wherever you can, any public meetings. We need to get the word out but most importantly take them to your congressmen and senators, your friends and your neighbors, your families. The senators must reinstate the $1.8 billion dollars in VA discretionary funding.

In 2004, the United States will be dedicating a memorial to the 60 million men and women who fought in World War II. We're going to come together as a nation and honor the World War II veterans in a memorial. But if we also want to dedicate that to the World War II veteran, then we need to put money back in the VA budget. For World War II veterans, who may have Alzheimer's and dementia but whose hospitals are slated to be closed, the tribute to them is to make sure that they have proper health care and that they're going to be treated. During the past 60 years nearly every family in America has sent one or more of their sons and daughters to fight somewhere in the defense of freedom. At the very least, we owe them adequate medical care provided in a timely manner.

I thank each of you for helping to fight this battle. Your efforts in the "I Am Not A Number" campaign put faces to the names that far too many law makers only think of as statistics. I heard that Secretary Principi reads *The American Legion Magazine*, because we got a call from several of those who appeared in "I Am Not A Number" issue that they received a call from the VA hospital in their local area. All of a sudden now have an appointment and were told to show up. It's a shame we couldn't put 300,000 names in that issue. Then we wouldn't have a backlog. They'd all get a phone call from the VA to come down and be treated.

Some of you have seen over the last several days and weeks about Sgt. Turner who tried to receive care in a VA hospital from her wounds that she received in Iraq. She had to go to Senator Kennedy to intervene to help her in the VA system. Deputy Secretary McKay said it was a mistake and that he would personally see to it that she received priority. When we were on Scarborough's, I said to the producer because they cut me off, I said, "Ask him if he's going to follow every other veteran that's standing in line to be treated." What about Jason Stiffler who's been waiting two years for health care in a VA hospital. His story appeared on front pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. Will Deputy Secretary McKay personally step up to the plate for all the other wounded?

All the visits that we made were arranged through the Departments who were so gracious. The Adjutants worked so hard to make sure that everything was in place when we arrived. The legislative staff contacted the congressmen and the senators. We visited in Maine when Senator Snowe went along with us on the tour.

Well, I went out to Denver, the last hospital I was to visit. It didn't make it into any of our reports, if we would have had an opportunity to visit there. We pulled up to the front of the hospital. The PR person who was there said, "Mr. Commander, we have Deputy Secretary McKay, so we're going to have a meeting with the congressman." I said, "Fine." He said, "So we'll continue that but first, would you mind going down and addressing the VAVS representatives?" I said, "No, I'll be glad to do that." I went downstairs and the director was there, who said, "We have three high profile people here, the Deputy Secretary's here."

So we went upstairs after we addressed the VAVS representatives. The director was talking to a staff member, or somebody, and I overheard part of the conversation. "What do you want me to do about it now?" And he continued his conversation. I knew it wasn't one for me to hear. We then went around to where the elevators were and all of a sudden a photographer for the VA said, "Come on, we'll take you up to the room that we're going to meet with everybody." I got upstairs by the director's office. I started to go into the room but someone said, "You can't go in there, Commander."

The door was locked. Somebody came over with a key, opened it up, and walked inside. I could see the room was full of people. The next thing I know, the director is dealing with somebody else. I could see exactly what was starting to transpire. I said, "Mr. Director, we're not going to put you in a crackerjack box. We're going to leave." He said, "No, let me try to get this straightened out." I said, "No, that's ok, we're going to leave." So we left, went outside, and waited. We were locked out of the room because the Deputy Secretary didn't seem to think it was right to have the National Commander of The American Legion in to discuss any problems concerning the Denver VA hospital. It put the director in kind of a bad spot. It didn't matter if they shut Ron Conley out of the Denver VA Medical Center.

But I felt bad because the Deputy Secretary shut out The American Legion from visiting that hospital in Denver.

We're going to let the Secretary know when he comes here that we weren't happy with the Deputy Secretary's actions. I believe common courtesy would have been for him to came outside the room and say to me that they had another special meeting to address some problems and hoped I wouldn't mind. He could have said, "I know you already were scheduled to be here but please would you give us the necessary time and if you want to reschedule and come back, or if you want to go get a cup of coffee and give us some time, or whatever." I would have said fine and I would have left. But he didn't give us that courtesy. He shut us out.

On the bright side though this year, thanks to your calls and letters to law makers, The American Legion defeated a proposed $250 deductible for VA health care treatment, as well as the measure to cut out the pharmacy, *Applause*. That's right you owe it to yourselves. But now we must continue to fight in the short term to get the $1.8 billion dollars back into VA health care. Most importantly, we must urge every law maker to establish mandatory funding and this won't be easy. Separating a politician from dollars that can be used for pork will be like extracting teeth from a tiger, but we must do it. We must make the VA "A System Worth Saving." We must step up to the plate and give full attention of our elected federal representatives and demand—don't ask—to an end to the broken promises made because it's obvious they don't understand that the veterans are high priority in this country.

All veterans with the ability to use their insurance, including medicare should be free to choose the VA facilities for their health care regardless of economic status or level of service connected disability. For those veterans who don't have health insurance, VA can offer a premium based health care benefit. As I traveled throughout to all these hospitals, the care in a VA hospital is the best there is in the country. But the people that are blocked in that uilding in Washington, D.C. who work for the VA, just don't get it. They think The American Legion is here beating up on them. We're here as a partner for them. We're not beating up on them, we're beating up on Congress. That's where the responsibility lies.

You know the dedication and the hard work that the National Adjutant does, but he was asked to do another important function. He was asked by the President to serve on the Presidential Task Force to improve health care delivery for our nation's veterans. We agreed with 98 percent of their findings. I want you to join me right now to stand and give a round of applause to the National Adjutant Robert Spanogle.

...Standing Applause.

We talked about honor about your word is your bond. But let me tell you about Bob Spanogle. He truly fits the same description that we gave the Congressman. He served on the Task Force and he recommended mandatory funding for all eligible veterans. The majority of PTF members did not include Priority 8 veterans in the report's funding recommendations. Bob was one of three commissioners who offered a compromise that was rejected. Bob then wrote a Minority Report. He truly stuck up for his word and his bond, because he believed in his heart that we cannot shut out the VA to any veteran, whether Priority 8 or not. If you served your country honorably and whether you were in the deserts in Iraq or Afghanistan, or you were in World War II and you have Alzheimer's and dementia, you should have the ability to go into a VA hospital and be treated.

This stuff about Ross Perot the millionaire getting treatment in a VA. If he served his country honorably, and he became a millionaire, good for him. He still should be treated in a VA hospital if he desires. It's a copout to pass the buck on Priority 8 veterans to the White House and to support full funding to treat the other veterans. Today, more than 164,000 veterans those who fit Priority 8 group have been prohibited from entering the system because they are not poor enough and because they lack service-connected disability ratings. Their decision means that the Veterans' Healthcare Eligibility Act of 1996 is now unraveling. The overcrowded VA system, hamstrung by a budget that doesn't meet the cost of the growing demand, is forced to concentrate only on the indigent and those with service-connected disabilities. And they're not even doing that when they're going to shut seven VA hospitals down.

My entire year as Commander has been spent collecting examples of many ways in which discretionary appropriation models fail to fulfill the care-giving processes of the VA. The mandatory funding model supported by The American Legion coupled with revenue

generating programs such as Medicare reimbursement and premium-based health care plans will help to boost VA funding to a level that will allow VA to meet the increased demand for care. History has proven that 30 percent increase in demand cannot be served by 7 percent increases of funding and then, as the Congressman mentioned, the spread over the years is 50 percent versus 70 percent. Where are the nation's priorities when tens of thousands of veterans are forced to wait months for life saving health care in VA hospitals? Where are this nation's priorities when the only answer we ever hear to our demand problem is to downsize our facilities and send us somewhere else? Why is the remedy so often contracting care from a hospital that has no clue what it means to have sacrificed some part of your life, maybe a limb, maybe your eyesight, maybe your mind, for the freedoms of others? We are at a crossroad. But luckily there is an answer.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is America's biggest managed health care system. It's a national treasure and a good reason for any young man or woman to serve in the United States Armed Forces. This health care system was created to treat the unique health care condition of veterans of this nation. The U.S. government has the distinct responsibility to see that those needs are fulfilled, it's called a debt, it's called an obligation, it's called a promise. The VA health care system serves tens of thousands of men and women who were willing to give their lives for the freedom of others who make America their home. That is why it is "A System Worth Saving." And saving it is the very least we can do for our comrades who continue to arrive at Walter Reed Hospital without limbs or without sight or without hope. As Legionnaires, we will fight until every veteran receives the proper medical care. My visits with the military men and women that I met in Bosnia, Kosovo, Korea and elsewhere in Europe and Asia, as well as my visits with wounded troops at Walter Reed Hospital will always, always be etched in my memory.

During my visit to South Korea, the Commanding General said that they needed incentive pay or a tax break that to attract servicemen to help serve in Korea. This request was honored by The American Legion and it was included in the National Security resolutions and presented to the Congress of the United States. I'm glad to report to you that this provision may indeed be adopted. In fact, the issue of having an under-strength and over-worked military remains a concern for The American Legion. We and our British allies fought and won Operation Iraqi Freedom, but resistance continues. Iraq and Afghanistan are being added to the growing list of countries where our military peacekeepers, nation builders and humanitarians are at work. How long can we ask these men and women to handle these long standing and open-ended missions while fighting the war on terrorism and providing homeland security? The answer is simply one that begs the need to increase the endstrength of all the military services, including the Coast Guard.

More than 200,000 reservists have been activated for Homeland Security since the 9/11 attacks, which should tell us that we need more active duty manpower in our military inventory. Two National Guard enhanced brigades will be used in Iraq in the months ahead. Already, National Guard units have complete responsibility for America's military presence in Bosnia and Kosovo. The service chiefs have asked for more people, and The American Legion, I am proud to say, has led the way to increase the numbers. Although this has been authorized, it's not been funded. Shame, again, on the Congress of the United States. We need to continue with our efforts to make sure our nation has the right size national force to deal with all these threats that occur to our national interests.

Leading the list of broken promises was lifetime health care for our military retirees. The Supreme Court refused to hear the class action suit calling for free lifetime health care for our World War II and Korean War retirees. Still, we're trying to call on Congress to increase TRICARE medical reimbursement rates to keep TRICARE providers in the system. This year we strongly supported Concurrent Receipt for all disabled retirees regardless of rating.

The term Concurrent Receipt is not widely understood but I believe that all of you here understand what Concurrent Receipt is. The American Legion thanks Senator Harry Reid again for sticking up for Concurrent Receipt, who voted to once and for all correct this long standing miscarriage for our disabled retirees. In the House, House Bill 303 has languished in the House Arms Services Committee that has prompted a discharge petition led by the Democrats. The action has brought letters and calls by disabled retirees urging the Republicans to get on board either by signing the discharge petition, or passing House Bill

303 calling for full retirement pay and full disability pay for those retirees.

With the highest level of our congressional support since 1999, the Flag Protection Amendment, House Joint Resolution 4, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on June 3rd by a vote of 300 to 125. It was the fifth time since 1995 that The American Legion and our partners of the Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. has successfully passed and pressed the issue on Capitol Hill. As before, the hurdle to clear next is that of the United States Senate where success has been just out of reach. Presently 64 senators support the amendment, three short. With the tremendous level of support for flag protection, I cannot understand why a handful of United States Senators continue to impede the will of the people. They go against the majority of our constituents and the majority of their colleagues, and they defy common sense of reason by opposing legal protection for the flag. I hope all of you will remind and encourage your senators to support the Flag Amendment when it comes to the floor. And remember this description. The Flag Protection Amendment is to restore back to the Congress of the United States the power that the Supreme Court took off of them. Why don't they understand this? This is power to give them the opportunity to make a right decision and to correct a wrong.

I want to congratulate the Legionnaires from all departments who spearheaded the nationwide grassroots effort that made our American Legion proud. For one day last fall, we put aside the ordinary to honor those who perished at the hands of terrorism one year earlier. It was a day to remember, not just in 2002, but everyday. We remember those at the World Trade Center. We recall the extraordinary courage of a handful of brave Americans who fought back. Their actions in the skies over Pennsylvania, I'm convinced, saved the lives of thousands on Capitol Hill which included many Legionnaires on September 11, 2001. And of course, I was there as well as so many others. We mourned the loss of those soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who worked at the Pentagon. Shortly after that terrible tragedy and with concern for the children of America's military who were soon to be called into action, The American Legion established a 9/11 Memorial Scholarship Fund, now referred to as The American Legacy Scholarship. It exists to provide the fullest measure of financial assistance for the education of children whose active duty military parents died in the service of their country as the result of the war on terrorism. One year ago the fund had just broken the $100,000.00 mark. I'm proud and pleased to tell you that today contributions to the fund are now at $400,000.00. Much of this has come from the good members of The American Legion family: The American Legion, the Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. Maybe we'll get some presentations at this Convention to boost that up to $500,000.00.

This has been a difficult year for our country. But the good news is as of the first target date of 2004 membership, we saw an increase over the 2003 membership. This is even before the membership teams in the Departments started working on membership. These are the members who paid because of their first notice. But I believe from all the emails that I've received that the membership is coming in because they've seen what The American Legion has done this past year. They see that we have gone back to the basics, but talking about basics and acting on the basics are two different things. Some people have referred in the past when they hold office that "I'm going back to the basics" but they never did anything.

As far as going back to the basics, you have to take action. The action is the four pillars of The American Legion: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Children & Youth, National Security and Americanism. We stood up for the veterans of this nation as an organization to properly fund VA health care. That is the core. People have said to me, "Commander, you had a heck of a program this year." It wasn't my program, it was in the core of this foundation of The American Legion, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. All we did was try to get people energized, to understand that we have a system worth saving and we need to do that.

Today, we helped honor some of the family of those young men and women who took the oath. We gave them the Blue Star Banner. But it's been throughout the whole country that The American Legion Posts have gone out to recognized those families that have young ones serving in the United States military today. We're giving that family a support network, almost 1,200 requests for assistance helping families of deployed heroes in this time of need. You know of the work that's done dealing with our youth programs. Of course, the finest were here on stage with me earlier. But we're a community based organization, and part of

our responsibility is the other pillars: Children & Youth and Americanism. You can overlap Children & Youth with Americanism because we've got to teach our children proper respect and how honorable it is to serve their country especially in time of war.

There is much more to be proud of in The American Legion and in the legacies being carried on by our finest young men and women to ever wear the uniform of the armed forces of the United States. When I became your National Commander, I told you about my experiences as a young security policeman while serving in Guam. I met a young soldier coming back from Vietnam, having stopped in Guam on the way back to the United States. He said to me, "Who is going to take care of me?" It's kind of ironic that one of the last soldiers I met as National Commander is one named Salvador Ross. He didn't state those words but he didn't have to. He's blind, missing a leg, part of his hand and if he doesn't say it, I know he thinks it. "Who is going to take care of me?"

We have a tremendous responsibility. This organization is great because of you. Look to your right and left and see those people who are here today. Are they going to need care next year, or the year after? It's all about comradeship, it's all about buddies. If we don't keep fighting for an adequately funded VA health care system, we risk losing it for them. So many are coming home just like Pvt. Ross. We must not let them down. We will not let them down on my watch.

As Legionnaires and veterans have done for us in past years, we must make certain that a viable VA health care system will always be there for the new generation. They need it. They deserve it. And they shall have it. Anytime you fund the fight of war, there is additional cost to that war and that's the health care of the men and women who fight that war.

...*Standing Applause.*

Our next guest is a sixth generation Missourian born in St. Louis. He grew up in Mexico, Missouri where he still resides and tends to several groves of trees he planted by hand. At 33 years old he became the 47th Governor of Missouri, the youngest Governor the State has ever had. He served Missouri for two terms. He is a strong supporter of law enforcement and the United States military. He serves as the ranking Republican on the Small Business Committee and is the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee that funds the nation's housing and veterans needs. Please welcome United States Senator Christopher Bond.

Address: The Honorable Christopher Bond
United States Senate

It is indeed a great honor to address this wonderful National Convention of The American Legion. As a Missourian, I welcome you to Missouri. It would be a little redundant to say we issue you a warm welcome. All the speeches you hear today probably could be traded in by most people who live here for a good one inch rain. But we hope that you will enjoy our fair city and that the air conditioning will hold up. I would be remiss in welcoming you if I did not also recognize your spouses and families who tirelessly supported you during your deployed service, kept the fires burning for your return. I particularly appreciate the warm welcome from your National Commander Ron Conley.

This is a pivotal time as we gather together. As we look at our nation's history, we have U.S. forces deployed overseas in Iraq and other distant shores for the purpose of fighting terrorism abroad so it cannot strike here again. People are concerned about the terrorist attacks in Iraq. The fact of the matter remains, friends, that since we've carried the battle to them, the terrorist attacks are on their territory, not ours, where our fighting men and women are prepared to take them on and to win those battles.

Our Commander in Chief has not lightly committed our troops to fight against terrorists and the dictators who would support them. Yet, a debate continues today questioning the wisdom of the President's commitment. Let me be clear, I support that decision. It was and remains absolutely necessary that we not flinch in the face of the current threats that confront us. The reports coming from our troops and leaders in Iraq indicate that in spite of the continued threat of violence, the morale and commitment of our forces remain very high. While we won the war in record time, it is now clear that the peace will take much more time to achieve. And that's not surprising, because the forces are motivated by evil spirits

that have not been banished.

The attacks of 9/11 made it clear that the threat of terror is not an idle threat. The President made it amply clear not long ago after the attacks that the war to defeat terrorism would take years, not months. We cannot retreat from the course the President has set for us. To do so would send the message that we are not committed to confronting terrorism that has destabilized major regions of the globe and poses a significant threat of mass casualties with the aid of weapons of mass destruction to any state that stands in the way of terrorist demands. The news coming out of Iraq and other global hot spots makes it clear that our all volunteer force augmented by Guard and Reserve volunteers, has been and is ready for the task and is without equal. When our troops come home we will be waiting with open arms to express our thanks and our gratitude.

There is not a veteran here who does not understand the commitment our volunteer forces have made. When called, you reported to two World Wars; the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm and other contingency operations that required your service. So for me it's an honor to stand before you, to thank you for your service. We are free because of your service. The Iraqi people are free because of men and women who were willing to follow your lead.

Now the symbol of our commitment is something you all are familiar with. When you first entered military service, you swore an oath to defend the constitution and the symbol to which I refer was most likely standing silently at attention nearby. Wherever you served overseas this symbol identified where those who covered your back were located. And when you returned the symbol's presence reminded you that you were truly home. The symbol, of course, to which I refer is our beloved Old Glory. In a nation defined by many cultures with many values and many beliefs and even many languages, our Old Glory is one symbol that unites us. In combat it is the one symbol around which we can gather and know that we're still standing on free soil. The current effort to defend our Nation's symbol from those who would desecrate it rests in the United States Senate.

On June 3rd of this year the House of Representatives passed legislation that reads "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States." Very simple. The Senate version has 56 supporters but we need two-thirds of the Senate or 66 senators in support if we're going to see the measure pass so it can be forwarded to the State Legislatures. I hope we can do it, and I ask you to determine if your senators have supported the flag amendment. We have an election coming up in 15 months in case anybody hadn't notice and this would be a good time to emphasize your interest in exercising that vote, and that will make your voices heard.

You and Commander Ron Conley obviously know a little bit about making your voices heard. As the largest veterans' service organization in the country with almost 3 million members it's your voice that reminds me and reminds all of us what it is we were sent to Washington to serve. Among the highest priorities are veterans health and benefits. I've been listening for some time, which is why I continue to work hard at improving accountability and making the VA health system a model of efficiency. Yet I know that there is still much to be done. I commend those in the VA who are working hard to do it.

As Chairman of the VA/HUD Appropriations Subcommittee that funds VA, I have a responsibility to draft the VA funding bill along with my counterpart the ranking member Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, who also is the strongest supporter of veterans and veterans issues. Senator Mikulski and I cannot write a blank check as we are constrained by spending limits in Congress. That's why I strive to make the money we do provide go further by eliminating waste and inefficiencies, and making sure that funds for veterans are not siphoned off in other activities or other unneeded buildings in the VA system. In the past four years, I have been able to increase the veterans medical care account by almost a total of $4 [billion] dollars. This year we have a very tough time, but we are going to do our very best to meet our commitment to the nation's veterans and to make sure that veterans medical care is adequately funded.

Access to health care and the long waiting lines experienced by veterans seeking care is clearly a problem that needs to be fixed. One reason waiting lines are too long is due to the demand by many veterans for the pharmacy drug benefit offered by the VHA, and understandably so. My committee is supportive of Secretary Principi's efforts to allow the VHA to provide drug benefits to veterans for prescriptions written by private care

physicians. When veterans no longer need a VHA appointment to get their prescriptions filled, the lines will be shortened so that those who need to see a doctor can get to see the doctor. Those who just need to prescriptions can get their prescriptions filled.

Finally, there's an issue that demands our attention that impacts fewer veterans but is perceived by all veterans as unfair. And that is of course the requirement that a military retiree pay for his disability payment due to a service-connected disability out of his retirement check. And that must end. The American Legion continues to fight for Concurrent Receipt. I am a cosponsor and supporter of Concurrent Receipt. I will continue this fight and ask for your help as we seek to win this battle.

Your efforts to improve veterans benefits and health care are vital to the health of the overall VA system. Your Commander, Ron Conley, has wisely stated that our VA system cannot be sustained without the partnership and cooperation of the Administration, the veterans, the VSOs who represent you, the Congress and the others in the Administration. If we fail to include any, there's a recipe for failure. I think we have an outstanding advocate and servant in Secretary Principi. Teamed with the leadership of The American Legion and your support we should have no doubt that Secretary Principi will continue to make improvements in this VA system.

Later this afternoon, of course, we're very proud that our Commander-in-Chief is coming to St. Louis and will be addressing the Convention. As you know, he has the weight of the nation and the burdens of the world on his shoulders. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, he has taken lots of criticisms but he has not lightly committed U.S. forces to our nation's defense. Every casualty that is reported is a reminder to the Commander-in-Chief and to all of us that freedom is not free. One group of citizens who understands the cost of freedom is seated before me here at this Convention. When our Commander-in-Chief reports to you, it's my hope and prayer that he will be heartily welcomed for his leadership which he has demonstrated in two key areas: placing an outstanding leader in charge at the VA, and confronting the terrorists, the dictators and those who support them who would rule by violence and fear.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I now call on the National Adjutant Robert Spanogle of the Department of Michigan to issue the Call for the Convention.

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

Call for the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in St. Louis, Missouri on August 26th-28th, 2003. The Convention business sessions will be held in America's Center Halls 4 and 5, Street Level.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The Convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year amending the National Constitution and By-Laws and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it. At 12:00 o'clock (noon) of the final session or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, which ever first occurs on Thursday, August 28th, 2003, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and the five National Vice Commanders in that sequence.

Representation

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

Vote

"...Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention July 28th, 2003, and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized

delegate strength have been paid and one alternate for each delegate. " (Section 3, Article V)

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

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

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

Alternates

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

National Executive Committee

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

Department Officials

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

Convention Committees

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

Americanism
Children & Youth
Constitutional Amendments and By-Laws
Credentials and Internal Affairs
- Credentials and other Internal Matters, (Section I & II)
- Membership (Section III)

Economic
- Employment & Veterans Preference
- Other Economic Matters

Finance
Foreign Relations
Legislation & Rules
National Security Committee; Joint Meeting (Includes Aerospace, Defense, Civil Preparedness, Law and Order, Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
- Claims Rating
- Hospital and Medical Services

Mr. Commander, that completes the call for the 85th Annual National Convention.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I now declare the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion to be regularly convened.

Certificate of Appreciation
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

The man who has served as our National Chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principles of God and country. He serves on the Executive Board and as a Chaplain of the Central Labor Council for Wabash Valley in Terre Haute, Indiana. He is a Marine combat veteran of the Vietnam War and an active member of The American Legion. He is a life member of American Legion Post 139 in Sullivan, Indiana. He cites many memorial moments in his American Legion services, among them officiating at the full military services for a Marine Vietnam veteran MIA whose remains were repatriated. It is an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation marking his years of service as Chaplain of the National American Legion, to Chaplain Norris Keirn.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of Charlotte, North Carolina
For the 2002 National Convention
Richard J. Santos, Maryland, Past National Commander

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I call on Past National Commander Rick Santos of Maryland to present the Plaque of Appreciation to the city of Charlotte, North Carolina for hosting the 2002 National Convention.

PNC SANTOS: To put on a National Convention requires the unswerving dedication, service, and commitment of a Department within The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and a detachment of the Sons of The American Legion. It also requires the cooperation of local city officials, resident citizens and employees of that state and city that hosts our National Convention.

In 2002, our National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina was one, of course, I would not forget, and I'm sure those in North Carolina will not forget. On behalf of The American Legion, our entire American Legion family, we say a job well done to the Legion family in North Carolina, especially under the guidance of the President of the North Carolina Convention Corporation, Jerry Hedrick, and all those that served with him and for him.

Again, Jerry, on behalf of The American Legion, please accept this plaque on behalf of the Legion family in North Carolina and all those from Charlotte, throughout the state, that made us most welcome, plus with the rain on Sunday at the parade, a welcome day.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It is my honor to present to you the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion who is a life member of Lysle Rishel Squadron 68 of the detachment of Kansas. He comes from an American Legion family who continue active in being members of our organization. He has served at every level of the Sons of The American. Welcome to our stage Commander Neal Warnken of Kansas.

Address: Sons of The American Legion
Neal C. Warnken, Kansas
Newly Elected National Commander

Thank you, Commander Conley, for the invitation to come before your Convention. I would like at this time to introduce some key people here with me on stage. First, I would like to introduce my beautiful wife Patty and our immediate Past National Commander and his wife, Steve and Linda Laws. Also our National Adjutant Mr. Brian O'Hearne. Is the Kansas delegation on the floor this morning? *Yells from the floor.* I would also like to say hello to my mother and my father, Dave and Lorraine Warnken.

Building a better tomorrow is going to be my theme for the next year and after the last days, months, years we should strive to make this a better place for all. Let us reflect on what had happened in New York City, Washington, D.C., military action in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq, and the fact that many of our soldiers and loved ones are still in harms way even today. There is a song that comes to mind. That song was written by a gentleman or at least sang by a gentleman by the name of Darryl Warley. And the message is quite simple

and the words are, "Have you forgotten?" Well, I can tell you as the Commander of the Sons of The American Legion representing over 270,000 members of the Sons of The American Legion, no, we have not forgotten and nor will we forget America's greatest asset and that is the American veteran.

We must build a better tomorrow by taking care of our veterans and their families by ensuring the growth of the Child Welfare Foundation and the Children's Miracle Network. Working together as a family we can accomplish these goals.

Commander Conley, I congratulate you on a great year and wish you a successful convention.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Before the members of the Sons of The American Legion leave the stage I'd like to have Steve Laws stand up. He serves their organization with great honor and distinction. I had an opportunity to be with him on several occasions but the tremendous job and great honor to have him serve a part of our team.

It's time to welcome those who come to us from other organizations to bring greetings. Our first guest is the President General of the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution. He was elected to that office just last month. Welcome Raymond Musgrave.

Greetings: Raymond G. Musgrave, President General
National Society, Sons of the American Revolution

Greetings from the descendants of America's first Legion. To those Legionnaires herein assembled and those who compose the world's greatest armada, the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. Our organizations have a common purpose to preserve freedom and liberty for all people in this nation and throughout the globe. The American dream is to be free of tyranny and suppression of any form. We exist during our term of life as responsible human beings so that our prodigy may survive to ensure the future's progress that will unfold. Such a worthy endeavor requires commitment, cost, tribute of self-sacrifice, intense labor, the highest development of technology and human intelligence, national monetary resources and an undeniable faith in our creator.

Many of our critics label us as relics of the past who promote aggression, nation building and colonization. Tell this to the families whose love ones remains lie under the crust of mother earth, for those who have no limbs with which to move their remaining body parts. The compatriots from 1776 to 2003 have proven to those who criticize that they are being blinded by a misunderstanding and burdened by half truths from those who oppose the truce of America's creation of a free form of government. We are a collection of human beings whose dedication is to preserve our many species of humanity. We love peace, freedom and liberty, and we are willing to share it with all who will pay the price in preserving it. Don't misjudge our dedication and intent. We must retain and enhance our strength to keep ever vigilant in our duty to suppress at any minutes notice any threat to our national freedom. There must never occur in this nation another 9/11/01 event. Let us combine our respective organizations, the efforts in the future. Let us especially respect and form committees which will interact one into the other for the common goals and purposes of both of these organizations. Let us work jointly to ensure the ever existence of freedom and liberty. We must dedicate ourselves to promote the public teachings of national heritage by truth and not by revisionary methods which would strip and forever bury the heroic sacrifices of our forefathers who were willing to give their very all so that we may, on this present day, enjoy and celebrate humanities greatest achievements of government for and by the people.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Our next guest is a Dominion President of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada, and a man dedicated to veterans. Welcome Bob Cassels.

Greetings: R. R. (Bob) Cassels
Dominion President
Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada

It is my pleasure to be here today to bring you greetings from Canada's oldest veterans

organization; the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada formed in 1840. As I told some the other day, at 5:00 o'clock in the morning with my wake up, I felt I'd been the president that long.

I can see that you have had a very busy year, Commander Conley, working in all the benefits that you're trying to get for your veterans. I read in your write-up some of the issues that you have been working on: increasing funding for veterans health care, capital assets realignment for enhancing services for your veterans, demanding action to reduce various VA workload backlogs, forcing VA to acknowledge problems created by lack of action on thousands of appeal claims. I listened this morning as you gave your speech and presentation, and it reminds me of when I'm back home and we're dealing with our government. We seem to have the same problems, and I guess whether it's our government or yours, getting them to recognize the veterans. And to those who have sacrificed so they have the freedoms they have today. It's the soldier that got it for them. It's the soldier that maintains that.

I noticed also, and I've read many times, the support of the Legion family towards the troops and their families who are here; assisting them with grass cutting, doctor appointments, helping them with their children. You are to be commended for that work you do for those people who are serving in other countries so that we can enjoy these freedoms we have in Canada and the United States.

There are a few things that we've been doing working along with our sister organization, the Royal Canadian Legion in Canada for programs for our veterans. Just to mention a few, we're in the process of working on seven issues, one being a veterans' independence program that we have in place in Canada. That is, if a veteran cannot get access to a bed, our government, through Veterans Affairs, will keep them in their home. They will subsidize for home care, grass cutting, snow removal and, if they need assistance in the kitchen for cooking, they do that. What was happening to us is if the veteran passed away, in twelve months, it was like turning the key and it got shut off. The widow lost all of her care that she would have had through that, even though she has saved our government thousands of dollars by looking after that veteran in his home where he was comfortable and with his family. We've been very fortunate we have a Minister of Veterans Affairs who made an announcement in the House of Commons on the 13th of May, that this will not happen now. It will be getting a reading in the Fall in the House. And since the 1st of May, they have not cut one widow off that program. So she is going to retain that for the remainder of her life for looking after her spouse.

We had a program in place in Canada that if an individual serving in the armed forces was killed in the line of duty, the Canadian government would look after the educational needs of their children; getting them through the primary schools on to university and looking after those costs. In 1995 for some reason it was removed. This is going to be reinstated. The education portion will be subsidized and they will be looked after by the Canadian government through Veterans Affairs.

Also, we're working on long-term care as you had mentioned, Commander Conley, which is something with dementia. We have PTSD problems with people and they need the care. We've also received the word that an increase in pensions for POW's (Prisoners of War) will be increased. We have a program in Canada called 'Canada Remembers'. They take veterans to travel to the former different theaters of war. Most recently we just returned from Korea three weeks ago, where we traveled with, I believe, 58 Korean veterans that the Canadian government took back to Korea for the 50th Anniversary of the end of the Korean War. We took part in the ceremonies in Pamyongwon on the 27th [parallel], the unveiling of the monument. Following that, I had the opportunity to go along with veterans to the United Nations Cemetery in Pusan where 547 Canadians are laid to rest. Some of them are buddies, as we say, of those who went back. For some, it was their first time back and they were quite amazed at how Korea has progressed. They also went to Juneau Beach.

Our country, Canada, through our Veterans Affairs 'Canada Remembers' program is refurnishing monuments in Europe. The one at Vinny Ridge is being refurbished. I'm not sure what the cost is but I know it's quite a cost.

I thank the members of The American Legion family for the hospitality that you have shown to my wife, Lise and myself, and wish you all the best in the years to come.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Next, a man who has been a member of the Royal Canadian Legion for nearly three decades. During that time, he has served in a leadership capacity and at Branch, Zone, District and Provincial level. He served as a member of the Legion's Dominion Executive Council for six years. Today, he is the Dominion Vice President of the Royal Canadian Legion. I just asked him if he gets kidded a lot about his name because here in St. Louis with the 100 some degree temperatures, please welcome Jack Frost.

Greetings: Jack Frost
Dominion Vice President
The Royal Canadian Legion

Thank you for inviting myself and my wife, Lynn, to your Convention. Your hospitality can only be described as incredible, and we are most grateful for you for having us in your midst as you go about the business of serving your veterans.

I listened to your remarks, Comrade Ron, and I must say I was inspired. To you, sir, I offer my salute for your continued advocacy for the veteran. They must never be forgotten.

During my youth, my parents, they tried to impart as much worldly knowledge as possible before I left the nest. My father always said, if you're going to stand before an audience such as this, then know what you're talking about and keep it short. My mother was much more simple in these matters. She said, "Make sure your fly is up." Well, I'm sure of one thing today, Comrades.

I bring greetings from the more than 430,000 Canadians who are part of The Royal Canadian Legion. Unfortunately, due to previous commitments, our Dominion President Alan Parks asked that I stand in for him and bring you his greetings and those of our members. Our Canadian Legion, with Alan as our president, is a champion of veterans rights and benefits just as your National Commander, Ron Conley, has been during the term of his office. Your continued advocacy for the benefits of the American veterans mirrors what we do in the land across the border. The key word I used was 'continued' because that is how it has to be. Legionnaires here, in Canada and similar organizations around the world were formed to ensure our veterans were not forgotten by the governments. And the work is never ending. As long as there is a sailor, soldier or airman who is asked to serve, there must be a Legion to protect them after their service is done.

We have been particularly fortunate in Canada with our campaigns to maintain veterans' services and have them updated as need be. But it takes determination and commitment to make sure that the level of care is never cut back. Our politicians know that we are watching as yours know that you are watching to ensure that veterans' services and benefits are continually maintained and updated. It is our duty to continually remind those around us that it is thanks to the men and women who served when called upon to meet the threats of our way of life that we still have the quality of life we enjoy today. To do less is to abdicate the responsibility passed on from previous generations. These service men and women deserve the best treatment possible from the government that has employed them when the job is done, be it in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Far East or even here at home.

Before I came this week, I had a chance to think about what was going on in the world. It struck me that not a lot has change since our men and women fought together in Europe, Korea, and the Gulf War, and served on other peacekeeping and peacemaking missions around the world. Wars are a fact of life as they always have been. In some cases, you have been in the middle of conflicts without us. In others, we have been in similar places without you. While our continent makes us neighbors, our political parties and powers don't always necessarily agree on how to approach a problem. Neither you, nor I, have to make apologizes to each other for the bond that exists between us. It is a bond that our people and our organizations have forged in the heat of battle. We also share a land mass that only exists as it does because we protect it together. We do, indeed, have our differences and long may they exist. They are what makes you so uniquely American and us so uniquely Canadian, but they should never be allowed to sever the ties that our veterans forged in wars that they have been involved in since the beginning of this last century.

Just before I came to St. Louis, a Canadian journalist did a polling sample of Americans in the more northern states. What he found was mutual respect for each other's way of life.

Long may it be that way and long may we serve to remind our citizens that there is a debt owed that can never be repaid. And that debt is to those that have taken on the role of defender. In Vancouver just a couple of weeks ago, a group of people decided to stage a protest about their plight on the grounds of one of our war memorials. When the veterans in the region started to protest this abuse of the memorial, one of the protestor's stated that war was like his ass, it was behind him. Obviously, he forgot those who did protect his ass and his right to protest.

This is the other role we have to play as Legionnaires, my friends. We must never let the citizens of our nations forget that they live today in a society that only exists because of the sacrifices at home and abroad. It is a role that we in The Royal Canadian Legion relish and is one that we continue to carry out with zeal and commitment. Caring for our veterans and ensuring their sacrifice is remembered are the cornerstones upon which The Royal Canadian Legion has been built. Like your cornerstones they remain strong. The cornerstones of our nations remain strong and with the dedication of our members to the ideals of our nations, they will support our systems for a long time to come.

In closing, my wife and I are deeply honored to be here. We've enjoyed your company and, as I said in the beginning, you have shown me hospitality that is second to none.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Chair recognizes Larry Besson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

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

To the Eighty-Fifth Annual National Convention of The American Legion, St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003.

The section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 24, 2003, in Majestic A, 2nd Level, of the Renaissance Conference Plaza.

Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Chairman, and James C. Young of Texas was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the Delegate Strength Report as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based upon the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer thirty (30) days prior to the opening of the Convention (July 28, 2003); 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 July 28, 2003, and in accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 3,041 allocated as follows:

Alabama	31	Montana	18
Alaska	14	Nebraska	60
Arizona	50	Nevada	14

Arkansas	26	New Hampshire	32
California	142	New Jersey	81
Colorado	32	New Mexico	19
Connecticut	36	New York	188
Delaware	17	North Carolina	52
District of Columbia	9	North Dakota	30
Florida	134	Ohio	154
France	9	Oklahoma	36
Georgia	56	Oregon	32
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	244
Idaho	19	Philippines	8
Illinois	142	Puerto Rico	14
Indiana	130	Rhode Island	15
Iowa	75	South Carolina	33
Kansas	53	South Dakota	33
Kentucky	36	Tennessee	39
Louisiana	44	Texas	94
Maine	34	Utah	16
Maryland	86	Vermont	23
Massachusetts	69	Virginia	62
Mexico	7	Washington	43
Michigan	99	West Virginia	34
Minnesota	121	Wisconsin	81
Mississippi	25	Wyoming	14
Missouri	67		

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

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...*From the floor* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: All in favor so indicate by usual sign say "aye." Opposed? The report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section I, is adopted; a quorum is present.

Chair recognizes Ed Dentz from Department of Virginia, Chairman of the National

Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Edwin J. Dentz, (VA)

The Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met at 10:00 AM on Sunday, August 24, 2003 in the Renaissance Grand Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri. Forty-one (41) delegates assigned to this Convention Committee were in attendance, plus sixteen (16) guests.

Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Edwin J. Dentz, a delegate from the Department of Virginia, was elected Permanent Chairman. Leo P. Burke, a delegate from the Department of California, was elected Permanent Secretary.

The Committee then proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously 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.

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

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

The Legislative and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action. However, the Committee heard remarks from Kevin Gunn, Administrative Assistant for Representative Gephardt (MO). Mr. Gunn shared his views on establishing and maintaining strong relationships with local congressional offices to enhance grassroots lobbying efforts.

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

This summer, Congress received two thorough reports concerning veterans' health care. One report came from the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans. The other report came from National Commander Conley entitled, "A System Worth Saving." Both reports identified a critical common finding: timely access to quality VA health care is currently jeopardized because of inadequate annual Federal funding. Both reports addressed the need for Congress to focus on its budgetary obligation to America's veterans.

Clearly, VA must receive guaranteed funding to meet the health care demands placed on the nation's largest, integrated health care delivery system. VA medical care, a national resource, continues to exceed nationally recognized health care standards, but only a fraction of its patient population receives timely access to health care.

Since 1996, VA's funding has increased 40 percent, but its patient population has increased 70 percent. VA is currently treating over twice the number of patients, but many veterans must wait six months or longer for a primary or referral care appointment. This is absolutely unacceptable.

Prior to going on its August Recess, the House of Representatives passed the VA HUD appropriations bill for FY 2004 that continues to shortchange VA medical care. This bill is $1.8 billion less than Congress agreed to fund VA medical care just before Memorial Day.

Now the focus turns to the Senate. VA HUD Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman, Kit Bond (MO) and his colleagues are urged to meet the Budget Resolution funding recommendation for VA medical care, $27.1 billion.

The message is clear—; without guaranteed funding, VA will continue to ration health care for America's veterans, those currently enrolled. Without guaranteed funding, VA Secretary Principi will continue to deny enrollment to Priority Group 8 and possibly others.

Mr. Chairman, I do not believe currently VA funding reflects the "Thanks of a Grateful Nation," especially a Nation at war.

Mr. Chairman, on September 16, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to

discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. The highlight of this event will be the National Commander's testimony before a joint session of the congressional Veterans' Affairs Committees.

National Commander Conley, as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Virginia, 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.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...*From the floor* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Calling for the question. All in favor say "aye." Opposed? The Report is adopted.

The Chair recognizes Kenneth Danilson of Iowa, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance for the purpose of making a report.

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

Forty-six (46) members met at the Renaissance Grand Hotel, Benton Room, at 9:00a.m. Sunday, August 24,2003 in St. Louis, Missouri. Paul M. Allen (Minnesota), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and made general announcements concerning convention activities. He then informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana) who updated the committee on the status of the U.S. economy and its effect on the investment policy of the national headquarters.

As the first half of 2003 closed, Mr. Buskirk reported that Wall Street economists focused on unemployment as it soared to a nine-year high of 6.4%. U.S. corporations announced 60,000 job cuts in June. In addition, average work week hours were down to 33.7 per American worker .

In spite of these factors, it appears that the U .S. economy is beginning to expand. New orders for goods rose by 1% last month and exports by 4%. With the occupation of Iraq, good corporate earnings are being reported for the end of the second quarter of 2003. The Dow Jones Industrial average is up 7.8%.

For the balance of 2003, an improved profit outlook and low interest rates suggest that the tide is turning for the economy. New orders for technology products have been slowly improving. This pent-up demand for capital goods makes us cautiously optimistic that the U.S. economy is rebounding.

The American Legion Investment portfolios have survived the economic recession through the application of a conservative long-term growth investment strategy. Treasurer Buskirk stated that should the economy continue to rebound, he is of the opinion that improved economic circumstances will be reflected in the positive growth of our investments. Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that national dues be set at $9.00. A motion from Myron Kirby (Illinois) was made that the 2004 per capita dues remain at $9.00. Tony Riley (Indiana) seconded the motion and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Dennis Henkemeyer (Minnesota), Chairman of The American Legion Magazine Commission and Daniel S. Wheeler (Virginia), the acting publisher of The American Legion Magazine. Mr. Wheeler reported that The American Legion Magazine is projecting a year- end surplus of $2,800,000 and that the magazine has not received any postage increase this year .He also informed the committee that the magazine staff had negotiated away two paper increases. Mr. Wheeler reported that advertising sales are on track to reach their goal of $8,750,000 for the year.

National Finance Director Paul M. Allen reported that the 2002 Crowe-Chizek certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate prior to the convention and published in the convention program, shows our total assets were at $140,334,712, a 2.4% decrease over last year. He also informed the committee that our 2002 year end surplus was $1,826,710 and that we are anticipating a $868,000 year-end surplus in 2003. The national

financial status is very sound.

Roger Messier (Virginia) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the convention committee on finance. Bobby Coleman (South Carolina) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:31 a.m.

Mr. Commander as a duly delegate from the State of Iowa, I move for the approval of this report.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...*From the floor* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Calling for the question. All in favor say "aye." Opposed? The report is adopted.

At this time, I call on the National Adjutant for Administrative announcements.

Announcement: Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

The Commander wishes on the adjournment of this first session of Tuesday before our special session, that The Hon. Sparky Gierke, Past National Commander, Addington Wagner, Past National Commander, Les Galloway who is Chairman of the Resolution Subcommittee of the NEC, and Tom Cadmus who is the former chairman of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation report up here right after this session recesses.

The Western Caucus will meet in this room tomorrow after the close of the Wednesday session in the Convention Hall. So those of you who are in the Western Caucus of The American Legion please stay after the recess tomorrow, they have a meeting here in this Hall.

As you can see on the agendas, President George W. Bush will address The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion in this Convention Hall at 3:05 p.m. Now everyone understands that the security will remain in place, that means the magnetometers will remain outside so if you leave the Hall, it will have to come out and you'll have to go back through the magnetometers.

The American Legion Auxiliary will be having a luncheon so they will be joining us probably around 2:00 o'clock, and from 2:00 o'clock., starting there, we will provide some entertainment.

The other thing we request is that the President of the United States, our President, does travel with a number of media both written media and television and radio. They will be entering the Hall also. We will be in the process for the next hour of rearranging the stage so you'll see a little bit of confusion, but we hope you'll bear with us.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I forgot to recognize one other individual when I recognized the Department of Pennsylvania and that's Dr. Almo Sebastianelli who has been a good supporter for many years.

The time now is 1:43 p.m., at this time we will recess this session until 3:00 p.m. Please stand. With the Colors of our country in place, we will render the proper salute. One, two.

We are now recessed until 3:00 o'clock.

The Honorable George W. Bush, Jr.
President of The United States

THE PRESIDENT: Thanks for that warm welcome. It is great to be here in St. Louis, Missouri, at the 85th Annual Convention of the American Legion. I wonder if I'm the only member here today from Post 77, in Houston, Texas?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No. *(Laughter.)*

THE PRESIDENT: Seems like they'd have given you a better seat. (Laughter and applause.)

It is always an honor to be with people who have served America and who love America. *Applause is heard in various places throughout the speech.*

When the American Legion held its first caucus in this city, back in 1919, Legionnaires

dedicated this organization to the service of God and country. Times change, but those are still the right priorities.

On behalf of your fellow citizens, I thank The American Legion and the Ladies Auxiliary for your idealism and for your faithful service to God and country.

I'm honored to be traveling today with Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Tony Principi. He served in Vietnam, and he serves his comrades in my Cabinet. He's a tireless advocate for our nation's veterans. I want you to understand the facts of this good man's leadership. The budget for Veterans Affairs has gone up by $15 billion since I took office, a 30 percent increase. And my budget for fiscal year 2004 includes the largest discretionary increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs ever requested by a President. The Department, under Tony's lead, has made major progress in reducing the backlog of veterans' disability claims and the number of veterans waiting for health care. And we will continue to work to make sure those backlogs are eliminated.

I want to thank Ron Conley, the National Commander of The American Legion, for his kind introduction and for his leadership of this distinguished group of citizens. I appreciate Senator Jim Talent and Congressman Todd Akin from the state of Missouri who are here with us today. I thank Elsie Bailey, American Legion's Lady Auxiliary National President.

I'm honored to be on the stage with Major General Patrick Brady, Medal of Honor recipient. I know in the audience somewhere is my friend Arlene Howard. There she is. Arlene, thank you. I don't know if you remember the speech I gave in front of the Congress right after the attacks of September the 11th, but I held up the badge of one of the brave who were killed. It was the badge of Arlene's son. I'm honored you're here, Arlene, I appreciate you coming—I can't wait to give you a hug.

I want to thank the board of directors for the invitation. And I want to thank you all for being such great Americans. The American Legion is an effective and respected voice for the veteran, and you speak with authority. In the years following the first World War, leaders of this organization helped to establish the U.S. Veterans Bureau. Following World War II, you helped secure passage of the GI Bill. You've supported the memorials to those who fought in World War II and Korea and Vietnam, so the sacrifices of those wars are always remembered.

For two generations, you have demanded a full accounting of Americans whose fate is undetermined. And my administration will not rest until that accounting is complete. And having fought under the American flag and seen it folded and given to families of your friends, you are committed, as am I, to protecting the dignity of the flag in the Constitution of the United States. *(Standing applause.)*

In the 20th century, the American flag and the American uniform stood for something unique in history. This nation gained great power and we used that power in the service of human freedom. Americans liberated continents and concentration camps. America's armed forces humbled tyrants and raised up and befriended nations that once fought against us. Our nation led a great alliance against a communist empire, until that empire was gone and its captives were free. America's veterans have all been a part of this great story of perseverance and courage, and people and nations across the world are better off because of your service.

On Memorial Day last year, I visited the military cemetery at Normandy, and saw the grave of one of the founders of the American Legion, Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. When Roosevelt landed with the first wave of his unit on D-Day, he and his men found themselves in a different part of Utah Beach from the point they expected. Roosevelt quickly sized up the situation and called in a whole division to the new sector. Turning a challenge into an advantage, he declared: we'll start the war from here.

Well, a great challenge came to America on September the 11th, 2001. Enemies who plotted for years in secret, carried out missions of murder on our own soil. It was a day of suffering and sorrow. It was also a day of decision for our country. As a united and resolute people, America declared: we'll start the war from here.

In this first war of the 21st century, America and all free nations are facing a new threat and fighting a new enemy, a global network of terror supported by outlaw regimes. We've seen the hand of the terrorist enemy in the attacks on our country. We've seen the deadly work of the terrorists in Bali, in Mombasa, in Riyadh, in Jakarta, in Casablanca. On a single day last week we saw the true nature of the terrorists once again. In Baghdad they attacked

a symbol of the civilized world—the United Nations Headquarters—and killed men and women who were there to bring humanitarian help to the Iraqi people. They killed a respected U.N. Special Representative, Sergio Vieira deMello, from Brazil. And on the same day in Jerusalem, a terrorist murdered 21 innocent people who were riding a bus, including little children and five Americans.

The terrorists' aim is to spread chaos and fear by killing on an ever-widening scale. They serve their cause by sacrificing the innocent. They celebrate the murder of women and children. They attacked the civilized world because they bear a deep hatred for the values of the civilized world. They hate freedom and religious tolerance and democracy and equality for women. They hate Christians and Jews and every Muslim who does not share their narrow and violent vision.

No nation can be neutral in the struggle between civilization and chaos. Every nation that stands on the side of freedom and the value of human life must condemn terrorism and act against the few who would destroy the hopes of the many.

Because America stands for freedom and tolerance and the rights of all, the terrorists have targeted our country. During the last few decades the terrorists grew bolder, believing if they hit America hard, America would retreat and back down. Five years ago, one of the terrorists said that an attack could make America run in less than 24 hours. They're learning something different today. The terrorists have not seen America running, they've seen America marching. They've seen the armies of liberation. They have seen the armies of liberation marching into Kabul and to Baghdad.

The terrorists have seen speeding tank convoys and roaring jets and special forces arriving in midnight raids. And sometimes justice has found them before they could see anything coming at all. We've adopted a new strategy for a new kind of war. We will not wait for known enemies to strike us again. We will strike them and their camps or caves or wherever they hide before they hit more of our cities and kill more of our citizens. We will do everything in our power to deny terrorists weapons of mass destruction before they can commit murder on an unimaginable scale.

The security of this nation and our friends requires decisive action. And with a broad coalition, we're taking that action around the globe. We are on the offensive against terror, and we will stay on the offensive against terror.

In Afghanistan, we acted against the Taliban regime that harbored al Qaeda and ruled by terror. The Taliban felt pretty strong, when they were whipping women in the streets and executing them in soccer fields. When our coalition moved in, the Taliban ran quickly for the caves. But the caves could not hide these killers from justice. We've sent a message that is understood throughout the world: if you harbor a terrorist, if you support a terrorist, if you feed a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists, and the Taliban found out what we meant.

Afghanistan today is a friend of the United States of America. Because we acted, that country is not a haven for terrorists, and the people of America are safer from attack. That nation still faces challenges, and our coalition forces there still face dangers. Yet, we're working every day to make sure that Afghanistan finds its future as a free and stable and peaceful nation. America and the new Afghan army are working together in a major operation, called Warrior Sweep, which is hunting down terrorists one by one. NATO is now taking a leading role in keeping Afghanistan secure. New roads are being built, medical clinics are opening, and many young girls are going to school for the first time, thanks to our coalition and the United States of America.

The al Qaeda terrorists lost a base in Afghanistan, but they operate in many other places. We're on their trail, from Pakistan, to the Philippines, to the Horn of Africa. Earlier this month, we captured a major terrorist named Hambali. He's a known killer, and was a close associate of September the 11th mastermind, Khalid Shaykh Muhammad. Hambali was one of the world's most lethal terrorists, and is suspected of planning the attack on Bali and other recent acts of terror. We're making steady progress. Nearly two-thirds of known senior al Qaeda leaders, operational managers, and key facilitators, have either been captured or killed.

Now al Qaeda is wounded, yet, not destroyed. It remains a grave danger to the American people. Terrorist networks are still finding recruits and still plotting attacks, and still intending to strike our country. Yet, our resolve is firm, and it is clear: no matter how

long it takes, we will bring to justice those who plot against America.

We've also pursued the war on terror in Iraq. America and our coalition removed a regime that built, possessed and used weapons of mass destruction, a regime that sponsored terror and a regime that persecuted its people. Our military coalition destroyed the Iraqi regime, while taking extraordinary measures to spare innocent life. The battle of Iraq was conducted with the skill and honor of a great military, the United States Armed Forces. Because of our military, catastrophic weapons will no longer be in the hands of a reckless, unstable dictator. Because of our military, Middle Eastern countries no longer fear subversion and attack by Saddam Hussein. Because of our military, Iraq will no longer be a source of funding for suicide bombers in the Middle East. Because of our men and women in uniform, the torture chambers in Iraq are closed, the prison cells for children are empty and the people who speak their minds need not fear execution.

In all the debates over Iraq, we must never forget Iraq. We must never forget the brutal nature of the regime of Saddam Hussein. Mass grave sites, literally thousands of people buried in mass grave sites were recently discovered by our troops. They contain the remains not only of executed men and women, but of executed children, as well. Our people in uniform, joined by fine allies, ended this nightmare in Iraq, removed a threat to the world, and they have made our nation proud.

The work of our coalition in Iraq goes on because that country is now a point of testing in the war on terror. The remnants of Saddam's regime are still dangerous, and terrorists are gathering in Iraq to undermine the advance of freedom. Al Qaeda and the other global terror networks recognize that the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime is a defeat for them. They know that a democratic Iraq in the heart of the Middle East would be a further defeat for their ideology of terror. They know that the spread of peace and hope in the Middle East would undermine the appeal of bitterness, resentment, and violence. And the more progress we make in Iraq, the more desperate the terrorists will become. Freedom is a threat to their way of life.

They have sabotaged water mains and oil pipelines, and attacked local police. Last week, they killed aid workers bringing food and medicine to the country. The terrorists have killed innocent Iraqis and Americans and U.N. officials from many nations. They have declared war on the entire civilized world, and the civilized world will not be intimidated. Retreat in the face of terror would only invite further and bolder attacks. There will be no retreat.

We are on the offensive against the Saddam loyalists, the foreign fighters, and the criminal gangs that are attacking Iraqis and coalition forces. We're receiving more and more vital intelligence from Iraqi citizens, information that we're putting to good use. Our recent military operations have included almost 200 raids, netting more than 1,100 detainees. Since the end of major combat operations, we have seized more than 8,200 tons of ammunition, thousands of AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons.

And as we help the Iraqi people establish security, we are working through that famous deck of cards. So far, of the 55 most wanted Iraqi leaders, 42 have been captured or killed. The brutal, viscous sons of the dictator are gone. Recently we captured the former Vice President of Iraq. He was one of Saddam Hussein's most feared enforcers. And recently, as well, we captured the man known as Chemical Ali. He earned his nickname by ordering chemical weapon attacks on whole Iraqi villages, killing thousands of citizens. Chemical Ali's savage career is over. The search goes on for other former leaders of Iraq, and we will find them. After decades of smothering fear, the Iraqi people can be certain: the regime of Saddam Hussein is gone, and it is never coming back.

Ultimately, the security of Iraq will be won by the Iraqi people themselves. They must reject terror, and they must join in their own defense. And they're stepping forward. More than 38,000 Iraqis have been hired as police officers. Iraqi police and border guards and security forces are increasingly taking on critical duties. Over 1,400 Iraqi civil defense corps volunteers are being trained to work closely with coalition forces; 12,000 Iraqis will be trained in the next year for the country's new army.

At the same time, 31 countries have contributed 21,000 forces to build security in Iraq. I will continue to challenge other countries to join in this important mission. In most of Iraq today, there's steady progress toward reconstruction and civil order. Iraq's Governing Council, representing the nation's diverse groups is steadily assuming greater responsibility

over the country. The coalition provisional authority, led by Ambassador Paul Bremer, is implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure a successful, democratic Iraq, and a better future for the Iraqi people.

Building a free and peaceful Iraq will require a substantial commitment of time and resources, and it will yield a substantially safer and more secure America and the world. I'll work with the Congress to make sure we provide the resources to do the work of freedom and security.

Iraq's progress toward self-determination and democracy brings hope to other oppressed people in the region and throughout the world. It is the rise of democracy that tyrants fear and terrorists seek to undermine. The people who yearn for liberty and opportunity in countries like Iran and throughout the Middle East are watching and they are praying for our success in Iraq.

More progress will come in Iraq, and it will require hard and sustained efforts. As many of you saw firsthand in Germany and Japan after World War II, the transition from dictatorship to democracy is a massive undertaking. It's not an easy task. In the aftermath of World War II, that task took years, not months, to complete. And, yet, the effort was repaid many times over as former enemies became friends and allies and partners in keeping the peace. Likewise, the work we do today is essential to the peace of the world and for the security of our country. America is a nation that understands its responsibilities and keeps its word. And we will honor our word to the people of Iraq and those in the Middle East who yearn for freedom. Murderers will not determine the future of Iraq, and they will not determine the future of the Middle East.

In Jerusalem, as in Baghdad, terrorists are trying to undermine the hopes of peace with acts of violence. Their desperation also grows as the parties move closer to a just settlement. But terrorists do not speak for the Palestinian people. They do not serve the Palestinian cause. And a Palestinian state will never be built on the foundation of violence. Now is the time for every true friend of the Palestinian people, every leader in the Middle East, and the Palestinian people, themselves, to cut off all money and support for terrorists, and actively fight terror on all fronts. Only then can Israel be secure and the flag rise over an independent Palestine. And to bring that day closer, America will be a consistent friend of all who work for peace.

For nearly two years, on many fronts, the United States and our friends have conducted a global campaign against terror. We met the enemy on desert sands and mountain passes, wherever they choose to gather and fight. We've had successes, yet our mission continues. The stakes could not be greater for the American people. All of us who have taken an oath to defend this nation will do our duty.

Our military forces in the war on terror are showing the definition of duty. In hostile conditions and remote parts of the earth, brave Americans are sacrificing for freedom and the security of others. Some have been wounded, and some have been killed. The veterans in this hall understand the loss and sadness that have come to military families. This nation is grateful to every man and woman who serves, and we honor the memory of all who have fallen. We also remember what this fight is about. Our military is confronting terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other places so our people will not have to confront terrorist violence in New York, or St. Louis, or Los Angeles.

Our Armed Forces are doing the work they are called to do. They're taking the fight to the enemy so that America and our friends can live in peace. The war on terror is a test of our strength. It is a test of our perseverance, our patience, and our will. This nation has been tested before—by the character of men and women like you, we've come through every trial.

And so it is today. Our course is set. Our purpose is firm. No act of terrorists will weaken our resolve or alter their fate. Our only goal, our only option, is total victory in the war on terror. And this nation will press on to victory.

Thank you for having me. May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: We cannot leave the Hall until after the President and his party has departed the convention center area. Please remain in your chairs. On behalf of the delegates to the 83rd National Convention of The American Legion Auxiliary I extend our thanks for sharing this time and this is to the members of The American Legion Auxiliary.

Please rise and join me in rendering a proper salute to the flag of our country. Right hand salute, one, two. We are now in recess until 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

...At 3:55 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Wednesday, August 27, 2003, at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, August 27, 2003

...At 8:30 a.m. the Delegates listened to the Prelude by Mr. Peter Ole, organist..

...At 9:00 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 85th Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Convention will come to order. I'm going to call on the National Sergeant-at-Arms for the opening.

NATL SGT-AT-ARMS MURPHY: Colors being in place. Please render a right hand salute one, two. Uncover for chaplain.

Invocation
Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana, National Chaplain

Oh taste and see that the Lord is good, let us pray. Eternal and gracious father, You are a great loving and awesome God. We thank You for the privilege of being here this day, and we thank You for the privilege of being a citizen of this great country. We thank You for blessing us. And Lord we thank You that You enable us to bless others and offer to them that opportunity of freedom. And today, Lord, we mourn the loss of two more service personnel in Iraq. We pray for their families as they mourn this loss, and as a grateful nation, we are thankful once again for those whose loved others so much that they laid down their lives.

Bless our proceedings today. Bless the speakers this day that we might gain insight and knowledge as they share with us and as we give honor to those who so richly deserve it. And in all that we do, may You receive the glory, in Your holy name we pray. Amen.

NATL SGT-AT-ARMS MURPHY: Remain uncovered. Please recite with me the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Call on the National Adjutant Robert Spanogle.

Announcements

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: I have the results of The American Legion's Baseball World Series from Bartlesville, Oklahoma. The winning team is Rochester, Minnesota. The final game was between Rochester, Minnesota, Post 92 and Cherryville, North Carolina, Post 100. The score was Rochester 5, Cherryville 2. The Player of the Year who received the George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Award was Jarred Willis of Logan, West Virginia.

People have asked when they can make contributions to the various Legion charities. After the report on Americanism, which is at 1:10 p.m. in today's session, we will accept donations for the 9/11 Fund or The American Legion Legacy Fund, which has been established for the children of those who have lost their lives in the war on terrorism from the active force, the Guard and the Reserve. At 2:05 p.m., after the report on Children and Youth, we will accept donations to the Child Welfare Foundation. At 3:10 p.m., after the report on Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section II, we will accept donations to the Disaster Emergency Relief Fund. Thank you Mr. Commander.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Our first guest this morning has a distinguished military career that began with his acceptance to the United States Naval Academy in 1967. He graduated from the Academy in 1971, and went on to earn a Master's degree from Michigan State University. He served aboard the *USS George Bancroft*, the *USS Indianapolis*, the *USS Minneapolis-St Paul*. His land based assignments include serving on the staff of the Commander-in-chief, Pacific Fleet and Executive Assistant to the Commander-in-chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. Today he is the Assistant to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Please welcome Vice Admiral James Metzger.

Address: Vice Admiral James Metzger
Assistant to The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

As you know probably, General Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff wasn't able to be here and he passes along his sincere regrets that he couldn't do this. Dolores Hope, it turns out, personally asked him to deliver a eulogy at Bob Hope's memorial mass. And after spending a fair amount of time trying to figure out how he could be here in St. Louis and in Los Angeles at the same time, he asked me to come and speak to you. So, this is a great honor and privilege for me and a great opportunity to be here today.

As you all know, better than others, Bob Hope entertained American troops for half a century often at great personal and professional risk. He was some of you may know this, he was our nation's only honorary veteran recognized by Congress in 1997, for his many years of service to our troops. When accepting that award he said, "to be numbered among the men and women I admire most is the greatest honor that I have ever received."

That's really a great tribute. A great tribute to all of you, to all veterans. Ben Franklin once said that, "those who give up liberty to purchase temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." Like Bob Hope and everyone in uniform today, I know you understand this.

Now I grew up in Parkville and I know some of you are here from Parkville, Maryland. The American Legion Post there is prominent. I'm asked from time-to-time why is it that I went to Annapolis; why did I join the Navy; why did I become a sailor? I can really answer that pretty well, but I can most importantly pinpoint the exact moment when I understood probably the meaning of service, the moment that I decided to make the Navy a career. I was a young lieutenant commander, frocked lieutenant commander they said in those days, with only six years in the Navy after graduating. I was participating in the commissioning ceremony of my submarine the *USS Indianapolis*. In attendance were about 50 of the survivors of the World War II cruiser that was our name sake.

Now, you may remember the story of the *USS Indianapolis*, the cruiser sunk by a submarine near the end of the war in the Pacific after having delivered atomic bomb parts to the island of Tinian. On board that [cruiser] were about 1,100 souls, and we think only about 800 of those were able to survive the sinking and get into the water. But of those, only 316 actually survived. They endured days of exhaustion and exposure in those shark-infested waters. And they saw many horrors. They saw their shipmates drown. They saw shipmates lose their sanity and they saw their shipmates attacked by sharks. In short, they went through hell.

During the commissioning banquet that night their spokesman stood up, asked all the survivors to stand, and offered a toast. What he said then I'll never forget, "I propose a toast from the old crew of the *Indianapolis* to the new crew of the *Indianapolis*. Thank you for carrying on our legacy, we're proud of you, you're our heroes." I remember thinking, they are proud of us? Those American heroes are proud of us? From that moment I knew that what we were doing was worthwhile and it was good enough for me to hear their words.

I firmly believe that the war on terrorism is a crucial event in our nation's history now. The goal of terrorists is to spread fear, deception, intolerance and an absolute disregard for the value of innocent human lives. They hate our values, the essential liberty that Ben Franklin spoke of. So we can't hesitate or rest for an instant. There is too much at stake. But I have to tell you, I'm incredibly optimistic about this future, about this war. We are winning. In Afghanistan we ended the brutal Taliban regime, and we eliminated al Qaeda safe havens and we paved the way for a free and democratic government. Now our troops are leading provincial reconstruction teams. You may have heard of them, PRTs. These groups provide security, prepare roads, build schools and clinics. They're accomplishing remarkable things in an area that has been plagued by poverty and violence for generations.

In Iraq, we toppled the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein just in a matter of weeks. We defeated Saddam's elite republican guard who had vowed to hold Baghdad at any cost. By the way, when the naysayers were arguing that we were bogging down in a quagmire—and you remember that sandstorm—we were really at our best. The 3rd Infantry Division was up there. Iraqi units tried to regroup south of Baghdad thinking that the sandstorm would

provide them cover and prevent us from targeting them. But our ground and air forces worked together and struck. Their backs were broken. Their morale was crushed.

You will remember also that shortly before the combat began, the Turks voted to deny us access in the north for our ground forces, the 4th ID. This probably caused Saddam to shift his focus away from the north. But, we conducted an air drop of some 1,000 soldiers of the 173rd Air Borne Brigade using C-17s. And they joined forces with special forces who were already in the area and successfully opened up a northern front. In the west other special forces units secured air fields and other key infrastructure. In the Gulf, Naval units cleared mines and secured ports. We have great technology and our technology enabled us to conduct a new type of warfare. For example, using precision weapons and intelligence gathered from overhead sensors like (UAVs) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, we could target a particular command and control headquarters while leaving buildings on either side of that headquarters intact. You should have seen the pride in the faces of those young folks who were keeping track of the hospitals in Baghdad, of the Mosques, of the UN Headquarters. The so called no-hit targets. We were very careful.

Our troops were well trained and ready, and they fought aggressively. But the military defeat of Saddam's army wasn't their only accomplishment. Remember back to February, you probably heard all the dire predictions. We're going to have oil well fires, sabotage of dams and bridges, and humanitarian disaster. Well, we planned ahead and, thankfully, none of that happened. Now areas are patrolled by Iraqi police and coalition soldiers shoulder-to-shoulder: schools, clinics, banks and stores are open for business. Our troops have accomplished extraordinary things, more than what you see on TV.

About 90 percent of the schools are now open. There are no longer storage sites for munitions, and they're no longer preaching Batheist propaganda. In many cases coalition forces have rebuilt them and repair their water and their sanitation. All of the major cities and most of the towns have functioning municipal governments. Meanwhile, Iraqi children play in playgrounds and soccer fields built by coalition troops, and they receive inoculations and medical care from our medics. But the most important thing, the single most important thing that we're providing, is hope, hope for a lasting peace for Iraq.

Now Iraq and Afghanistan are still dangerous places and American and coalition troops go bravely into harms way as you know everyday. But their attitude is terrific. I've seen it, they have absolutely no doubt about why they are there and the inevitability of their success. You can be proud of them.

I was serving in the 6th Fleet in the Mediterranean during the Kosovo conflict. During that time, I ran across a *60 Minutes* piece on *Armed Forces Network*. A lot of you have seen Armed Forces Network before, so you may not get the show on the day that it was actually broadcast. I saw Andy Rooney. Maybe some of you saw it. I want to say it in his words so that you can feel it. Andy Rooney said:

> When I was in college Adolf Hitler was trying to take over Europe. There was a political movement here in the United States called 'America First' led by a senator from Montana named Burton K. Wheeler. Now, 'America First' was telling everyone that Europe's problems were none of our business and I agreed with that. Some philosopher that I'd read in college said that any peace is better than any war, and that really seemed true to me. Probably true to some of those protestors that were out there yesterday. "Why should I die for someone else's freedom?" Now, I was certain that it was wrong for Americans to be involved in a war in far away Europe. Well, the draft board didn't care much about what I thought and I was dragged out of college into the army, kicking and screaming all the way. After following the tanks and infantry across France and Germany as a reporter for *Stars and Stripes*, I got to a small prison, a prison camp in a town named Dukla. There are about 250 Jewish prisoners in that camp that had been forced as slave laborers to make wings for German fighter planes. When the guards heard that we were coming, they poured gas on the roofs of the barracks and with the prisoners still inside they set those barracks on fire. Two days later I got to Buchenwald. I knew how wrong then that the idea of 'America First' was. I've never forgotten how dumb I was thinking that it was someone else's war. So when I hear that the slaughter of Albanian's in Kosovo is none of our business, I say to myself, I used to be just as wrong as you are. I'm proud of my President.

I'm proud of what we're doing. I'm proud of my country.

Andy Rooney's words meant a lot to me then, it meant a lot to the folks that were there fighting in Kosovo. It really struck a cord with me and brought home maybe what we're all about. He had learned what our troops understand that for some things, it is worth putting your personal comfort and security on the line.

Despite what you see in the news, most Iraqis understand what we're trying to do and they're working with us. I mentioned that we're providing security in Iraq side-by-side with the Iraqi people. There are now more than 40,000 Iraqi police on duty in 40 cities. There are 2,000 men recruited for the civil defense force. There are 800 recruits in the new Iraqi army who are in training. There are 12,000 Iraqis on duty as facility protective service guards, and these numbers are growing every week. The process of turning Iraq over to the Iraqi people is well underway. It was an Iraqi who provided us with information on Saddam's two sons. Iraqis are providing us with more and more information on the remnants of Saddam's regime every single day. We've captured the majority of Saddam's inner circle of tyrants. Only about a dozen of the 55 top leaders of his regime are still at large, and their days are numbered. It's becoming obvious to the Iraqi people that his regime will never come back.

Of course American service men and women are not alone in this effort. The war on terrorism is being fought by a coalition and has been from the start. More than 40 countries have deployed troops in Afghanistan and 35 have committed troops to Iraq. We expect these numbers to continue to increase. They are willing to go into harm's way by our side because they, too, understand what's at stake.

I'm convinced the terrorist groups are working hard on finding new more horrible ways to attack our society. Just last week, we witnessed the tragic bombings of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad and the bus in Jerusalem. The terrorists are shrewd, they're adaptable, they're flexible and this war is far from over.

Meanwhile, our soldiers continue to serve not just with courage but also with compassion and character. In Iraq recently, an American soldier entered an Iraqi suspect's house took a shotgun blast to the chest. Fortunately, his vest stopped the shot. But think about that for a moment. There you are armed, just having taken a shot in the chest. What would you do? Well, this soldier got up and placed the Iraqi man under arrest. This is the kind of discipline and professionalism we see in our troops. America still sends us the best of her sons and daughters.

Here's a quick story. Not long ago I was visiting a new Arleigh Burke Class Destroyer and as I often do, walked through the ship. I asked sailors questions about Navy history, about our heritage, about Navy capabilities. And when they answer correctly, I give them a coin. So as I left the ship there was a group of sailors standing on the pier, maybe about eight or nine, and I asked them questions. As they answered, I gave them a coin and they went back across the brow to the ship. After a few minutes there was just one sailor left and before I could ask another question he looked at me and said, "Admiral, I'm new in the Navy, I don't know much about it, I'm sorry." I said, well that's fair but you just went through boot camp not long ago, so what did you learn in boot camp that was important? And at that he straightened up, stood taller, put his chest out and said with great pride and with confidence, "military bearing sir." Well, he got a coin and for all of my days I'll really never forget what he said. As long as we have young men and women like him in our armed forces, young men and women like those you presented the Spirit of Service Awards to yesterday, we can never fail.

Their character is part of your legacy, the legacy of generations of American service men and women. I was a 7th Fleet Commander in Yokosuka, Japan. We made a port visit, Flagship *USS Mount Whitney*. We went to New Caledonia, an island in the South Pacific. Who's been to New Caledonia? Somebody, maybe. I'm sure of that because we made the port visit, and this was a place that Americans had set up a logistic base many years ago, 1942. I talked to a woman and her story was a common one. Her dad had a pistol and showed it to her. He said, "There are three bullets in this: one for you, one for your sister and one for your mom. I won't let you fall into the hands of the invaders."

This New Caledonia, if you look at it on the map, was kind of on the path where the Japanese were headed. It was just a matter of time for them and they knew it. The lady said that as a girl she was outside, playing one day and saw ships coming. She ran back to her house screaming, dad they're here, they've arrived. She thought it was the end. The dad said,

"Well, I would have expected them to bomb us first so something doesn't make sense." They all went down to the harbor and when they saw those American flags flying from those ships they knew they were saved. Their life had changed. They called it the 'American time.' Seeing those flags flying was the best thing that ever happened to them. Every U.S. serviceman and woman today is still a hero to them. They welcomed us so enthusiastically, the best welcome I've ever received anywhere in my life. They were happy to have the chance just to say thanks.

That's your legacy. That's the legacy of all of you. You can rest assured that all of us in uniform will carry on your great heritage. There are only two options at this point in history: support terrorism actively or passively, or take a stand against terrorism so that ultimately this nation and the liberty that this nation stands for will survive. We're taking a stand and we'll prevail because we share a common conviction, a conviction shared by Bob Hope, Ben Franklin, all of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coastguard, our coalition partners and millions of Americans, especially Americans like you who know that liberty is worth fighting for.

Thanks to you on behalf of the Joint Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Staff. Thanks for your service for all that you do and have done in the past for our nation, in your communities, for veterans, men and women in uniform. You've made this country what it is.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It is a special privilege to introduce our next guest for he is truly a veteran's advocate on Capitol Hill. Elected to chair the House Committee on Veterans Affairs in 2001, he started immediately working to improve the delivery of health care and benefits to our veterans. In July, he stood in opposition to the stripping of $1.8 billion dollars from the VA budget to cover medical services in 2004. He believed then and he still believes that veterans come before pork barrel projects. In two years, he has helped deliver seven new laws that call for investing more than $8 billion dollars in expanded and enhanced programs to help veterans. He orchestrated a 46 percent increase in benefits for today's military under the G.I. Bill. The worth of the G.I. Bill is something we all understand. Please give a very warm and standing ovation to our guest, Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey.

Address: The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
United States House of Representatives
Chairman, House Veterans' Affairs Committee

Admiral Metzger, I appreciate your words. They were very well spoken and your eloquence and your leadership, and that of our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and of course, our Commander-in-Chief who spoke to you yesterday who is doing a magnificent job in leading this country and the world in this fight on terrorism.

Commander Conley, thank you especially for your leadership in the area of health care for veterans. Before I get there, though, just let me make a point. When I was invited by Steve Robertson to be here, to address you, he was in my office several months ago as he often is. I asked, "Do you really want members of Congress to come and speak?" When the Admiral was talking he made the point about the islands in the South Pacific. My father fought in New Guinea. He was a combat infantryman, and saw a very horrific battle in New Guinea and elsewhere in the South Pacific. Years later, as part of my first official duties, I made a trip to New Guinea and lo and behold I got a sense of what U.S. Congressmen are thought of while I was there.

Now it turns out there were three. You may know this as a matter of historical fact, as recently as 50 years ago cannibalism was something that was actually practiced in some parts of New Guinea. It turns out there were three cannibals sitting around the campfire discussing what their favorite meal was. The first one says that his favorite meal are missionaries. "Ah, they're too salty," the second one says. "My favorite meal happens to be teachers." "They're too stringy," the other one said. The third one said, "My favorite meal is U.S. Congressmen." When he said that the two looked at each other and then looked at him and said, "How do you clean 'em?" *Laughter.*

As you know, Commander Conley brings testimony to the floor and obviously has been

very tenacious during his tenure as Commander of The American Legion. In promoting health care, he's been to some 60 facilities throughout this country to try to do an assessment. That assessment, as we all know, has lead to a very important policy and a series of recommendations that he has made to us in a report called "A System Worth Saving."

But what you probably don't know in addition to the one hat that he wears—and I know Elsie Bailey gave him another hat very recently, a rather large hat, a ten gallon hat—he also is a member of the Rotary Club. It turns out one time in his area in Pennsylvania there was supposed to be a speaker. The Rotary Club on a monthly basis brings in speakers, sometimes more frequently, for lunch. They give a speech and everyone goes home afterwards or back to work. Well, it turns out that this person is a sex expert. Everybody showed up, the place was packed on the day that this expert was due to give his speech. But he didn't show up. So the president of the Rotary Club looked around and saw Ron and said I'm gonna tap him. Ron took to the microphone, gave a half hour speech, got two standing ovations, sat down. Went home that evening to Barbara who said, "How was the speaker today?" He said, "Well, I spoke." He didn't want to give any explanation, so he says that he talked about fishing. He went to bed, he was tired. The next morning she was out shopping and some of the other wives come up gushing about this speech that Ron had given. She said, "That's interesting, he's only done it twice. The first time he lost his hat, the second time he got so sick he said he would never do it again.

Ron, we are indebted and I say this on behalf of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, the most bipartisan committee in the Congress of the United States. We are indebted to the work that you have done, the 60 facilities that you visited, and the work that you've done out of your Washington office. Thank you on behalf of my colleagues because your advocacy could not come at a more opportune time. We are in a fight. We are in a battle. Many people who are our friends, or ought to be our friends, have bought into underfunding, however well-meaning, into underfunding of the VA budget for health care and that has to be reversed. It has to be reversed within the next couple of months.

I think many of you know that Bob Spanogle, the National Adjutant, did a tremendous job on the Presidential Task Force for Health Care Funding which met for two years looking at every aspect of health care funding. It started out with the idea can we do more DoD/VA sharing and by doing so, realized those synergies and those economies of scale so that we could get a better bang for the buck for our military and for our veterans. When the dust had cleared and all had been said and done, they came to the inescapable conclusion that that wouldn't be enough. We needed to find a means of guaranteed funding, full funding, mandatory funding to make sure that we don't go through this under-funding every single year through the appropriations process. Bob, I want to thank you for your very fine work. Not only did you join in the consensus, but you wanted to go even further and said so, so eloquently at our hearing that we held on the PTF fundings. I want to thank you for your good work on behalf of our nation's veterans.

I thank the Legion itself for its enduring message of God and country, peace through strength, healthy patriotism, respect for our flag, a fair deal for our veterans. The idea of service in service of others, selfless, provided in a loving and a compassionate way without a banner going forward to say what is being done. You just do it. In your communities you do it each and every day and it has made a difference. Thank you for reminding each succeeding generation of Americans that freedom isn't cheap. And the blessing of liberty were and are procured with the blood, sweat and tears of America's armed forces.

On a lighter side, I thank you for the great work you've done with American Legion Baseball, and of course, Boys State and all the civic initiatives that have brought so many people into the public arena as a direct result of your work in trying to tell people this democracy is worth fighting for and it's certainly worth participating in.

Thank you for the extremely dedicated and talented Washington office that you have. On a day-to-day basis John Sommer and Steve Robertson truly help us to craft policy. They help us to write the bills and they help us to shape the budgets. Without them we would be blind. I thank them for the tremendous work they do. They do it without fanfare. They walk the halls of congress and they make a difference each and every day.

A quick story about John Sommer and how he makes a difference. Do you remember the Vietnamese boat people who left by the millions after the fall of Saigon? In the late 1990s, President Clinton and the international community decided to close the refugee

camps and forcibly repatriate to Vietnam approximately 40,000 people, including a number of army members and others who are our closest allies. Despite the conviction of many, including myself, our former allies were improperly screened out. They should have been refugees allowed to come to this country. The Administration, the international community said send them back.

Outraged, I put together a series of four hearings. I went over to High Island and several of the camps. I remember meeting one Vietnamese double amputee who said, "You mean there's no room in America for me? I fought with you guys." Enter John Sommer and The American Legion. With the full clout of The American Legion, I offered an amendment on the floor that said none of our funds will be used to send these people back. The amendment won. Out of that came what we call the Rover Program, and as many as 18,000 Vietnamese who fought with us have come to the United States as a direct result of that amendment. It would not have happened without John Sommer and The American Legion. So thank you.

I'd like to thank Elsie Bailey for her steadfast leadership at the helm of the Auxiliary. She is from my district from Whiting, New Jersey and I thank her for her leadership. I thank our State Commander Ted Bear, Ray Zawacki, Leo McKernan, Billy Mack, Warren Davies, Jimmy Hall. So many are Legionnaires in my own state who have been indispensable to me and my colleagues in doing our job on behalf of our nation's veterans.

The nation is at war in Iraq, Afghanistan and the new war on terrorism that President Bush told the Legion yesterday which began on 9/11. He said we would win, that there would be no retreat. It seems to me the time is now for a fresh campaign to ensure that no veteran, not now, not ever, is left behind. Those brave men and women who shouldered or shoulder the disproportionate share of the risks of war in preserving the peace or in hunting down the terrorists of al Qaeda or the Taliban, must be honored and respected in both words and in tangible deeds. While the words are necessary and often conveys heartfelt sentiment, they can, at times, be cheap. While the words we all say have meaning, The American Legion, the VFW, the DAV and the [other] VSOs take a back seat to no one in expressing through ceremony what we all feel, and we thank you for that.

But words, especially by politicians can be cheap. Each day it becomes painfully clear that growing numbers of our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, like the Persian Gulf veterans before them, will need a vast array of veteran services. For them and for every veteran, it is up to us to ensure that a grateful nation remembers, not just in prose and patriotic rhetoric but in concrete deeds. It is up to us to ensure that no veteran, at no time, not ever, is left behind or told he or she is a number, or that a moratorium on enrollment precludes access to VA medical care.

Often, and you've seen this in your work, those who oppose us are misguided or they haven't done their homework or they cling to myths and caricatures about what the VA is all about. We need to turn those opponents into proponents and that's where you at the grassroots level can make all the difference in the world. At the federal level it has been my experience, for 23 years as a member of Congress, to see that there are too many people who make decisions about the VA budget who don't have a clue what the VA is all about. The good people at Office of Management and Budget (OMB) come to mind on this regard.

Remember David Stockman during the Reagan Administration? I remember I was a ranking member on one of the subcommittees and there was an effort put forward to raise the loan origination fee by 5 percent. I remember asking one of the assistant secretaries, what will that do to the VA Home Loan Program? He said, Oh, it'll kill it." That's the kind of mind-set that we see time and again, when the long knives come out for veterans programs or by under-funding it, which lead to rationing and that means long lines and sicker veterans as a direct result to that.

And then there's the reluctance that we see often, of coming to grips with the enormous deleterious effects that combat and military service can have. Some policy makers would prefer to forget the ongoing agony, the scars and the aftermath of war and just move on. We saw it with Agent Orange. We still see it with Agent Orange as Dr. Jeanne and Steve Stellman would attest to. In my first term as a member of Congress back in 1981, I was the Republican cosponsor of an amendment offered by Tom Daschle to establish a means of providing care and presumptive compensation for vets contaminated by Agent Orange. Our amendment would have married the best available science at the time, and there were volumes of it, to a variety of maladies associated with Dioxin, the poison in Agent Orange.

Not only did we fail to enact the amendment into law, our assertions were rejected as junk science. But with your help, we persisted and Agent Orange exposures were accepted as requiring medical care and compensation. A generation later we are now finally poised to discover what Agent Orange actually did, particularly on the long term.

The same denial conflicts occurred in treating soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. There were the usual suspects again denying these impacts. These are consequences of military service. Vet centers, if you can believe it, were controversial. There were those who wanted to cut them out. But the Legion and members of congress from both sides of the aisle got together and helped, got those vet centers passed and tens of thousands of veterans have now been treated and the effects of PTSD has been mitigated in their lives as well.

Mr. Commander, as you pointed out, since I've been elected chairman—it's been three years now—we've enacted a number of new laws, 13 in total. Five that were left on base. They were sent over to the Senate side but never got acted on. But 13 laws have been enacted so far. One of those bills, the G.I. Bill, provides an increase of 46 percent and the final increment will be phased in October 1, to help our men and women to get a college education. It will bring to just over $35,000.00 the value of the benefit of a three year service to our country.

The Homeless Veterans Assistance Act authorizes a billion dollars over five years. I believe, and I know you would agree, because you worked so hard on the bill, that it's unconscionable that on any given night 275,000 veterans are homeless. That has to stop. We've got to end this chronic... that's the equivalent of 18 army divisions on the streets! Men and women, 99 percent are men who wore the uniform with honor and distinction, are now homeless. Our new legislation which is in the process of being implemented would reach out and re-enfranchise these men and women back into society.

Then there are a number of other bills, expansion of health care and a host of other initiatives. Thus far this year, we have passed eight new bills out of the House pending in the Senate and eight more are ready to go, including the Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act, updated to ensure that when our men and women are deployed they won't find that their economic house goes into disarray and disorder back home, and it gives them some protection from creditors and others who would make life miserable for them.

We've also passed a Medicare Subvention Bill. You know this, but about half of our medical care budget,$13 billion, goes to men and women who are 65 years of age or older, half the budget. It seems to me it's about time those Medicare dollars flowed and followed without offsetting appropriated dollars to ensure that we get the money we need to run the VA.

Let me conclude with a couple of comments on the budget. Right before the August recess, huge majorities of both parties, democrats and republicans, forgot veterans. I believe it was temporary. I hope it was temporary amnesia, call it what you will. But when the VA/HUD Appropriations Bill was voted on, only 59 Republicans and only 50 Democrats voted no on that legislation. Why is that important? Well, you know why. Because that bill, while it does provide veterans health care funding, doesn't provide enough. After doing our due diligence, after working with the VSOs including The American Legion, we came to the inescapable conclusion we needed at least $1.8 billion dollars to ensure adequate health care for our veterans. Without it, we would see the idling of upwards of 5,000 nursing home beds, more than 1 million currently enrolled veterans would be disenrolled and other terrible consequences were likely to follow as well. Amazing to me the setback came after the Presidential Task Force recommendations were made.

You might recall that report, which is an excellent read and very well thought and laid out. It said that there was significant core under-funding in the VA health care budget, that there was a serious mismatch between the need and the funding that is provided by the Congress. It provides us with a blueprint, a way of going into the future for many decades, into the future to ensure that the long waiting lines, the lack of access and, of course, the problem of rationing are overcome. I tried to offer an amendment that would have provided $1.8 billion dollars. We didn't get it made in order. Which left the only game in town defeating the bill and moving on, coming up with a new bill that would make the difference. We lost. But that doesn't mean we've lost for the rest of this year.

I would ask you, if you would, to go back and to talk to your congressmen or

congresswomen and if they voted wrong, get them back on the team. There are many good men and women who just perhaps voted the wrong way, didn't know it was in the bill. I mean, there was a book written years ago by a California legislator and on the front of the cover of the book it says, "What makes you think we read them all." So don't assume that everyone knew exactly what was in that particular bill despite the efforts by Steve and others walking the halls of Congress. Sometimes the aides don't pass the information through. I'm not making excuses, but we want to get these good people back on our team and that means both the leadership, Democrats and Republicans, and the rank and file need to be vigorously lobbied and told what needs to be done. Add the $1.8 billion dollars back for fiscal year 2004.

The set back also underscores the need to ensure full funding of VA health care through a process that guarantees that resources will be matched with need. To that end, both Lane Evans and I, the ranking member, have introduced bills that would guarantee full funding that would try to get us to a point where we're not going through with this charade, through this exercise every year of under-funding, adding little back only to come up short at the end of the day.

I've tried to tell my colleagues since the Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, that we've seen more than a 100 percent increase in enrollees, a 70 percent increase in unique users, patients walking into the VA health care, but only a 50 percent increase in the funding. Do the math. It just doesn't work. We need to match need with resources. Then the bottom line, and I say this to all of you, the time has come to absolutely ensure that no veteran at no time, not now, not ever, will ever be left behind.

...Standing applause.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Congressman, we want you to know we appreciate and thank you not only for the speech, but your true dedication. You stand for honor, you stand for courage, and this organization is going to stand with you.

It is not often that a decorated combat veteran of Vietnam can be called a freshman, but our next guest is. He is a freshman Congressman from Georgia. He interrupted his college studies to join the army in 1968. He was an Airborne Ranger, wounded and received the Purple Heart and two Bronze Stars. Today, he's a member of the House Armed Services Committee and another member of that body who did not let political arm twisting keep him from doing what was morally right for the veterans of this nation. He left college compelled by a sense of duty and fairness to fight a war. Now he is fighting for veterans benefits on Capitol Hill and is a sponsor of legislation to provide concurrent receipt to disabled retired military men and women. From Macon, Georgia where he represents the states 3rd Congressional District, welcome Congressman Jim Marshall.

Address: The Honorable Jim Marshall
United States House of Representatives

This is going to be an audience participation event. I'm a little worried about you all sitting up here in the front row because I'm not sure whether or not you remember how to duck. I've got some quarters here and every time I say the term concurrent receipt I'm going to toss a quarter. I hope I don't hit anybody. I hope nobody sues me. So if I throw a quarter just duck, you guys who are out front.

The best way for me to talk about this is to just describe my progression and thinking on the issue. My father and my grandfather were both army officers. I grew up in an army family. Both my father and my grandfather were wounded in combat; both got disability ratings. It was duty, honor, country all my life growing up. I'm in college. Tet * . Lots of protest. I think I need to do my duty, to share the risk with the other folks my age. And so,

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* "Tet", a holiday, is short for Tet Nguyen Dan (First Day of the New Period) or Tet Tam Nguyen (Fete of the First Day) and occurs on the first day of the first lunar month of a new year, considered the beginning of Spring. The Tet Offensive on January 31, 1968 was considered the turning point in the Vietnam War.

I drop out of school. I enlist. I go to Vietnam. I'm wounded. I come back. The Veterans Administration tells me I'm 20 percent disabled as a result of wounds; left calf, left thigh, and they say they're going to give me 20 percent disability rating: 1970, $48.00 a month. I didn't feel all that disabled, my leg's numb, but I sure could use $48.00 a month going back to school. Time goes on. I go to law school, move to Macon, get involved in the community, become the mayor, get recruited to run for Congress. I ran in 2000, got whipped, came back in 2002.

Here's one thing that happens when you're running for Congress. Lots of folks come to see you and ask what your view on different issues is going to be. I had some military officers ask me what was my view on concurrent receipt. (*Throwing a quarter* ... Don't worry about me losing too much money in this deal. I'll tell you how I'm going to make a lot of money.) And I asked, "What's that?" and they tried to explain it to me. I had a hard time understanding what they were talking about because to me it sounded like they were saying two plus two equals five. Now, here I was somebody who served 21 months and one day and I get disability benefits. And they're telling me that somebody who serves more than 20 years, 25 years, 30, 35 years gets less, gets nothing. He or she who serves more gets less. It doesn't make any sense. I said sure, I would be happy to work on that. I get to Congress. One of the first things that happens when you get to Congress is different members who are pushing different pieces of legislation send it to your office and ask if you would cosponsor it. And the piece of legislation that came across my desk that I was most happy to cosponsor was House Resolution 303.

Many here know about House Resolution 303. It's written by a guy name Mike Bilirakis. He's a senior Republican from Florida. It is designed to take care of this concurrent receipt problem. *Throws another quarter.* What I notice is I'm about the 300th person to sign on. So I say this is great, we're going to fix it because you just need 218 votes in the House of Representative to get the thing passed. Then, I'm told by older and wiser heads that, no, we're not going to fix this. That in fact this legislation to fix the concurrent receipt problem has been around for 16 years and that the problem has been around since 1891.

I find that hard to believe. I looked into the history a little bit. Many of you in this room will remember that last year both the House and the Senate voted to solve the concurrent receipt problem once and for all as part of the defense appropriation bill. Went into conference committee and what came out? Something called Combat-Related Special Compensation. Essentially, some of our military retirees who are disabled were going to get their disability benefits and others who are disabled were not. We're now going to discriminate between military retirees who are disabled and other groups of military retirees who are disabled. I ask why? The answer is money. It's too expensive.

All right, let's see, this is about January or February of this year. Money—it's too expensive. I asked how much is it going to cost? What's the estimate? The estimates I've gotten—I don't know why the range is so wide— are $10 billion to $40 or $50 billion over a ten-year period of time. So the most this could be is about $5 billion dollars a year. And then, I go through the process of watching how the House votes on different packages. We have a House leadership, House Republican budget that's put up that proposes a $723 billion dollar tax cut over ten years. We have a vote in the House of $550 billion dollars over ten years.

Now most folks in this room are going to remember that the tax cut that was actually passed was $320 [billion], and I voted for it. I was one of a handful—maybe seven Democrats—who voted for the $320 over ten years. Now let's see, if I do my math right, it works like this. $320, $550 there's a difference of $220 billion dollars, which sounds like enough money to take care of this concurrent receipt problem. So, I say, ok, fine we've got a majority. A super majority of people in the House say we're going to fix this because we've got the money to do it, because we're interested in tax cuts and we're willing to vote for much higher tax cuts. And then the real kicker for me was when the House of Representatives voted to completely eliminate the estate tax.

Well, guess what folks, on average according to a couple of Boston College professor who did a study back in 2002, —I'm glad you all are sitting down —from 2002 to 2052 complete elimination of the estate tax will diminish federal revenue by $157 billion dollars a year to $784 billion dollars a year. And a whole bunch of my colleagues voted for that.

Now, I voted to increase the exemption dramatically and I'm in favor of a state tax reform. I have represented small businesses and farmers who are having financial trouble, I know what the deal is and I know how to fix it. I say, my Lord, if we can vote for this stuff why can't we vote ... then it dawns on me. Maybe we're using the wrong term. We're saying concurrent receipt when we should be saying something like —have you all heard of this —the death tax.

Everybody here has heard about the death tax. Everybody knows about that. Well, there's no such thing. We've all heard of it, it's a term that's commonly used now but there is no such thing as the death tax. It's a state tax and inheritance tax, some real wealthy folks, very good lobbyist, paid a lot of money to come up with a creative idea. We need to call it the death tax. And folks will know that's wrong. So they started training people. Guess what, as I understand it from things I've read, in Newt Gingrich's office there was a pizza pool. If you said a state tax or inheritance tax instead of death tax you had to put a dollar in the pizza pool. They trained people by making them pay for it.

What I'd like to do is to have us change the name that is used to describe this problem. Call it the Disabled Veterans Tax. That's what it is, it's a 100 percent tax on disabled American veterans. It's wrong, it should never have been done and we need to change the name. You walk up to somebody like me who grew up in a military family whose got a father and a grandfather who suffered from this concurrent receipt problem whose been in the military, who gets disability benefits and you ask me what's my view on concurrent receipt, I don't even know what that is. But I tell you what, you come up to me and you ask, "Am I in favor of a tax on disabled veterans? Am I in favor of the disabled veterans tax?" The answer is no. And that's going to be the answer of America folks. We're going to fix this problem.

Now you'll notice I said we are going to fix this problem. Now let me tell y'all something, a freshman democrat in Congress is not going to fix the problem. Y'all are going to do it and here's how we're going to do it. I have filed what's called a discharge petition in the House of Representatives. It's designed to get around the committee structure that's been bottling this problem up for 16 years. It's designed to force a vote on Mr. Bilirakis' bill, House Resolution 303. So, you've got a junior Democrat trying to force a vote on a senior Republican's bill. The leadership doesn't like it. Oh, isn't that too bad. That really hurts my feelings.

Let me tell y'all something. We need 218 votes, right now there are 352 cosponsors of 303. You'd think we'd be able to get 218 signatures on that petition. When you've got 352, heck, in the last Congress, guess how many we had—402 out of 435 members of the House of Representatives cosponsor 303. You'd think we could get 218 signatures? Guess what? We've got right now, 202. We've got 201 democrats, we've got one, I think courageous, Republican because his leadership has said don't do that. Y'all remember when you were kids you had to be home at 10:00 o'clock because mama said so. And you're going to leave, the last thing you tell your buddies is that mama told me I had to be home. This is the 'mama told me' sort of excuse, that's the excuse that I use on this one. The 'mama told me' excuse.

I will give you my web address. I want to encourage you to go to the web site to get more information about this. I'm also going to give you my fax number. I'm going to encourage you to fax me information about this as we work on this problem. My web site is www.house.gov/marshall. Here's one of the things you'll find on my web site. I list all the cosponsors. These are the people who have stood up in front of you time and again told you we're with you. We're going to take care of this problem. Please vote for me. When they're looking to get elected or reelected, they show up and they ask for your help. And you all know what I'm talking about. I've got everybody listed, all the cosponsors. I've got everybody listed who signed the petition to force a vote to fix this problem once and for all. And I also have how people voted on complete elimination of the estate tax.

Now, let me tell you something. Not too many members of Congress are going to come up to you and say, "You know the reason I haven't signed the petition and the reason I'm not really going to work on it right now? We've got an opportunity to fix this right now, to solve the concurrent receipt problem, but my leadership told me not to." That's the 'mama said not to' excuse and it doesn't fly in politics. You didn't hire representatives to go up there and represent the leadership. You hired representatives to go up there and represent you! So you're not going to hear that one. You will hear, "We can't afford it." That's what

I heard right off the bat. We couldn't afford it. Any person who is a cosponsor of 303 who stood up in front of a bunch of veterans and said this is wrong, it's been wrong for a long time, we're going to fix it and who has voted for complete elimination of the estate tax and won't do the petition, has his or her priorities in a mess! You think about it.

Another excuse, this is the one I really like. Oh, this is just partisan. What are they getting at? Well, they're getting at the fact that a junior Democrat filed the discharge petition and then went around and whipped his fellow Democrats to step to the plate and do what's right and sign the petition, force the vote, fix the problem. Well, now who points that out? The people who are pointing that out are making it partisan. This has not been a partisan issue, it has been bipartisan from the get-go. There are about an equal number of cosponsors every single year. We have an opportunity to fix it, and people can't use the excuse of partisanship as a reason not to fix it. Now, I've been willing to get up here in front of a large audience. It takes a fair amount of gumption to do that and take a chance of making a fool of myself by throwing quarters, for God-sakes, out toward the audience so it's a little gimmick people will remember, and I want you to take some chances, too.

Here's the first thing I'd like you to do. All the other national veterans groups have agreed. I'd like you to agree to do this. Among ourselves and all veterans, it's now the Disabled Veterans Tax. When somebody says 'concurrent receipt' in your presence and you call them on it, they owe you a quarter. Fair enough? We're going to train ourselves to say Disabled Veterans Tax. When one of our representatives, when a newspaper editor, when one of our staffers calls it concurrent receipt, we're going to say, "No, it's the Disabled Veterans Tax." Names define issues. People understand the Disabled Veterans Tax is wrong. You don't have to explain it. You don't have to go any further. They know it's wrong and we'll fix it using that term. So, that's one thing I ask you to do. Anybody object? Good, no objections.

By the way, I told you I was going to get my money back. On page 71 of the brochure for this convention I see the term concurrent receipt. I figure y'all printed at least, what, 10,000 copies of this? Maybe if I'm lucky you printed 20,000 copies of this and I get $5,000 bucks. So, call it the Disabled Veterans Tax.

Second thing to do is this. Got to turn the pressure up. We've got an opportunity right now to cause a giant step in the right direction even if we don't fix it altogether. The pressure should be focused on those members of Congress who are cosponsors, who voted for complete elimination of the estate tax, and who would like to get reelected or elected to another office. You're going to have some members of Congress who are real strong, and you know, dynamite couldn't get them out of office. But there are some members of Congress who have to worry about whether or not they're going to get reelected. And you've got people running for senate or governor or what have you, and they need the help of veterans. And you need to let them know that after 16 years you're not willing to wait any longer. "We're not going to give you help if you're not going to help us. You can't cosponsor, vote for complete elimination, say it's too expensive, and by God you're our representative, you're not just some lackey for the leadership."

So two things, call it the Disabled Veterans Tax. Let's turn up the pressure and go to my web site, find out the information that you need. I'm going to add to the web site information about the excuses that are being offered. We'll put some button up there called bogus excuses or the best fiction in town or something like that, something pleasant. Y'all can go to and see the arguments back and forth. Please do it.

I can't tell you what an honor it is to grow up in the kind of family that I grew up in. I lived and breathed duty, honor, country all my life. Reverence, respect, service to others; I couldn't sit by and let others go to Vietnam while I just cooled my heels with some student deferment. It was an honor to serve in Vietnam. It's an incredible honor to be on the House Arms Services Committee to serve in Congress. The point of all that though, is to get things done and I can't get this done without your help.

I was a student, first sergeant at Ranger School. We started with 194, we ended with 69. I went from 175 pounds to 154 pounds in just nine weeks and I was in good shape. There wasn't any fat on me. Toward the end of Ranger School I had to move the company around. Let me tell you something, everybody was tired, upset, didn't want to do anything and I had to stand up there and say, "Company, attention! Right face. Forward march. Double time." It's right after you do the double time that you get all the groans from everybody. The Navy

guys wouldn't understand that, I know you. *Laughter.* We're in double time right now, y'all. Work with your staff, have some gumption.

I talked before a group over in Columbus last week sometime. He's putting a sandwich board on and he's picketing his local member's office. Another older MOPH member is going to do petitions in a mall. Military's been a top down organization. In this kind of fight, you can't wait for the top to tell you what to do. We each need to do it ourselves. I'm doing what I can. This isn't going to work unless all of you get behind it and do it. If we succeed in fixing a problem that effects hundreds of thousands of veterans that's been wrong for a century, if we succeed, it's because you did it.

Thank you for your service. The service isn't over. You are still serving by fixing this problem.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Congressman, just so you're aware that you now owe The American Legion 20,000 quarters, because we have had our case for mandatory funding, "A Veteran is a Veteran," which we refer to it as "The Veterans' Disability Tax."

CONGRESSMAN MARSHALL: Keep the pressure up. God bless you all.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: As we meet in convention, the health care system created to care for him who has borne the battle is in crisis. Years of under-funding has left our comrades facing excessively long waits to see a primary care physician in a VA hospital. Our next guest is a true friend of America's veterans. Just last month, despite Republican leadership pressure, he stood firm to his commitment to increase veterans health care funding. He voted against the VA/HUD appropriations bill which took $1.8 billion dollars directly out of the health care portion of the budget. Yes, I'm proud of him because he's a Congressman from Pennsylvania. Yet, I'm also proud of him because he's a freshman lawmaker who, despite political pressure, stood firm in his pledge. He's my Congressman. Welcome to St. Louis and our 85th National Convention, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee that he pushed to get on and President of the 108th House Majority Freshman Class, the Honorable Tim Murphy.

Address: The Honorable Timothy F. Murphy
United States House of Representatives

If my parents were here, my mother would be pleased and my father would be amazed at the kind of things that this youngster has done in his life. Today, I want to talk about some of the issues we have in Congress. But, I want to talk about a few other issues as well that are important in your hearts and not ones that people necessarily associate with veterans and The American Legion, but ones that are clearly very near and dear to all of us.

Horace Mann once said, "That you ought to be ashamed to die unless you have achieved some victory for mankind." And certainly much of what The American Legion has done, and all of you as members of The American Legion have done, and all of you as veterans have done, has been part of achieving some of those victories for mankind, defending our nation, on the battlefield or, as one friend of mine, a Marine said, he spent four years operating an LMD. I didn't know what an LMD was and so I asked. He said it was a large metal desk.

But, however one serves the nation, I thank you for that and we owe you a great debt of gratitude. As Commander Conley said, yes, I ended up voting and there was a no-vote on the veterans' budget because as a health care professional myself, as a psychologist, and a person who has worked with many a veteran and family in need, I know how important veterans' health care is and $1.8 billion dollars is a lot of money. Not enough money but a lot of money and something that's incredibly necessary to make sure we continue with the expanding needs of veterans' health care. It was in a discussion I had with my majority leadership. And recently, when the President came to Pittsburgh, he invited me to fly in Air Force One with him. While in Air Force One and also in his limousine we spoke extensively about these issues. I told him I would continue to push for these things and that's my promise to you as well.

I'm also proud to serve with Chairman Chris Smith on the Veterans' Committee. I'm proud to have been a help in introducing a bill that will move us toward the system on which federal funding for veterans' health care is based, on the true needs of veterans and not an

annual whim of politicians. We want to see an independent body of health care experts draft a veterans' health budget every year for the President to submit to Congress. Health care practitioners, economists and specialists rather than politicians should be the ones analyzing veterans' hospital utilization rates and patient demand so that federal funding meets the needs of veterans on a real and rational basis. But ensuring that a veterans program is sufficiently funded is just one side of an issue. We must also be certain that taxpayers money is used appropriately. I'm worried by reports from the VA Inspector General citing waste, fraud and abuse in veterans programs, nearly $4 billion dollars worth. I am pleased we have uncovered it and pleased that Chairman Smith continues to be tenacious in helping to work with the VA of stopping any waste, fraud and abuse because it cannot be tolerated. Every dollar that's wasted there is funding that cannot be used for veterans health.

But, let me expand upon another issue here because so often the discussions that take place among folks at conventions like this are on some of these Congressional issues, on what happens to disabilities; what happens with health care; what happens with benefits for veterans. But you and I know in our hearts that when you go home, there's other issues near and dear to you, about your family, about your children, about your grandchildren. And specifically, I want to talk about one fine American Legion project, the American Legion Child Welfare Fund, one that we must be tenacious in continuing to work on.

Now it's not an easy thing for children who have great needs to have those needs taken care of, but we have to try. It was my uncle Dr. Garland D. Murphy that started this foundation back— actually had his first discussions in 1952, the year I was born. I know today we'll recognize some states for the work that they have done in raising money for this. I want to tell you some personal stories about Uncle Garland and about why he started this. Now, I'm particularly interested in this because in my role as a psychologist, and child psychologist, not even knowing the things that he did, the things that he was interested in, it seems to be one of the Murphy family traditions that we work with children.

But what happened as a young boy growing up in Arkansas, Garland was afflicted with rickets which left him pretty bow-legged. He also had a disease called von Recklinghausen's disease, otherwise known as Neurofibromatosis, which left him physically disfigured on his face and other parts throughout his body. After Pearl Harbor, he went to enlist in the army. Now, you'd think with some physical ailments the army would have made him 4-F. The good thing about Uncle Garland was he was a physician. And so he went with a bomb flight squadron and served as their surgeon in Europe in the war. Afterwards, he became Commander of [the Department of] Arkansas and National Vice Commander. But, he also remembered through his childhood the bitter recall of being teased as a child for how he looked, the torment, the fights on the playground. As he continued on in his medical practice, also with my grandfather, who was one of the first pediatricians in Arkansas, they dedicated their lives to helping families.

My uncle said that he didn't want to see other children suffer. What he had was some 10,000 acres of land in North Dakota and Montana. He went to The American Legion because he figured they could do it better than the federal government. He said, "I want to give the mineral rights of this land to help children." There was a lot of oil on that land and he helped The American Legion to establish this fund for children. Over the years, it has given some $6 million dollars in grants to assist children across the country in educational programs in multiple states. It's sponsored summer camps, crime prevention, children's advocacy groups, medical education programs, the list goes on. But the work of the foundation and the organizations it sponsors help our children grow to be healthy and productive, and it has to be something that reaches into all of our hearts.

I know a few years ago when I decided first to run for the Pennsylvania State Senate, I was standing in the new born intensive care unit at Mercy Hospital in Pittsburgh. I had worked in hospitals for a number of years in Pittsburgh and felt so much frustration over the years. But, here I was at this isolette, this incubator of a tiny baby probably not much bigger than your hand. It was born premature to a teenage mom who herself was addicted to crack cocaine. I don't know how many dozens or hundreds of children that I had seen who were born addicted to crack cocaine. I remember commenting to the nurse, "I don't think I can take this any more. I don't think I can continue to see these babies like this. I feel we're down at the bottom of a waterfall, this cascade of problems continuing to fall upon us and not being able to do anything about it. I've got to do something about it." She said, "Well,

why don't you run for office and go upstream." I said, "That I'll do."

I also know that in my work in dealing with children who were the victims of child abuse, physical abuse, neglect, starvation, sex abuse, it amazes me that in this country, the land of the free, and the home of the brave, what we do so often to victimized children is shameful and awful. If we as adults, if you as veterans who have been out there to see the hell in the world of war, don't stand up to help children as they face the hell in their homes and their communities, who else can? Who else will? That's why it is so vitally important for us to continue to support things like the Child Welfare Foundation. The American Legion is a model for the world of what you do for children. You're to be applauded for it on and on.

I also received a lot of my passion for working with children as being one of eleven children myself. Now I suspect there's obvious jokes when you're Irish Catholic, people just assume you're going to have a big family. My father, who is himself pretty good at telling an Irish tale or two, would actually say that it was because of my mom, Florence, who was a little hard of earing. I'd say, "What do you mean, Dad?" He'd say, "Well you know..." We didn't have a lot of money growing up. We were one of these families, quite frankly, that every Christmas the local American Legion or a VFW would drop off food baskets at our house to help the family at Christmastime because we didn't have much. It was one of those things. You thought that shoes were suppose to have holes in the bottom of them and refrigerators were supposed to be empty. But my dad would try to make jokes out of it. I should say, also my parents when they got these food baskets they'd say. "Oh, we have to take these to poor families, we're not a poor family, we have to take it away."

They taught us and instilled in us this pride in helping people. But on with this issue of my mother being hard of hearing. My father said he had to work three jobs in order to pay all the bills and he was constantly gone. But he'd come home at the end of the day, weak and tired, and he'd climb into bed with my mom and say, "Well, you want to go to sleep or what?" And she'd say, "What?" And that's how it works. When you have that many brothers and sisters around, you learn to fight and be scrappy about things.

Let's remember what is important to us. Let's remember that as you have taken up arms for America. Yes, it is our constitution that we swear allegiance to. Yes, it is freedom and liberty that our forefathers established. But ultimately isn't it for our families, that they know that they can be in safe neighborhoods, that our kids can go to good schools, that in this land of opportunity they can have the opportunities before them and not have them seized away by cruelty or by physical problems?

I want to renew the challenge of the late Garland Murphy that he presented to The American Legion back in 1952, and challenge each of you today to build on the Legion's great work with kids. I want to ask you to take this message home to your colleagues and help promote the work of the Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. Please set a local fund-raising goal for your Post or Unit to meet it. Every dollar you raise will help the foundation continue its charitable work. Last year, the foundation gave some $283 thousand to 11 organizations. If each Post in America contributed just $25.00 a year the foundation would raise over $700,000. If each Post in America just raised a hundred bucks by having a jar somewhere there at your Post, and if each Post raised $100 thousand, you'd raise $2.8 million dollars nationwide. Think of the thousands of children whose lives could be touched; whose lives could make a difference; and in some cases whose lives could be saved.

It was using this idea of building on small donations and how they can compound into greater things that enable the Department to become what it has been in working with the Child Welfare Foundation. And it is using little things like this that it also has helped those Departments that will be recognized today achieve what they have done.

We can argue all we want about what is right for America, but in the bottom of all these discussions, shouldn't we be able to at least agree in what is right for children? We'll struggle along the way. I know those who dedicate their lives to children sometimes have to be faced with the torments of failure, but, shouldn't we see failure sometimes as the expense of risk? And shouldn't we challenge ourselves anyway to continue to work? When you never challenge yourself, you're sentenced to this life of mediocrity. But instead, if we focus on doing the right thing, understand that it is always the time to do the right thing, and the only thing worse than failing to do the right thing is succeeding in doing the wrong thing. To let children continue to suffer is the wrong thing. Let us remember some words of

Theodore Roosevelt when he said that we should not be satisfied to live in that great twilight that knows neither victory or defeat. We should challenge ourselves to do mighty things, to live the life of strenuous effort. That is indeed what we must do.

I challenge veterans to make sure that part of the message you take home is that we have a mission in our families; greatness of America can be judged by the strength of our families and the strength of those families can be judged on our passion for helping our children. Please continue that work and let us be clear eyed. Let us be singular in purpose in knowing that this precious moment in time is when we must take our stand, when we must take our stand to know that will we move forward to help those in need, or, will we be self-centered and focus only on our own. You and I know that the way of The American Legion and the way of the American veteran is to stand proud, shoulder-to-shoulder, hand-in-hand with our eyes on the future knowing that we can help those in need. I thank all of you who have done all you have to help the children of America and this great nation of ours.

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award and Legacy Award
Ronald F. Conley, National Commander, Pennsylvania

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I'll ask Congressman Murphy to join me in making this presentation this morning. I have the pleasure of presenting the Garland Murphy Award to the Department that had the most participation in raising funds for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of the award is the Department of New York.

I'll read the award. "The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of New York for the program year 2002-2003, in recognition of their designation as the number one Department in total contributions received from their volunteers and support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaning grants." Signed by 'Udie' Grant, President of the Children Welfare Foundation and William Pease, the Foundation's Executive Secretary.

FANG WONG, DEPT OF NEW YORK CMDR: On behalf of the great Department of New York, I am truly honored to accept this award. I'm sure that when we bring the award back to our Department, the over 180,000 Legionnaires in the Department will be inspired and honored for the appreciation that the National Headquarters show. We will strive for bigger and better level. We're going to raise the bar.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I call upon the President of the Child Welfare Foundation, 'Udie' Grant.

PRES GRANT: Congressman, the board of the directors of the foundation present to you a memento in observance of the 50th Anniversary of the Child Welfare Foundation. We present this to you now in hope that you may use this on your desk in your office.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I now call upon the Chairman of the Children and Youth, Elmer Fuhrhop for his remarks.

CHRMN FUHRHOP: Congressman Murphy, I really appreciate your efforts in supporting the Child Welfare Foundation. It's been a challenge to work on it. But I'm going to keep right on going. We're going to hit the top and go right over in the next few years.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I think it's a special honor to have Congressman Murphy here in memory of his uncle's contribution to the children of this nation and having The American Legion be the keepers of the funds to make sure the youth of our nation are well taken care of. Congressman, we really appreciate you being here but we truly appreciate your family and their commitment to the children of our nation.

At this time we present the Child Welfare Foundation Legacy Award. This award is presented to the top Department based on the combined totals of The American Legion family for a contribution year. The Department earning the honor this year donated $41,393.00. It's with great pride and gratitude that I present the 2003 Legacy Award to the Department of Ohio.

ROGER HIGHT DEPT OF OHIO ADJUTANT: On behalf of the Department of Ohio Legion family, we thank you.

CHRMN FUHRHOP: While Congressman Murphy is here, I'd like to tell him and of course all of you how proud we are in the Child Welfare Foundation that when you make a contribution to the foundation, we can honestly say that 100% of the monies you're giving to the foundation will go for the good of the kids, for the youngsters, for the youth of this country. You might say, "Well, how can you do that?" The personnel is furnished by The American Legion. The office space is furnished by The American Legion. The monies that we receive is invested. We use the earnings from that investment to pay what little bit of expense that we do have. But the earnings are what we use to make the grants, so I think that we are one of the very few foundations that we can honestly say, that when you give to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation 100% goes for the benefit of children.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Our next guest is among the strongest advocates for veterans on Capitol Hill. In July, when the House of Representatives Rules Committee was debating restoring the $1.8 billion to the VA medical care area of the appropriations bill, he was testifying at 11:00 p.m., in favor of the action. Unfortunately, it did not pass to the full house. This man voted no on the final bill because it did not contain the $1.8 billion dollar funding. By this action he demonstrates moral integrity of the highest level. He is a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and the House Arms Services Committee. Give a warm welcome to a true friend of those in uniform, our nation's veterans, the Honorable Rodriguez of Texas.

Address: The Honorable Ciro D. Rodriguez
United States House of Representatives

I think in terms of my activities I need to share with you something. The last time I went to a group was to one of the high schools back home. The young man was kind of nervous who was going to introduce me. I was running late. He said "Mr. Rodriguez, can you tell me a little bit about yourself?" So I started to let him know a little bit about myself but noticed he was very nervous. So I told him, "you know what, it might be best that the least you say would be better." Sure enough, the young man grabbed the mike and said "The least I can say about Mr. Rodriguez, the better."

Thank you for inviting me to be here with you today in the "Show Me" State. Before I begin, I want to show you my fellow Texans. I would like the Texas delegation and those that came in with me to please stand; give all the Texans a good hand. *Applause.* There is another great American I'd like to recognize for his work this past year. He traveled this country, visiting VA facilities, reporting back to Congress with one of the most comprehensive, telling reports on the state of the VA health care that we've seen in some time. National Commander Ron Conley, thank you for your tireless efforts. On behalf of veterans, we value the report you provided "A System Worth Saving," and, of course, your strong leadership. Both will be markers for us as we move forward in trying to make the VA health care more responsive and more accessible to all veterans. What Commander Conley did is indicative of what we've come to expect and rely on The American Legion. We value your friendship and we are grateful for the vibrant and unwavering voice you have given the veterans' advocacy.

My friends, we have a serious problem before us. It is no secret to Ron Conley or to anyone in this organization, nor to the nation's 25 million veterans, and their families that the VA health care system is critically underfunded. As I go through my district and talk to both veterans and non veterans, they are all supportive. The result is that tens of thousands of veterans are being forced to wait weeks, even months, for care, growing more ill as they wait. And one group of veterans is being denied access to VA care. This is unacceptable and frankly dangerous. We're saying that to this and future generations of veterans: the care you need might or might not be there for you. That's not the right message we ought to be sending. And what is worse, there are continuing efforts by some to fund the VA services on the backs of the veterans themselves by asking for co-payments, additional pay on prescriptions and others. These services do nothing but discourage veterans from using the very system that was established to help them.

"Earlier this year, the VA found itself in a morally irresponsible position." Those are the words of Secretary Principi. And I'll say that again. "Earlier this year the VA found itself in the morally irresponsible position" of not being able to provide care to veterans who

sought to enroll in the VA care. Because of these inadequate resources, the VA was forced to stop enrolling so-called 'high income,' priority 8 veterans. They are no more high income than in my district. These are individuals who have earned the right. They're well-decorated, combat veterans, priority 8 veterans who in some cases make $25,000. That's not high income. Many cannot afford to have insurance. If they are Medicare eligible, their benefits do not transfer to VA. Turning any veteran away from necessary VA health is the wrong thing to do. VA should be serving every veteran who has honorably served and has sacrificed for this country, and who is now seeking help. They have been there for us and we as Americans need to be there for them now.

Only recently, veterans saw their prescription drug co-payments go up. It is a budget submission by the administration of additional resources that the VA needs to ask and they continue to ask our veterans. When I first heard sometime back, in articles, that the administration was going to see a $3 billion increase, I said, my God, it was about time. But when I found out that $1.1 billion of that was so-called efficiency movements, which means no money but cut additional existing services. When I saw that the $3 billion also included $1.4 billion that was actually co-payments that the veteran was having to pay, it wasn't real money. And the rest was co-payments of prescription drug coverage. That is not being forthright. That's not being sincere about what we need to do to take care of our veterans.

At the present time we have a shortfall. This $1.8 billion that we need now is not to add additional resources, but to cover existing services. And, yes, you'll have representatives come and stand right before you, telling you you've been given an increase of $1.4 billion and that they gave you one last year and the year before. That's true. But the increase of $1.4 billion does not even begin to cover the cost of inflation. Inflation for health care is not 2.9%, it's between 7 to 9 percent. So just to cover existing programs we need a 9%to 10% increase in order to cover that. In addition to that, in order to cover the construction work that's needed to redo our facilities that are over 50 years old we need up to 4% increase. So you add that 4 and that 7 or 9 percent, you're looking at an 11 or 12 percent increase that's needed right now to make sure of existing services.

So it falls with you and all of us to make sure that we do the right thing. When we try to present that $1.8 billion—and I want to congratulate Chairman Smith, Republican on the Veterans Committee—we went before the Rules Committee and I let them know we're asking for $1.8 billion amendment on the House floor to be able to pull it off. And, yes, there were discussions there about the fact that they had been giving us so-called increases. They were not sufficient. But at the same time that we had passed a supplement that we're willing to provide and the President is going to come back and ask for an additional supplement for the war, and we're going to be there to give it to him.

But the last supplement I want to share with you was a $30 billion supplement. In there was a $2 billion increase for health care for Iraqis. So when I stood there in the Committee I let them know that they are willing to provide $2 billion health care for Iraqis, but unwilling to provide $1.8 billion for our own veterans here at home.

I vow to you today that I will join my colleagues Congressman Lane Evans and other ranking members to push forward on that $1.8 billion that's needed. And we're going to push, since it didn't occur on the House side. We're going to push on the Senate side to try to make that happen. We've got to make that happen. It is time to make the VA health care funding also a mandatory instead of discretionary. It is time to base the annual VA health care budget on the number of veterans enrolled in the system. Despite the services we provide we don't have the majority are not being provided with access to health care. The President's own task force talked about the disparities from region to region, from state to state, in the access to health care to veterans. Their own report talks about the need to increase in those areas.

I want to talk to you about H.R. 2318, the Assurance Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003, introduced by Congressman Lane Evans. We know that 121 cosponsors have joined on H.R. 2318. We need your help to push the additional numbers that are needed to make this happen: annual funding for Medicare, for the Department of Defense, TRICARE for Life, the federal employees, all those are mandatory programs. We need to make health care for veterans mandatory. I know that the leadership in the appropriations area do not want to see that. I know that the leadership in OMB, which is the Office of Management and Budget do not want to see that because they want to make it discretionary so they can be

able to leverage money here and there and elsewhere instead of where it should be, and that is with our veterans.

At the end, when all is said and done, we've got to make sure that we make the resources available. Our veterans are reaching that age, World War II veterans, Korean War veterans, Gulf War veterans, as well as the Vietnam veterans, are reaching that age where they need us now. They were there when we needed them, they need us now. We need to be there for them when it comes to health care.

We have signed on H.R. 2318. We ask you to help get others to sign on that particular piece of legislation. I know it isn't popular to stand up with the appropriators in Congress. I know it isn't popular to stand up to the leadership, to stand against them in the House. I know it isn't popular to stand with those who have priorities other than veterans. But sometimes it's also not popular to go to war, and you've done it. It's also sometimes going to war you would prefer to be doing something else. You would prefer to be with your families but you've done it. So we have to do the right thing. We have to make sure because we're sending the wrong message to our fighting soldiers that are now both in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have to make sure that we reach out to them. We've got to make sure that the funding is mandatory so we don't have to fight year after year for something that we are already entitled to and that's to make sure that our veterans get access to health care.

I want to also talk briefly, because its important to mention, that the VA is in the midst of a massive restructuring effort to better match so called VA health care infrastructure to the demand of health care services. This is the "Capital Asset Restructuring for Enhance Services" (CARES). We can talk as much as we like but the bottom line is that this same report says we need $5 billion just for renovating our construction facilities throughout this country. We need that now and we need those increases as soon as possible. We cannot hand that old infrastructure down to the next generation of veterans. We've got to make sure we correct that. So one of the responsibilities of that particularly proposal is to make sure that we provide that. Experts will tell you that we need 2 to 4 percent increase each year just to provide those needed services for infrastructure. I've indicated to you that we have gotten less than 1% to try, and that has been coming from excess from the health programs that are need for our veterans to take care of our buildings when we ought to have additional resources to meet that need.

I wanted to mention to you a particular project. Pay attention because a lot of our veterans are not aware of Project SHAD. And it's not about the elections in Florida. Project SHAD was also referred to as Project 112. Project 112 and SHAD in this case, stands for Shipboard Hazard and Defense. These were the exercises that were done in the 1960s of 112 projects that were recently, in the last year, revealed by the Department of Defense, that supposedly did not have any information. These were the projects that basically utilized tests of both chemical and biological on our own troops in the '60s and '70s. It's important to note because of the fact that at the present time we have made some inroads in beginning to identify those veterans out there who might have been affected.

At first, they told us there were 54 projects, not 112. Now we're up to something like 60 projects. So we'll see how many we come up with. But we're going to continue to investigate these particular projects throughout this country. Most of them were in ships, some were on land. We have been able to identify close to 5,000 veterans who might have been impacted. I have filed legislation H.R. 2433 that would allow those veterans involved who were in these particular experiments—some knowingly, some unknowingly—that they take a priority in terms of being examined. We should make sure that their exposures were not harmful. But if they were, we need to do whatever we can to make sure that we correct that situation. So I will ask you to look at H.R. 2433, because, as of now, we have identified close to 5,000 veterans who might have been impacted in the '60s and '70s. They were in certain ships where we utilized both chemical and biological as experiments to see how our soldiers would react.

Our committee also has authorized a total of $1.1 billion over the next two years for major medical facility constructions. I'm pleased with that but it is not sufficient. We also have reported out bills that enhance veterans in education, self-employment and training opportunities. We've also provided important benefits to surviving spouses and ex POWs and children with spinal bifida.

We've also looked at a variety of other programs. One that I wanted to share with you

is from a homeland defense prospective. It's important to note that the VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care network with over 20,000 health care professional, 163 medical centers, 800 outpatient clinics, 115 medical research centers, and the story goes on. But the bottom line is, the VA ought to be the one from a homeland security prospective if anything happens, because they are the ones that are situated throughout this country to be able to be prepared to respond. But they need the resources. So I have filed a piece of legislation that is referred to as the Veterans' Emergency Preparedness Centers to create four centers throughout this country to be able to respond in case of a chemical or biological attack or a disaster within our own country, and be able to meet that. I've passed the language and now I need the resources to make that happen. We need about $100 million in order to begin to prepare the staff and be able to provide the resources that are needed to make that happen.

We've also been successful in guiding through the house bills that expand veterans self-employment and self-business education opportunities. Also bills that authorize a new federal procurement program for service disabled veterans, small business owners, as well as authorize five new national cemeteries in our country. We found ourselves still behind on a lot of those projects.

But finally, let me also just indicate to you that and let me just add my voice to those of Jim Marshall, my friend from Georgia and the 200 other colleagues who have signed the discharge petition. I'm going to encourage to put pressure on the ones who have not signed. Go back home and find out who hasn't signed the discharge petition and force them to do that. Do you know of anyone else who pays 100% tax on their government benefits? No, that's not right. So if we can cut taxes for millionaires, we certainly can cut our taxes 100% on military retirement pay and that ought to be done. We have 202 signatures. We need 218 and they'll have to pass that bill. They've talked about tax cut. Let's get a real tax cut that benefits our veterans out there that would allow them to have those resources and allow them to spend their money. That will help in terms of reinvestment in our economy.

It's important as we talk about veterans' health, that we also consider our soldiers who are out there right now. Our soldiers are doing a beautiful job. They're not complaining, they're doing what needs to be done. We have a responsibility to also complain for them. Right now in Iraq, in Afghanistan, we need more soldiers. The bottom line is we all know that the Reservists are carrying the bulk. They're out there and they need our help. If we want to start saving money, it should not be on the backs of the Reservists. Any good general would know that you want to make sure that you overwhelm them with force. We need to make sure—and I disagree totally with the Secretary of Defense on the fact—that we need additional servicemen. We needed them prior to Iraq and we need them now. As I talk to some of them, I know that they need our help and our support, and I know that the generals are also asking for help. We need to be there for them.

They always say you come in with a joke and you leave with a joke. I was there with Mr. Sherry. We were playing a little golf. As we were playing—I won't tell you who did it—but one of us hit a ball that hit an ant bed. All the ants were around the ball. Well, we swung at the ball. We missed the ball, but killed a whole bunch of ants. The second time around we swung at the ball again and killed a whole bunch of ants. The ball was still there. By the third time, one of the little ants said "You know what, it's apparent to me if we're going to survive we need to get on the ball." Congratulations for being on the ball.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Our next guest is a navy veteran of service in Vietnam where he commanded a river boat unit in the Mekong Delta. From those murky waters he has risen to lead the federal government's second largest department, the Department of Veterans Affairs. In this position he is responsible for a system of health care services, benefits programs and national cemeteries of our comrades. We've had an opportunity throughout the whole year to discuss many problems. And one thing I can at least tell you here this afternoon that the Secretary and I have had many discussions and we're going to continue that dialogue. Please welcome the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the Honorable Anthony Principi.

Address: The Honorable Anthony J. Principi
Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs

I thank Commander Conley for his kind words. I also want to thank him for his great leadership of one of America's greatest organizations. I know of no one in the veterans' community who has been a more tireless advocate of the men and women who served our nation in uniform than Commander Ron Conley. His visits to most, if not all, of our VA medical centers across the country has served to remind us of the importance of our mission and to help us get better. For that I thank you, Commander. I also wish to express my thanks to the National Adjutant Bob Spanogle for his tireless efforts as part of the President's Task Force address issues of VA and DoD health care and for his great contribution to the work of that commission. And of course to John Sommer and the entire Washington staff for the spirit of cooperation and collaboration as we worked together to address the issues facing our nation's veterans. As proud as I am to be a Vietnam veteran, to have two sons who saw combat in Iraq, I am more proud and more humble to serve as your Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to carry on the noble mission of my department.

Since the Iraq war started, I've tried to spend a little time up at Walter Reed Army Hospital and Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington visiting and thanking our wounded soldiers and Marines who came back from Iraq. I must tell you, it's very heart wrenching and tough to look at some of their difficult wounds, imaging if one or both of my sons were in those beds. But I must also tell you it's very inspiring to see first hand their enormous courage, to hear a young sergeant tell me he just wants to get out of that bed, get a prostheses on the leg he lost in Iraq and get back to the 3rd Infantry Division and take care of his troops. That's all he wanted to do.

I want to tell you a story about a young Marine I will never forget at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Barely 18-years old, he was severely wounded at the battle of Nasiriyah. He was shot four times. He was alone and had no family with him. I wanted to spend a few extra minutes trying to comfort him as best I could; hold his hand, thank him for his great sacrifices and wish him well. Before I left, I laid on his chest a book and said to him, "Corporal, when you get better, please read every page in this book, because you earned every benefit in here."

I went on to the next Marine in his room and spent a few minutes with him and his parents. He was shot up pretty bad, too. The Marines took a beating at Nasiriyah. After a while I left him and his parents and went back. As I was leaving the room, I saw that the first young Marine had managed to pick up the book and was reading it. I was so happy. I went back and told him how pleased I was. He could barely talk but whispered to me "That's all I want, that's all I want." He was pointing to a provision. I looked down and read that it was a provision that said because of his service in combat, he was entitled to become a United States citizen.

I broke down, I was overwhelmed, I didn't know what to say other than "Corporal, we'll make that happen soon." I thought to myself how very blessed America is to have young men and women from every corner of this great nation, small towns and villages and farms and large cities, who are willing to sacrifice everything so that others can be free. In the case of this young Marine to come to our country from a distant shore and be willing to sacrifice his life for the right to be called an American citizen. I thought as well how fortunate I was to be the Secretary to oversee the administration of services and benefits to these men and women.

Well, there is a happy ending to this story. Two days later, the President went up to Bethesda and granted him United States citizenship. I think that was a great thing to do for a great young man.

We at the VA face enormous challenges. We face the challenge, as I know you have heard, not only in your communities and homes, but here in St. Louis, about the tremendous demands for health care today and the lack of adequate resources. We face the challenge of a backlog of disability claims, for disability compensation and pension. And, of course, we face the challenge of ensuring that our national cemeteries are national shrines and that we have internment space for the sadly growing number of veterans who we're losing in America, 1,800 a day. But let me talk a little this morning, and I will try not to take too long, about our health care challenges.

I'm very proud of today's VA health care system. I know we're not perfect. You know we're not perfect. But this is not my father's VA, the VA that he was a patient in after World

War II. It's a modern health care system with highly dedicated and committed physicians and nurses across the country caring for our ever growing number of veterans. But at the same time, I call it the perfect storm, much like the movie *The Perfect Storm,* where that small fishing boat off the Newfoundland coast is facing those enormous waves. Today, the VA does have somewhat of the same challenges, the kind of forces coming together: high quality, customer satisfaction. We've opened now some 700 outpatient clinics—we've had very few community based outpatient clinics prior to 1995- 1996—so that our veterans can access the VA much closer to their homes; they don't have to drive hour after hour to get to a hospital and, in most cases, not all.

Prescription drugs—any of our elderly veterans simply cannot afford to go down to the local pharmacy and pay enormous amounts for prescription drugs. They need to go to the VA and they are coming for prescription drugs.

Of course, as to eligibility reform prior to 1998, we were caring for about 2.9 million veterans. In 1998, Congress said all 25 million are eligible. I think these factors have come together in such a way that we've grown from 2.9 million who use the VA health care system in 1998, to 7 million enrolled today. Five million are actually using the system. This year we will have probably 50 million outpatient visits, up from 26½ million. We have one million outpatient visits a week and 565,000 veterans will be inpatients in our facilities. And we're on track to fill almost 200 million prescriptions. That's tremendous growth. I'm proud of the work that our people have done but there is a problem, and the problem is waiting lists. Although we're making good progress in bringing down the waiting lists, we still have work to do.

One of the challenges, of course, is the financial challenge. You've heard a lot about that. First, I am very proud, and thanks to your advocacy, you should be very proud. Between 2001 and October 1st, God willing, Congress will get me an appropriation bill and get one to the President. Our budget will have grown from $48 billion on October 1, 2001 to almost $64 billion this coming October. That's a 32% increase. I believe it's the largest increase in a three year period in the history of the VA. I thank my leadership team for going toe-to-toe with OMB and I thank The American Legion for their advocacy because I believe that without your support it would not have happened. So I thank you.

I thank our President and our Congress on both sides of the aisle for stepping up to the plate. But we still have more to do, and the budget battles that are waging on Capitol Hill, I'm convinced in the final analysis, will prevail because of you.

I have taken the unprecedented step of addressing the prescription needs of our veterans. About a third of the veterans who are coming to us for health care are coming strictly for prescription drugs. They have a Medicare doc and have been through a series of lab tests but told to wait online maybe six months to a year to see another VA physician and go through another series of lab tests simply to get their prescription filled. So I've established a program for any veteran who is currently on our waiting list as of July 25th, who really just needs his or her prescription drugs to come to the VA with that prescription and they can get their prescription filled immediately. We've never done this before, we've never filled non-VA prescriptions. The military has in military hospital but we have not. I'm going to monitor this program very carefully to see how well it works, if it works well and the veterans believe it's worthwhile to continue, we will continue it maybe expand it, but we need to study it first because it's a new approach that we have taken and I want to make sure that our system can handle it and we'll watch it carefully.

Another issue of great importance is CARES. I know you've heard a lot about that, Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services. My predecessor started CARES and I decided to continue it because I believe it is important because health care in America has changed so dramatically. Technology, drug therapy, telemedicine, telemetry have revolutionized the delivery of medicine. Procedures that required weeks in a hospital can now be done in an ambulatory center of excellence. I foresee the day when they can be done at home. Drugs are making it possible for veterans and all Americans not to have to undergo surgery. Well over the past 150 years, we have built up a VA health care system for a different type of medicine and for demographics that were far different in 1900 or 1890 than in 2003 and 2004. Army posts, army forts that were abandon by the military became VA hospitals to house tuberculosis patients and the mentally ill when warehoused people in this country. But now drugs and a support structure allow veterans with mental illness to live at

home, to go to work and not have to be locked in a mental hospital. So we have to change with the changing times.

We have to be on the cutting edge of medicine into the 21st century and not the trailing edge gone by. These decisions are not easy but unless leaders are willing to step up to the plate and make the tough decisions, we're going to fail in our mission and we will become extinct in 2010 or 2020. That's why it's important to undertake this process. But I've changed it somewhat and I established an independent CARES Commission. Bob Ray, a former state commander in The American Legion is on that CARES commission, and the commission is headed by Everett Alvarez, the first pilot to be shot down over Vietnam who spent eight years in the Hanoi Hilton. He is second to none in his commitment to our nation's veterans and will not rubber stamp anything. Unless it's right for veterans, he will not report back to me.

I commit to you that I will not adopt the recommendations of the CARES Commission unless I'm absolutely convinced it's the right thing to do for our nation's veterans, past and present. I will not adopt the CARES Commission until I get a commitment from Congress that they will fund the modernization of the VA health care system and third, I will not politicize it. I will not say this is ok and this is not ok, this district is ok, this district is not ok. I will accept it in full, I will reject it in full, or I will ask the commission to go out and do some work. I think that's the right approach to take. But Congress has to stand up to the plate, too, and say Mr. Secretary, we commit to you the funding to build a new hospital, to build a new bed tower, before there is going to be any consolidation of any facilities as long as I am Secretary.

Disability Comp—At the beginning of January of this year, our backlog of disability claims for pension and disability comp and death gratuities for widows and widowers, stood at roughly 432,000 claims. I'm proud to report to you this morning that that backlog is now below 270,000, not withstanding the fact that we get 60,000 new claims each and every month. The waiting times have dropped from on average nine months to about 163 days. That's real progress. We're not there yet and we need to stay disciplined and focused but I can commit to you and tell you we're doing better. We're getting veterans answers on their disability claims. I thank the people of the VA and our regional offices around the country, and I thank your service officers for their enormous help in making that possible.

And third, our National Cemeteries—you heard Congressman Rodriguez talk about the need for internment space, and he's absolutely correct. I'm proud that the President has authorized me to open up five new national cemeteries across the country over the next several years, the most aggressive schedule since the Civil War. From California, Sacramento, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Atlanta, Georgia, Florida, Detroit, Pennsylvania, we're going to be opening up new cemeteries and will continue to do so to meet the regrettable need for additional internment space for our nation's veterans.

Let me just mention a man who has been my hero, a Civil War veteran wounded three times at the Battle of Ball's Bluff, Chancellorsville and Antitum. After the Civil War, he became one of America's most esteemed jurists on the United States Supreme Court. His name is Oliver Wendell Holmes. Several years after the Civil War at a reunion perhaps much like this, I'm sure much smaller, of his regiment, he said the following: As I look into your eyes, I see as I always do that something made you different, made all of us different who served in combat from what we would have been without it. It made us feel the brotherhood of man. It made us citizens of the world and not just of a small town. But best of all, best of all, it made us believe in doing something else besides getting all of the loaves and fishes for ourselves.

The American Legion stands for that. You have committed your lives in uniform and after you came home and hung up your uniform, you continued to serve your fellow veterans, your communities, your nation. Baseball, Boys State, Boys Nation, volunteerism, that's the greatness of America. I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, fellow Legionnaires, it is because of you America's great in the 20th century and America will be great in the 21st century, and that's why the Legion needs to stay vibrant and strong.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Thank you Mr. Secretary. For several years now The American Legion involvement with the Children's Miracle Network has continue to grow. More and more Legionnaires are helping to raise funds that stay right in their community.

Before we hear from the co-founder and chief executive officer of the Children's Miracle Network, Mike Shannon, here's a special message from *CNN*.

Pre-recorded Presentation: Angel runs in place like any other happy child which is a miracle considering what happened on a faithful spring day.

It was about this time of the day in the evening when I was going home. Angel, my grandson was with me. He was going home with me at the end of my shift and we came out that door there. We were walking out. Angel kind of went a little over to the left side, right in front of the bay window.

We heard a screeching noise and a car made a spinning out noise and as soon as I turned around the car came busting through the doors of the oil changing station. And one second my son was right in front of me and the next second he was gone.

I yelled for him and I just ran to him. His mouth was hanging open and his eyes were crossed-eyed but facing outwards; they were just fixed open. He was just bleeding from everywhere. I thought he was gone.

She thought he had already died. And I remember seeing his shirt up a little bit and his stomach barely breathing and I said, "No, he's still alive, he's still alive, look, look at his stomach it's still going."

And I told him, keep breathing, just keep breathing and I just kept telling him momma loves you, momma loves you, that it will be ok.

The child was unconscious on arrival, breathing poorly and had large scalp lacerations. I felt that the child was critically injured and was not likely to survive the incident. I really felt this child might not make it. I really don't know how long he was in surgery. To me anytime at all seemed like an eternity. Everything seemed like a dream, a blur to me.

At that point, with a young boy in a coma and a CAT scan revealing that he'd had a brain injury, at a minimum we needed to monitor the pressure in his skull in his brain. The pressure monitor is actually implanted in the brain through the hole that we drill. It allows us to treat the elevated pressure in the brain medically to release or diminish that pressure and improve the brain's outcome. Angel displayed a few behaviors in the emergency room that at least led me to believe that this was somebody who was going to survive and recover. He was on life support and completely helpless actually.

After about two weeks of him being in his coma, he started to come out of it. They had me bring familiar blankets, familiar toys, his familiar cup, things that he would recognize to help him come out of it and to see what he would remember. When I first walked in the room, when we all first walked in the room he didn't recognize anybody. He was making weird whining noises. I had asked one of the nurses there if they would allow my older son to come in.

I was calling him and he looked at me and he, like, got a little smile on his face and I started playing with him and he was holding my hand. It was like he snapped out of wherever it was he was in his head or in his back of his brain somewhere, wherever he was hiding in there. My older son got him to come out of there. We had to re-teach him how to walk, re-teach him how to talk, how to sit up, because he would lean over, he'd fall over.

I think if it wasn't for all the doctors, the pediatricians and the therapists and everybody that they have at the children's medical center, I feel that my son wouldn't be here today.

There's a lot of satisfaction involved in a case such as Angel's. He entered the hospital in a coma, critically injured; many felt that he wouldn't survive. The most satisfying part of my job really is ultimately the good outcome of the patient. I can tell you that when my wife and children are in the grocery store and a patient's mother walks up to them and says, you know your dad's our hero, he saved my little girl. That becomes very satisfying for me personally.

Address: Mike Shannon, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Children's Miracle Network

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes just to come up and acknowledge the incredible service that you have performed for Children's Miracle Network. Last year you raised more than $4 million for our 174 children's hospitals, so that when Angel needed it, it was there. We love this relationship with you. We've learned from you and we hope to

keep it going for years to come. We love the association and we have some great plans for continuing to raise money and continuing to take care of our kids all over the country. Our 174 hospitals saw over 17 million kids last year. They're there 24-7, whenever they're needed. Again, that's because of people like you who contribute and make that possible.

As we meet here today, there is a little baby being treated at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City. This baby's name is Jordan Nielsen. Jordan was born about two months ago, barely two pounds. You could hold Jordan in one hand and he would barely fill it at the time. Jordan weighs a little over five pounds today and is ready to go home over the course of the next few days. Jordan's father has not seen him, has not held him. His father is Staff Sgt. Jeremy Nielsen serving in Iraq right now. But while he is serving, we are there to take care of Jordan and all the kids like Jordan who need that very special sophisticated care that they can only get at our children's hospitals.

So again I want to thank you for all that you've done for all that you continue to do. Your service goes far beyond what you do with us at Children's Miracle Network. We're extremely grateful for that $4 million and I know we'll do more together in the future.

Presentation: The American Legion Distinguished Service Award
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor The American Legion can bestow upon an individual. To be considered for the Distinguished Service Award, one must demonstrate outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion. This year we honor a husband and wife team who have continued to work passionately for almost two decades on behalf of Vietnam veterans. They have played a key role in helping to convince lawmakers and leaders that Agent Orange exposure caused lingering health problems. They are the tireless researches of The American Legion Columbia University Study of Vietnam Veterans. Their work, their belief and the gut feelings of Vietnam veterans led to the creation of a system for estimating levels of troops herbicide exposures.

Many ailing Vietnam veterans have a hard time proving to the Department of Veterans Affairs that their illnesses are related to Agent Orange exposure. Their research helps to ease the burden of that proof. Once the government contracts scientists and funds studies based on their systems, I believe that undoubtedly we'll find more Vietnam veterans who should have been already receiving disability benefits. The work of these two researchers will count for more ways, not fewer ways, in which our troops were exposed to the harmful substance.

This morning we present The American Legion Distinguished Service Medal to Dr. Jeanne Stellman and Dr. Steven Stellman.

DR. STEVEN STELLMAN: We thank The American Legion, especially Robert Spanogle and John Sommer, for your unwavering confidence and support of our work for more than 20 years. When some in the scientific community questioned both the science, and even the public health importance of studies involving veterans, you were always there to remind us that we were on the right track. We owe a large debt of gratitude to a thousand very special Legionnaires and their family members. Your efforts in the early days of our studies as volunteer researchers in tracking down your brother and sister Legionnaires and persuading them to join our study, gave our work a valid scientific foundation. We are proud to acknowledge you as our collaborators along with the Legion's other national and departmental staff who have consistently gone out of their way to support this effort. We couldn't have done it without you and are proud to acknowledge you as our scientific collaborators.

Finally, your convention theme is The American Legion family. That's our theme, too. From the very beginning, our studies have gone beyond the individual veteran to show how your efforts and sacrifices in the service of our nation have affected not only your own health, but that of your family, children, and the community to which we all belong. Our research cannot give you back lost health, but we hope that it can be of use in providing the recognition of your sacrifices by the institutions that our society has set up to meet veterans' needs.

DR. JEANNE STELLMAN. This is an incredibly momentous time for us, but I have to say that I think it's you who deserve the Distinguished Service Medals. I just want to bring a personal note into this because I don't think that I would be standing here nor any of the remnants of my family would be alive if it weren't for the work of the American military and you veterans. I was born in a relocation camp in Germany after the war under the care of the American army and I thank you very much for that.

What we've been engaged in is more than science it's really a pursuit of simple justice. In the 1980s, we began to see the first signs that maybe there was something to this herbicide exposure and the health of Vietnam veterans. We needed a strong, solid group of veterans to work with to try to prove that. And there was no better collaborator and partner in this than The American Legion and Bob Spanogle and John Sommer, and all the commanders and volunteers who have worked with us.

We did a study for you and we ran right up against the opposition of the government who threw away millions and millions of dollars. They said no one was exposed and no study could be done, and the Legion fought that all the way up to the Supreme Court. They didn't win that fight but they did manage to work with friends in Congress and get the Agent Orange Act passed in 1991, and it was the first time that outside scientists were brought in outside the federal government. Those scientists of the Institute of Medicine listened to Legion testimony, looked at the Legion study, listened to us and said the Stellmans and the Legion are right and the government is wrong. And finally, so many years after the fact, a grant was given that we competed for and that the Legion collaborated with through the National Academy of Sciences. And we've managed to undercover more records and we've managed to detail flight plans, and we've managed to put together an exposure method that the National Academy of Sciences and the journals have said is ok, is acceptable.

So now so many decades after the exposure, we're finally ready to ask the government to put forth the resources to finally do those studies that are needed, to provide access to the records. It's no good to try to do a study if the National Personnel Records Center say, well we can't tell you anything, we don't know where the records are. You need to line up the access, you need to line up the resources and then I have full confidence that when the studies are in that the Legion will be there to assure that there is full treatment, compensation and recognition after all these many years.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Many thought the only focus The American Legion had this past year was the funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Well, they were wrong. The campaign to restore Old Glory and maintain its protection that had existed for over a hundred years. Once again, the House has passed the Flag Protection Amendment. It awaits action in the United States Senate. The Citizens Flag Alliance continues to be active. To bring us up to date on what needs to be done, I present to this body the Chairman of the Board of The Citizens Flag Alliance and a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his life saving actions in Vietnam. Stand and join me in rendering the proper respect and honors to a true American hero, Major General Patrick Brady, United States Army Retired.

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

Our Chaplain said the other day—and I don't know if he's here listening to me to make sure I get this right— somehow there's a similarity between the feeling of friendship among people, and a feeling that we'll all have some day in paradise. I think that's the kind of a feeling that brings you all together, year after year, to do your good work. But it certainly is a feeling I get when I come back and get to be with you folks every so often.

My task is to bring you up-to-date on the constitutional fight for our flag. As you know, as the Commander said, we recently had a great victory in the house. Your amendment got over 300 votes of those who were present. Actually there were six people who were not present who would have voted. We probably got more votes in the House this time than we ever have had in the past. For some reason we lost two former supporters. Bobby Rush of Illinois, Elijah Cummings of Maryland. I hope that those of you in those states will find out what happened. More disturbing was Adam Schiff of California who pledged to support the

flag when he was running for office in order to get votes, then voted against the flag. I hope that those of you in California will ask him why.

Prior to the vote, we testified in the House. The opposition could only get one person to testify against us. He was a disabled veteran and focused much of his time on his own personal problems. I'm always amazed at the strength of our supporters in the Congress as they wade through the mockery of the media and opponents, and they just keep on toughing-it-out. The fact that the House had a hearing at all is a very good sign and I'm convinced that they're not going to give up on this issue. It makes it vital that all of us continue to show strength in all that we do for our Constitution. All Congresspersons are busy and they need to know that people in organizations like you are behind them.

The debate on the House floor was interesting. The material that we have spent some six or seven years developing was used extensively. Congressman Hyde came back just to debate on the flag issue. He added to all our copy points that this issue was also about putting an end to the vulgarization of America. The opposition is falling off many of their discredited arguments and spent much of their time defending their own patriotism. I think they see the tide in this country and they fear deeply that people will question their patriotism on the flag issue. But in their charges against those of us who support the flag amendment, they were doing the same thing. They were questioning our patriotism. These people believe that it is unpatriotic to protect the symbol of patriotism. And it's patriotic to allow it to be burned. It's just insane.

Now the Senate is always a challenge. We may be three votes short. I spoke briefly to Senator Frist and he seemed supportive, but how supportive is often hard to determine. We expect the Senate to vote in the second session just before all these folks go out for reelection. I spoke to Senator Feinstein, she replaced Senator Cleland as a major cosponsor. She along with Senator Hatch will be great assets in the struggle in the Senate. I think it's worth noting that three candidates from the Senate who have voted against the flag in the past are now running for president. Senators Kerry, Lieberman, and Edwards. Senator Clinton may fit that profile as well, at least for the future, and she recently asked for information on our efforts. She also said that the Supreme Court has made legally, dubious decisions. Now she's absolutely right. We hope she will agree that the flag decision was one of them. These people must know that a vote against the flag by a presidential candidate will be far more visible and do far more harm than their vote as a senator. Too few of their constituents have any idea how they voted on that issue.

It's also important to note that some members who support flag burners have said that our troops are actually fighting for the right to burn Old Glory. Now they said that some time ago, I doubt that they would ever say that directly to any troop especially those magnificent young people we had on this stage yesterday. One wonders what they will do when they have to vote for this so-called right, the right to burn our flag with our troops in harms way around the world. We should not miss an opportunity to make them eat those words.

We heard the President yesterday and we hope that he will speak out more often on the flag in the future. That part of his speech, the only part that got a standing ovation, got no coverage in the media extensive coverage last night. Now your new commander is from Texas and we hope that he will work with the President to get him to speak out.

I think we're seeing changes in America that work very much in our favor. Much of the mood in America is formed by the media. Whether we like it or not that's absolutely true. They will do all the can to downplay their personal responsibility for anything. They are the most influential element in our society, in fact, in any society. They are challenged only by education as an influenter of public opinion. We would have won the flag battle long ago if we had the support of the media. A sad example of their influence worldwide is what we saw in the Arab reporting on the war in Iraq. Up until the day that the Iraqi media went off the air, the Iraqi people refused to welcome our forces. Many of them thought Saddam was winning the war as was reported by Baghdad Bob. Once he went off the air we saw the truth as the people went wild welcoming our troops. What that media did was prolong that war and helped kill many more than would have been killed if they had simply told the truth.

In our media, we've heard incredible stories that *CNN* knew that Saddam's son would kill his two brothers if they returned to Iraq. They did not warn them and he did in fact kill his own son-in-laws. They knew of the butchery of Saddam, they kept that secret to keep their office in Iraq. The *Los Angeles Times* altered a series of photos to show GIs threatening

civilians. They put it on the front page when in fact, the GIs were trying to help those civilians. There can be no doubt that our troops have the support of the overwhelming majority of our people, but many do not know that because of media reporting.

I was initially shocked to hear from people on the front lines in Iraq questions. They would question me on whether or not the American people really supported what they were doing over there. When you consider what they see and read about demonstrations, and criticisms of the combat plan, the failures in execution of that plan and our own media, it's easy to understand why they would be concerned. Many of us went through that in Vietnam and we know what it does to morale. I was overseas and could not get any media but *CNN* overseas and the *BBC*. I thought the war was a catastrophe. And I was very concerned because of friends and the fact that I was in it and could not find the truth out until I got back to the states.

In one instance, the media covered 20 protestors, ignoring 3,000 supporters very close by. And many of these demonstrations are beyond criminal. I think they're treasonous. The Constitution allows for peaceful demonstration. That must never be changed, but one demonstration actually was designed to keep supplies from our troops. And aside from all that, they take the police away from the important task of internal security.

Today, every death is front page on the newspaper, every single death. I saw last night in California which is the same size as Iraq, that it has three times the murders each day as there are GI deaths from all causes in Iraq. Each is tragic, each is tragic, but less than 200 combat deaths in that entire war is phenomenal. In Vietnam for me, that was about a half of weeks work.

On the education front, the University of Ohio actually stopped the display of the U.S. flag from campus buildings because they thought it might hurt the anti-war students' feelings. A Columbia [assistant] professor said he would like to see a million Mogadishus in Iraq. We could go on and on but the point is that, finally, they are being exposed by a balanced media and our people are getting fed up. We're finally seeing the media criticizing the media something that was unheard of for many years but something that is so very important. I believe that we will soon see the demise in the strength of the media on the left that continually attacks the morale of our troops and that will work for our cause for the flag and the cause of patriotism throughout our society. It will reduce the anti-American platform and protestors will not perform in a vacuum.

We're seeing laws passed to protect citizens who display a flag at work or on their person. In Madison, Wisconsin they're actually passing a law against flag desecration in as much as it intimidates people. That should be interesting to see how that works out. But we're educating an entire generation of reporters recently embedded with our troops and learning the truth about the quality of the American servicemember and his patriotism and what that flag means to our men and women in uniform.

We all heard the story about the embedded reporter who offered to call home to four troops. They all sacrificed their personal calls to allow a sergeant to call his pregnant wife and to call the family of a fallen comrade. Such acts would not surprise a soldier but astonished that journalist. He asked aloud when do they get people like this. Such people are apparently rare among journalist and their friends, but such people are very common among our military folk and among veterans.

In the midst of all this, we continue to see the ignorance of the people on the flag issue and more seriously, their ignorance on the Constitution. This is again because of the media. The police in Connecticut in responding to the burning of a French flag declared that there is no law against burning the French flag, but there was against burning the American flag. That was a policeman talking. I can't say that it would bother me to see the French flag burned. In Utah, the police were going to arrest a woman for defacing the American flag by painting a peace symbol on it. The police incorrectly said that that was against the law. It's not against the law. I think there was a similar case in Goshen, Indiana. Last night outside this building we saw an American flag with a swastika painted on it. Now it outraged some of you but it is absolutely legal. The fact remains that too few know that flag burning is legal and that's our greatest challenge.

As I mentioned before, very soon there will be 140 million people online and that's the best way to communicate our cause. We need to out-media the media and the way to do that is on email and through the internet. We can do so much through the flag amendment to

raise the awareness of people in what's happening to our Constitution and nothing is more important. The more people who are aware, the more people will become puzzled by what is being done by the courts, and the more people will become involved.

We've made a lot of progress. Some of the ridicule that we saw earlier has changed. We're seeing some writers with talent treating the position of those who support flag burning with ridicule. I saw a great article in *USA Today* by a communications law attorney lacing scorn on those who call flag burning and cross burning speech. As you know, the Supreme Court has recently decided that cross burning can be banned. This is a great example of what happens when you have some of the court jesters we have today messing with the great work of our founders. Their distortion of the simple concept of freedom of speech has given us pornography, denied us prayer, denied us the Ten Commandments, the Pledge, made it legal to burn the flag, but illegal to burn your draft card, your money, your mailbox, or a tag on your mattress box. In Pennsylvania, they say that you can display the Ten Commandments but you can't display them in Alabama. You can display them and they are displayed in the Supreme Court. The Constitution has not changed a bit but this is the way that these different judges look at it.

The ego and political bias of these people have turned a simple thing like the spoken word into a smorgasbord of sanctions and licenses concerning issues that judges like or dislike. The ruling on cross burning is a perfect example. Essentially, they said cross burning is protected speech unless it's done to intimidate. I wonder if there was ever an example of cross burning not done to intimidate. They're reasoning on this issue is so tortured and confusing as to be incomprehensible. Six judges said one thing, seven said something else and the minorities of three and two said something else again, all on the constitutionality of cross burning. That's what happens when you mess with our First Amendment. One justice got it right when he said cross burning had nothing to do with the First Amendment. Burning a cross is unlike any other symbol in our society and not intended to communicate anything other than fear and hatred. The same is true of flag burning which is also unlike any other symbol in our society.

That brings me to the importance of organizations like yours. Leaders of both parties come and go. They cut taxes, the raise taxes, they cut the military, they increase the military, more government, less government and on and on. But they leave little of permanence in the area of values and patriotism. They are secular, they can't seem to define values and morality and that's left to people like you. You and organizations like yours go on and on, fighting for our values and for our patriotism. You are the vault for the values of this country. What you do for veterans is important. It's absolutely vital. But what you do for veterans values is most important.

You've heard me many times press the importance of uniting the Pledge, the Flag and the Constitution in a trinity of patriotism. We've seen what happened to the pledge. In Colorado, where it's now law to recite the pledge daily, voluntarily, the ACLU and their continuing denigration of God has attacked the pledge. Now, they've also attacked the Boy Scouts, claiming they are a religious organization. Yet they defend the North American Man Boy [Love] Association and their solicitation of minor sex on the Internet. Judges too often support the ACLU as we saw in the 9th Circuit Court in California which also said that the pledge was unconstitutional. They must be amused watching the outrage that we saw which they know will soon die and their intellectually and values-attuned colleagues on the higher courts will affirm their decision right in our face. Most Americans will forget and get on with their lives.

We saw this identical scenario on our flag. But I hope you will not forget. I hope you will always be getting on with the work of our Constitution and the values that we all fought for that are embedded in that document and embodied in our flag. The Constitution is too important to be left to the courts and the media and so is the flag. They both belong to the people and it's time to let the people decide.

I hope you will never give up. You're going to win this battle, I have no doubt. Sooner or later you're going to win it. I may not be with you when that happens but my service with you on this issue has been a highlight of my life. Never forget that if that flag is precious enough to cover the coffins of our heros, it is precious enough for us all to protect.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: General, we want to thank you for your many years and

dedicated service to honor the flag of our country.

Time has an uncanny way of building some memories, dulling some memories. Yet for those who lived for years in brutal captivity in North Vietnam, the past 30 years has been greatly relished. This morning we have the honor of having a man who was imprisoned more than six years during the Vietnam War. He comes to say thanks for what The American Legion did many years ago. And he will reveal the key to the survival of all prisoners of war. Please welcome Richard Stratton, United States Navy, Retired.

Address: Captain Richard A. Stratton, USN (Ret.)
Former POW

During the Christmas season of 1972, the North Vietnamese communists were given a long overdue present. Overdue since 1964, the present was a multi-service bomber stream hitting strategic and tactical targets in downtown Hanoi night after night. Those of us imprisoned in the wallow prison facetiously known as the Hanoi Hilton stood up and cheered. Although the very rafters in the ceiling twanged like banjo strings and the deck heaved with each string of 750 pound bombs, we cheered because we knew that we were going home at last. Some of us had been there for over 10 years. Others for only a month. I was there for six years and two months. And sure enough, from February through March of 1973, over 500 of us were incrementally released to return home.

Part of the reason we survived and were released was due to the efforts of The American Legion. This is why I am here today 30 years later. It finally dawn on us that we had not publicly and emphatically stated our thanks to you. Thanks for supporting our troops in South Vietnam. Thanks for supporting our families. Thanks for writing letters and demanding humane treatment for us. Thanks for wearing POW/MIA bracelets and flying the POW/MIA flag as a public show of support. Thanks for providing direct support and guidance to the National League of Families who advocated our cause from your office in Washington, D.C. As a former president of our POW/MIA organization, I am here to say thank you. But you might well ask what did we do to help ourselves and survive so that we could answer your call to come home?

The main key to our survival is what I call the three "Ps," patriotism, persistence and prayer. I was in prison with patriots. I never met a man in prison who ever doubted that you would get us out of there. Yeah, some of us wonder why it took so long, but we retained our faith in our country despite torture, humiliation, beatings, starvation and medical neglect. In an age when it became the fashion to spit upon and burn our flag, we were manufacturing our own flag from scraps of cloth, thread from blankets and bamboo needles.

For the last two years in jail, Ron Webb and I were part of the cell's color guard. John Dramesi, our escape artist, obviously unsuccessful, had manufactured a flag about the size of the palm of your hand. Ron and I literally guarded John and the flag. Each evening as the cell doors were closed for the night, John would post the colors, hang them on a wire and the whole cell would recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Yeah, for you purist there was always a light on in the cell so the flag was always lighted. We did fight about that, too. So the flag flew all night long. In the morning, John would retire the colors and again the cell would say the pledge. By the way, John presented that very same flag to President Nixon at a White House dinner in honor of the returned POWs.

In another cell, Mike Christian had manufactured his own personal flag which he sewed inside his shirt next to his heart. One day during a routine cell shakedown the prowling guards discovered the flag, hauled Mike out of the cell and the interrogators worked him over verbally and physically, beating him to within an inch of his life. They threw him back into the cell to be an abject lesson to all his cell mates as to what happened to those who defied their communist captors. The cell learned a lesson the communist never intended. Mike declined all offers of assistance and sympathy. In the 30 man cell he dragged himself from person to person soliciting scraps of cloth; red cloth, white cloth, blue cloth. He tore out thread from his already thread-bare blanket. He sharpened a point on a sliver of bamboo, manufactured an eye in the wider end and all night he quietly sat bruised and battered, creating an American flag and sewing inside his shirt next to his heart. No words were spoken. No words were needed. The tutorial and patriotism and persistence was complete.

Yes, not only did we as officials of the United States government publicly honor the

flag, we also unreservedly acknowledged that we were "One Nation Under God." Each Sunday we would be locked down after the mid-morning ration. As soon as the guards were out of sight, we conducted a church services. In the early years of isolation and solitary confinement, the service consisted of tapping the letter "V" for victor, on the wall from cell to cell, so that the whole compound would be engaged simultaneously in private prayer. No one ordered this; it was a spontaneous outpouring of faith. Each covert message sent by tap code or in writing ended with the letters Gulf, Bravo, Uniform, standing for God bless you. We end all of our communications to this day with each other in the same manner.

At the end of our imprisonment, when we were in larger cells, each Sunday we would hold a public service which the communist did all in their power to thwart but never succeeded. One Sunday we were feeling our oats in cell number seven which was the new home of most of the senior prisoners, unsuccessful escapees and folks like me the communist just didn't like. We had mustered a great choir, the majority of whom couldn't carry a tune in a wheel barrel but they sure made a lot of noise. A couple of frustrated hellfire and damnation preachers in our midst prepared to regale us with our sinful conduct and general unworthiness. The whole event when off with great fanfare: catcalls, amens, hooting and hollering. The communist could not stand anything over which they had no control. So they came in and hauled out the two preachers, which was probably well deserved, the choir director which certainly was deserved, and the senior ranking officer who was always the communist fall guy. These great guys were once again thrown into solitary confinement. Well, lets face it, they were bad, but not really that bad.

This event really got our collective ire up to a fever pitch. To a man all 28 of us stood up and started to protest in song that could be heard all over downtown Hanoi. The performance started with the Star Spangled Banner, ran through the whole patriotic medley and ended with God Bless America. Running out of breath and voice we passed the lead on to the next cell. This is cell number seven, number seven, number seven, where the hell is six? Cell six took up the songfest and passed it down the line to five and so on down to cell number one. By then the communist were frantic. They called out the riot squad, posted guards at all the windows armed with AK-47s. Their take on it was that they had a prison riot on their hands. Our take of course, that it was a peaceful protest demanding the release of our leaders and freedom to practice our religion. We won but that's another story.

So you can see why to this day I really do not have much trust with or respect for those Supreme Court Justices who would deny us the right as American fighting men and officials of the United States government to publicly declare our faith in the face of our enemies. Nor do I have any respect for those Justices who allow denying our right to practice our faith in God and country, simultaneously protect those who would desecrate our flag and the symbols of our religion. Maybe those worthies would benefit from a sabbatical in Hanoi's wallow prison.

So it was that we survived exercising the three "Ps": patriotism, persistence and prayer. We did our part and you did your part to ensure that our families were secure, that we were not forgotten in the peace negotiations which could have happened. And that we were returned with honor to our country. We thank you for continuing to support our military and their families. We thank you for defending our flag and our right to freely and openly practice our religion. We, the returned prisoners, wish you well in all your endeavors.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It is a pleasure to introduce to you a man who shares our commitment to veterans. He had a distinguished military career and today is the Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Commission for the Republic of China. Traveling from Taiwan to St. Louis to spend time with us is a sacrifice. We certainly appreciate his dedication and commitment to veterans. Please welcome to St. Louis, General Teng.

Greetings: General Teng, Tsu-lin, (Ret.) Chairman
Veterans Affairs Commission

I'm very thankful of the introduction by the National Commander, Mr. Conley. I feel greatly honored to be invited to attend your 2003 National Convention held here in the great city of St. Louis. The President of my country Mr. Chen and our Premiere Mr. Yu Shyi-kun, have asked me to extend their warm greeting and good wishes to you.

I understand that The American Legion and my organization, the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, or VAC, have been associates with each other for over 40 years. In the past 20 years especially, we have deepened this relationship through mutual visits and learning from each others experiences in serving veterans. The American Legion has also passed resolution during your National Convention urging your federal government to support the government of the Republic of China. We are deeply appreciative for this support.

Veterans gave the best part of their lives to defend the freedom, peace and security of their countries. After retirement, they deserve a decent treatment and respectful support from their governments, as well as their fellow countrymen. War is never our love, but when we have no choice but to face it in order to defend freedom and peace, we must serve our country and destroy the enemy. From the Spanish War through World War I and II, Korean War, Vietnam War up to Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, you have upheld your pledge of duty, honor and country. You have defended your beloved country and have saved the world from tyranny. A record that your children and children's children will be proud of.

Thanks to the effort of The American Legion the proud veterans are organized and work together for dignity and benefits of their fellow veterans. We have so much to learn from your organization experience and expertise. Above all, your accomplishments and spirits inspire us in our efforts to serve our own veterans. For this gift of inspiration I salute you and wish you a most successful Annual Convention.

National Commander Conley, ladies and gentlemen on behalf of President Chen of my country, I would like to take this opportunity to present you a National Medal of Cloud and Banner with respect and a VAC insignia as a motive to remind you the Sino-American cooperation on veterans affairs this year. Now I will ask your old friend Mr. Hans Song to read the citation.

MR. SONG: Citation. Mr. Ronald F. Conley, National Commander of The American Legion has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of American and the Republic of China. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander Ronald F. Conley is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with Cravat by the government of the Republic of China. In accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations, signed by Chen Shui-bian, the President, Yu Shyi-kun the Premiere and Tang Yiau-ming, the Minister of National Defense.

And the inscription of the plague of VAC insignia "Presented to Mr. Ronald F. Conley, 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." Signed by General Yang Te-chih, the Minister, Veterans Affairs Commission, the Republic of China on the date of August 27th in the year of 2003.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: First of all, General, again we welcome you here to St. Louis. One of the highlights of the National Commander and the National President is when we go overseas. The hospitality extended to us as we visited the Republic of China is first class number one, and it is truly a wonderful experience that will live with me for the rest of my life. We've had an opportunity through the courtesy of the Veterans Commission to meet the President of the Republic of China, sitting with him for some 30 minutes, discussing our concerns and relationships between our two countries. It was a great honor to be there with the members of the Commission and to meet the President.

I want to thank you General, but I also want to thank Hans for his courtesies that he's extended to us, as we toured your beautiful country. This evening the General will be able to stop up in my room. We're going to present him with a gift up there, but I'd like to present to him now the International Amity Award. "In grateful recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for contributions made in the development of international goodwill and comradeship between The American Legion and our wartime allies of the Veterans Affairs Commission Republic of China. Awarded by the National Commander of The American Legion with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee to General Chen given the 4th day of July, 2003. This is when this award was

made up and presented the 4th of July, the day of our independence.

GEN CHEN: It is my great honor to receive this International Amity Award. This represents an acknowledgment as well as an expectation. I have endeavored to promote freedom, dignity and peace for people of the world through serving veterans. This award will give me further encouragement to devote myself even more to this task. I pledge to you that I will do my very best in serving the veterans and in promoting positive interaction among the international veterans organizations, to help me fulfill these expectations. I appreciate and look forward to your guidance and suggestions.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Chair recognizes Kenneth Sercerchi of Maine, 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
Kenneth Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m. on August 24, 2003, a total of 86 delegates assigned to the Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters convened in Room 130 of America's Center, St. Louis, to consider 21 resolutions assigned to the committees for action. Kenneth Sercerchi was elected general chairman and Bill Christoffersen (UT) was appointed general secretary. Richard T. Lee of California was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference, and Paul Tenney of Vermont was appointed secretary. Albert Robotti of New Jersey was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters, and Henry Wilson of North Carolina was appointed secretary.

In response to a call by the National Adjutant, a screening committee consisting of Ken Sercerchi (ME), Bill Christoffersen (UT), Al Robotti (NJ), Richard T. Lee (CA), and Dave Desmond (NC) met at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, August 22, 2003, in the Parkview Room of the Renaissance Grand Hotel to make recommendations to the Convention Committees on Economics. The report of the screening committee was presented to the convention committees and was adopted.

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 to the report without changing the meaning. The meeting was recessed at 9:45am subject to recall by the chair.

Employment and Veterans Preference Committee
Resolutions Recommended for Approval

Resolution No. 30: Veterans Hiring Preference for Federal Contractors
Origin: Utah
Submitted By: Economic (Employment & Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, Affirmative action in hiring by federal contractors has become an earned benefit available to America's veterans; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has issued new definitions of affirmative action for veterans that has relieved the federal contractors of any obligation to hire veterans; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has promoted the privatization of federal jobs which has resulted in thousands of veterans being forced out of employment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion strongly support changes in Title 38, United States Code that will require federal contractors and employers with federally funded grants to actually hire qualified veterans.

Resolution No. 34: Employment of Veterans in Government Workforce
Origin: Utah

Submitted By: Economic (Employment & Veterans Preference
As amended and consolidated with 33 (UT) and 18 (MA)

WHEREAS, A grateful nation has awarded to those who have served in the U.S. military, certain rights and benefits, one of which has been a small advantage when veterans seek jobs with the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Absence from our highly competitive job market creates an unfair burden on veterans upon completion of their military service, in competing with their non-veterans peers, which this preference with the federal government is intended to mitigate; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion strongly support veterans preference in federal employment; and

WHEREAS, The federal government in legislation creating the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration has included language that in effect eliminated hiring preference for veterans; and

WHEREAS, The use of the Direct Hire Authority can result in elimination of preference for veterans in hiring by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, The United States Office of Personnel Management has recently promulgated a new hiring authority called the Category Rating that eliminated preference for veterans in hiring by the federal government;,and

WHEREAS, The United States Office of Personnel Management's Category Rating allows a selecting supervisor to use "a number of intangibles that don't show up in the numeric score" to eliminate preference for veterans in hiring by the federal government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That, The American Legion strongly support veteran's preference in federal, state, and local government and oppose any and all efforts to reduce this preference; and be it further

RESOLVED, that The American Legion seek changes in Title 5 and Title 38 USC that will eliminate the Direct Hire Authority and the Category Rating System; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that The American Legion advocate on the state and national level forcefully and publicly in support of legislation securing veteran's preference in government hiring.

Resolution No. 68: Support Legislation for Activated Reservists
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Economic (Employment & Veterans Preference)

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the largest veterans organization, has members serving in the U.S. Armed Forces throughout the world today; and

WHEREAS, Many of those members serving in the military today are Reservists and National Guard personnel who have been activated and deployed for an undefined period of time, fighting and supporting the war on terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom) from the Philippines to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, while their families deal with the challenges of separation, mental and financial hardships, as well as the responsibility of preserving the overall well being of the Guard and Reserve service members' children and other dependents; and

WHEREAS, Many of these Guard and Reserve service members who have been called up to active duty will experience compounded hardships due to changes to health care benefits and significant losses in income (difference in pay) due to the fact that many Guard and Reserve service members' current income can be two or three times more than their active duty pay and because of this the service member will incur additional debt or be forced to sell their existing homes or liquidate other assets to meet their existing obligations while activated; and

WHEREAS, Without creative and common sense solutions to allow our Guard and Reserve service members to stay financially whole during these unprecedented and open-ended deployments, the U.S. armed forces will see a significant departure of many skilled, highly trained and professional service members from the various Reserve and National Guard units; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St.

Louis, MO, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urge local, state and federal bodies to enact legislation to provide income insurance to citizen soldiers and sailors during deployments; tax credits to employers who hire and support their deployed Guard and Reserve employees with continuation of their medical benefits and pay while deployed, and couple these initiatives with support and commitment for all affected parties.

Resolutions Recommended to be Received and Recorded

Resolution No.	
12 (MA):	Support Full Funding for Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)
13 (MA):	Support Staffing Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), As Required By Law
21 (MA):	Reaffirm Support for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)
31 (UT):	Oppose Any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Program
35 (UT):	Reaffirm Support for the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) for All Separating and Retiring Personnel
105 (TX):	Veterans' Employment and Training Service
106 (TX):	Oppose Any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program and Local Veterans' Employment Representative Program

Resolutions Recommended for Referral to Commission on Economics

No resolutions are recommended for referral to standing Commission on Economics.

Resolutions Recommended for Rejection

Resolution No. 32: (UT)
Support Improvement of Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Committee on Other Economic Matters

Resolutions Recommended for Approval

Resolution No. 143: Qualified Veterans' Mortgage Bonds
Origin: Oregon
Submitted By: Committee on Other Economic Matters
As amended and consolidated with 104 (TX), 114 (WI), and 154 (CA)

WHEREAS, In order to facilitate home ownership by veterans, five states (Alaska, California, Oregon, Texas and Wisconsin) have chosen to offer state veterans' home loan programs to resident veterans who have provided faithful service while in the U. S. Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, These programs have existed for many years and have assisted hundreds of thousands of veterans in obtaining affordable housing and making a better life for themselves and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, Current law, which governs the use of tax exempt bonds used to fund these loans, as contained in Section 143(1)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code, limits these programs to only those veterans who served prior to 1977; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of men and women have provided faithful service to our nation after 1976, serving in peacetime as well as in hostile military confrontations in locations such as Beirut, Grenada, Latin America, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, Hundreds of young men and women are serving; and

WHEREAS, These veterans and their families are being denied, without basis under current law, the opportunity to participate in these state veterans' home loan programs; and

WHEREAS, Congress has chosen to ignore the service freely given since 1976 by these deserving men and women, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion does hereby urge Congress to approve legislation to remove the aforementioned discriminatory portion of the Internal Revenue Code in order that veterans serving after 1976 and their families might enjoy the same benefits.

Resolutions Recommended to be Received and Recorded

Resolution No.	
11 (MA):	Small Business Administration
16 (MA):	Support the Small Business Administration in Outreach Efforts
19 (MA):	Full Funding for Small Business Loans in VA
107 (UT):	Provide Payment of Death Benefit if Montgomery GI Bill Not Used

Resolutions Recommended for Referral To Commission on Economics

No resolutions are recommended for referral to standing Commission on Economics.

Resolutions Recommended for Rejection

No resolutions are recommended for rejection.

CHRMN SERCERCHI: Mr. Commander, as a duly appointed Delegate from the Department of Maine, I move the adoption of this report.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...*From the floor*: Second

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Motion's been made and second. Calling for the question? All those in favor say 'aye'. Ayes have and so ordered. The report of the Economics is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

Now it's time to extend special recognition to three employers for their outstanding record of making jobs available to veterans. That special recognition comes in the form of The American Legion Employer of the Year Award. We Recognize three such organizations as 2002 Employers of the Year.

One award is for a company employing 50 or less people. Another for companies employing 51 to 200 people. And the third is for companies with more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a Post and advances through the Department and National competition levels. The 2002 Employer of the Year Award in the under 50 category goes to ACS State and Local Solutions Company, Lake City, Florida. Here to accept the award is Tom Moreau, Project Manager.

MR. TOM MOREAU: Thanks to everyone involved in this award. It's been a big year for me in the workforce arena. We have actually received four awards and this is the one that's important. It's important because I grew up with The American Legion. My grandfather was actually a founding member of two different posts. It's the first organization I joined when I returned from Vietnam, and to be recognized by The American Legion is very special to me.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The American Legion National Award for outstanding Employer of the Year, employer of veterans for 2002, presented to the 51 to 200 category, goes to TRW of Killeen, Texas. Accepting the award is James Critz, Program Manager.

MR. JAMES CRITZ: Some of you may know that in December of last year TRW was merged with Northrup-Grumman, so on behalf of the thousands of men and women employed by Northrup-Grumman Corporation we thank you for this award.

Our little office is outside of Fort Hood, Texas, which is the largest military post in the United States. Half the people there, it seems, are deployed in either Iraq or Afghanistan and the other half are getting ready to go. It's easy for us to hire veterans. We know them day

in and day out as the people who work beside us, shop beside us, and live next door. So again, we find that you can get a dedication, you can get a loyalty, and you can get some confidence in the people you hire when you hire veterans. And we can't wait until they come back. I've got jobs for them, so if you're in Texas, and you know where they are, send them to me.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I should have read the award for the first one we gave. The award reads: "The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of the Year 2002, presented to TRW for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 85th Annual National Convention, St. Louis, Missouri, August 27, 2003." We just want to let you know Jim, after tomorrow I'm looking for a job.

The award in the more than 200 employees category goes to Johns Manville Company of Defiance, Ohio. Accepting the award for Johns Manville is a Past Department Commander of Ohio, Glenn Hickman.

PDC HICKMAN: On behalf of the Department of Ohio it gives us great honor to receive this award for the Johns Manville Company of Defiance, Ohio. We thank the National Adjutant, the National Commander and the National organization for this award.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: On behalf of the men and women of The American Legion and all of our nation's veterans, I extend to you our congratulations. We're certain you'll keep hiring veterans. Please tell other businesses about the work ethics of our veterans.

Presentation: American Legion Local Veterans Employee Representative of the Year Award
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

Another employment award that I'm honored to present goes to the top Local Veterans Representatives in the nation. The award honors an individual who has done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice. The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2003 goes to Alonzo Philmore, Lake City, Florida.

MR. ALONZO PHILMORE: Thanks to Commander Conley, to the National Adjutant, to my Department Commander, Reginald Beverly, to my Past Department Commander, Clarence Hill and to the rest of the dignitaries on the platform. I want to give a shout out 'thank you' to two men who have taught me more about The American Legion than I could ever read in a manual, and that's Willie Merrill and George Worley.

I want to give a shout out too to Tom Moreau who received an award here today. He's my boss at the career center who allows me to take charge of the veterans program in our four county region. He said as long as you're doing a good job, getting veterans hired, I won't put my foot in your..., you know the rest of the story. So he allows me to do my job. And to the Florida Delegation here today, let's make some noise back there.

Yesterday, as I watched the young men and women on stage here take the oath of service, they made a promise to America to do a good job. I thought about the promise that was made by America to us as veterans. One night, I was watching my wife as she took the mop out of the closet to clean up a spill. She is sitting over here and puts up with all of my goings and doings. She's my employment office at home. As she put the mop away, a thought came to my mind. Sometimes as veterans we are treated [like the mop]. When we're needed, we're taken out of the closet to mop up a spill somewhere in the world, or the United States. But when we're not needed we're put in the closet and we're forgotten.

Let's not let America forget us. We did not forget America. For God and country we still serve. For God and country we will continue to serve.

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year I'm happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award to Richard Perez, of Yuma, Arizona.

MR. RICHARD PEREZ: I thank National Commander Conley and his staff. This award will certainly motivate me in the future to continue assisting veterans. It certainly is

a very rewardable career. But most of all, I'd like to thank my wife, Laura, who's sitting here on the side. She has put up with a lot from me helping the veterans; bringing home these people to feed them; going out to the desert to provide people water, food and clothing. She's a special lady.

Presentation: Employment Service Office of the Year
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

Continuing with our recognition of those who assist our fellow veterans in finding meaningful employment, it is time to honor the top Employment Service Officer of the Year. The award goes to Central Texas Workforce Center of Killeen, Texas. Accepting the award is Lewis Boren, Office Manager for the Texas Employment Security Commission.

MR. LEWIS BOREN: On behalf of all of the employees of the Central Texas Workforce Center in Killeen, Texas, neighbor to Fort Hood, home of the 1st CAV and the 4th ID, I thank the National Commander, and thank you for this prestigious award. It is our pleasure to help veterans become employed. I think we do it very well, and we love coming to work everyday and doing it.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: How many times have you found yourself asking what can one person do when you were confronted with a difficult challenge. All of us at sometime have said that or at least thought it. With us now is someone who just didn't stop at that point and wonder. She grabbed an idea and she ran with it. It is an idea and a project that honestly, most of us have not heard of. It's a project that is not quite two years old but if you haven't heard of it, you will. And in your experience in the commitment to helping Americans, remember those who serve and sacrifice for our freedoms. Give a warm welcome to the founder of the Pocket Flag Project from Colorado, LuWanda Ford.

Address: LuWanda Ford, Founder
Pocket Flag Project

Thanks to Commander Conley for inviting my husband, Leonard, and me here to be able to tell you about the Pocket Flag Project. It's such a privilege to be standing right here where President Bush stood to talk to us just yesterday. I'd especially like to thank Wilmore Richter Post No. 161, from Arvada, Colorado. They're the ones who are committed to this project behind us and they're the ones who saw to it that we're here today.

The Pocket Flag Project is a grassroots effort which became an international project. It put small folded flags into the pockets of our front line troops. We start with a flag that's about 8"x12" in size and fold it in the traditional triangular shape. It is then packaged in a 3"x3" zip-lock type bag with a card which says, "A flag for your pocket so you can always carry a little piece of home. We are praying for you and we are proud of you. Thank you for defending our country and our freedom."

This did not start out to be an international project. Far from that. I merely wanted to teach our sons, Weeblo Cub Scout group, about patriotism and about respect for our United States flag. These boys were nine and ten years old at the time. I asked them if they would like to fold a hundred small flags and give them to some of our troops who would soon be deploying. I wanted them to make a personal connection with some of the people who would be going to serve our country and defend our freedom. I wanted them to understand that our freedom comes at a price, and not easily. As we folded flags, we learned about our flag. We talked about what we would want to tell the people who would be receiving our flags, and that's how the verse was created.

We arranged for some Navy Reservists to come in uniform to our pack meeting in November of 2001, to receive those hundred flags on behalf of our deploying troops. That night, we had a reporter at the pack meeting. She asked the boys where the flags were going. My son told her that these flags were going to all the soldiers in the war. We'd already had that conversation and told them a hundred flags was not enough, but the other boys picked up on it and started saying that they were going to all the soldiers in the war. I gave up. I said if you guys will fold some more flags I'll get some more fabric and we'd better get help.

We couldn't get them to understand. So I created the first web site so that we would have an easy place for people to go and learn about our project and understand what the

process was and to get all of their questions answered. I found a fabric distributor who would sell us the fabric at cost if we ordered at least $200.00 worth at a time. As a result of the article about our flag presentation to the reservists, I received one phone call from the mother of a Marine. She was someone I had known several years before and asked if I would send a flag to her son who was on the way to Afghanistan. I was pretty choked up and I asked her for his address. I said of course I would send it. A couple of days later I sent him a package with 12 flags in it. I told him his mom had asked me to send him a flag and I'd sent some extras for him to give to the other people that were with him.

I talked with her about a month later. She said that his ship had just arrived in Singapore the day before. He called and woke her up at 4:30 in the morning and those flags were the only mail that he received. He didn't receive any of the Christmas cards or Christmas gift that they had sent him. She asked if we could send some more flags and I said sure, how many should we send? She asked if we could do his whole ship. I said sure, how many is that? Well, she said it was about 2,400 or 2,500. I didn't know how we were going to do it. But I knew somehow God would help me to do it.

At that time, I had no more money. I had few volunteers. I was going on faith alone. Before we were done, we sent flags not only to his ship but the two other ships that were accompanying that one on the way to Afghanistan. That Marine was so excited, he told his mother. He wrote to us that when he got his first leave to come home he wanted to put on his dress blues and come meet those Cub Scouts who had sent him those flags. He did just that about eight months later. What a wonderful role model he was for those scouts. That was the personal connection with a soldier.

That was just the first of the now 365,000 flags that have been made by groups in 48 states and Cuba and Germany. These groups are Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, school classes, church youth groups, choirs, senior citizens, auxiliaries and other groups like yours. When we first started this, there were no plans to do anything like this but as we started to get thank you letters from troops, and from the volunteers, we knew we had to keep on going.

One of the most memorable letters we received was from a 19-year old soldier in Afghanistan. In his letter he said, "Yesterday six rockets were fired at our camp from across the mountains in Pakistan. When we were done firing back, I went to my tent and was on my cot thinking, "Does anyone back home know that there's still a war going on? Does anyone think of us while we are over here or have they forgotten us? Does God remember we are here?" His letter said that minutes later his platoon sergeant handed him a package. In it were dozens of small flags with notes of encouragement in them. He said those little flags did more for our morale than you could possibly imagine. He's right.

I can't imagine what these little flags mean to our troops. Only someone like you can because you have been there; far away from home and maybe wondering if someone still cares. Only someone like you who has been there can imagine what receiving our own little flag from an unknown child from the states could mean for your morale.

Other letters say things like, we carry them wherever we go. Or, I carry mine in my left breast pocket close to my heart, that's where I keep my family's pictures. It takes up a small place in my utility pocket but a large space in my heart. Or, it reminds me why we are here and that someone still cares. I have a big notebook with letters and emails that say 'thank you' for us sending these small pocket flags.

Along the way we have received some special thank you's like the flag flown on a refueling mission for us over Afghanistan. The sergeant who arranged for this came up from New Mexico after he returned home and personally presented it to us. That event was at our post on the 4th of July weekend last year. Our scouts have been privileged to present pocket flags to Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell who is the only veteran representing our state in Washington, D.C., and Colorado Governor, Bill Owens, who sent the local National Guard planes up to protect the skies over our state after the September 11th terrorist attacks.

One of the highlights for all of us so far has been to personally present a pocket flag to President Bush when he came to Denver in September 2002. When he left in the motorcade to make his luncheon address, one of his aides asked if we would like to tour Air Force One. Can you imagine how exciting that would be for now ten and eleven year old boys and their scout leaders, too? The answers varied when we asked the scouts what was most exciting that day. Some say it was meeting President Bush and shaking his hand and talking with

him. Others say it was touring Air Force One and sometimes they will say it's the red, white and blue peanut M&M's in the little box with the Presidential seal on it.

We need your help and financial support to keep this project going. Each of the volunteer groups at this point is paying for their own flags and postage. When we do a community flag folding and invite the public, we have to get donations to cover the costs. Some groups would like to fold flags but they can't pay for their own flags. In just the past two weeks or so, I've received requests directly from the front lines through email for 8,000 flags. There's still a war going on.

I do this from our house by myself. Sometimes I need to hire some help. Since I'm doing it alone, please be patient with me if you don't get an immediate respond after you email. Our tax exempt filing status fees and trademark registration alone are $1,000.00. Our flag suppliers require that we put a deposit down before they will order fabric and that's been anywhere from $3,000 to $15,000.00. We have been able to negotiate a payment plan with some of them, but I don't have enough credit on my credit card to be able to order sometimes when we need to order flags. Your adopting this project and helping us spread the word and sending financial contributions is supporting learning about our flag, youth programs and scouting but most of all, our troops on the front lines. Your contributions will ensure that we can carry-on and see that flags get to all the troops on the front line.

In the future we want to make these flags available to the other active military, to veterans and to other deserving people, as well as the public. Thank you for your service to our country and God bless each of you.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery draws plenty of attention each year. Figures show 3,000 events are held at the tomb every year. More than 4 million people will visit this hallowed site. Yet, there is little public knowledge of the cracks that run diagonally around the rectangled tomb. Two years ago, cemetery officials approved a project to replace the original tomb with an identical one. This one to be carved from the stone from the same quarry as the original. That quarry is in Marble, Colorado and operated by the Colorado Yule Marble Company. Before we hear from the president of the company Rex Loesby, I'd like you to watch this video.

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

Address: Rex E. Loesby, President
Colorado Yule Marble

As mentioned in the video, last year we were asked by Arlington National Cemetery to provide the replacement stone for the Tomb of the Unknowns. Publication of this news lead to a contribution of $31,000.00, by Mr. John Haynes a Colorado resident, to fund the quarrying of the 55 ton replacement stone. To quote John,"It was just the right thing to do." This contribution sparked other contributions and a groundswell of support to make the entire project from quarry to finished stone placement at Arlington, a contribution from the American people.

I want to thank National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for the opportunity to address you today. When we first contacted Mr. Spanogle about the project to replace the Tomb of the Unknowns, it was he that told us that The American Legion has played a key role in establishing and maintaining the memorial. He told us that it was Congressman Hamilton Fish, one of the founders of The American Legion, who sponsored the legislation that authorized the Tomb of the Unknowns Memorial in 1920. In 1968, The American Legion provided funds for the permanent lighting of the area around the tomb.

So I address you today with the request that you consider helping us with the project to replace the stone for the Tomb of the Unknowns. Throughout our discussions with the members of The American Legion staff, one theme has dominated. That theme is that along with John Haynes, we all feel that it is the right thing to do.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The chair recognizes Joe Caouette of New Hampshire, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism for the purpose of a report.

Report: National Convention Committee on Americanism
August 24, 2003
Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., New Hampshire, Chairman

Fifty members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met on Sunday, August 24, 2003, in the Renaissance Grand Hotel, Majestic Room, St. Louis, Missouri, to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph E. Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; Ted Howarth (NJ), Vice Chairman; and Charles Gannon (MD) as the Secretary.

The committee discussed 19 resolutions that were assigned to the group. Included among them were several that pertained to the recent ruling on the Pledge of Allegiance by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Your Americanism Committee reiterates its continuing resolve to do all that is necessary to voice its opposition to the court ruling that removes the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. This matter will most likely end up in the United States Supreme Court and I can assure you, your American Legion will be there.

The ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California has angered many people, including delegates to the 84th National Convention last year who voiced their displeasure by adopting Resolution 292 titled "Pledge of Allegiance". That position has not changed.

Mr. Commander, on behalf of the committee, I offer for consideration by this convention a reiteration of that position, consolidating new resolutions originating in the Departments of Alaska, Puerto Rico, Ohio and Illinois.

Mr. Commander, with your approval I would like to read the resolution in its entirety.

Resolution No. 160: Pledge of Allegiance
Committee: Americanism

Consolidated with Resolution No. 6 (AK); Resolution No. 38 (PR); Resolution No. 49 (OH); and Resolution No. 65 (IL)

WHEREAS, In October 1970, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution 13 titled "Defense and Respect for the United States Flag," that voiced The American Legion's support for continuing the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, several states have passed legislation to encourage and authorize the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in the schools within their state; and

WHEREAS, In 1954, The Congress of the United States reaffirmed the influence on government by a supreme power when it revised the Pledge of Allegiance by inserting the words "under God" as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all; and

WHEREAS, Liberal judicial opinions and media coverage has questioned the propriety of reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools in the United States, citing the unconstitutionality in references to God; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, the Congress of the United States, and many other groups and organizations open their regular meetings by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion reiterate its continuing support for the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form, voicing opposition to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version approved by Congress in 1954, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the nation's schools to include the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance by teachers and students in regular school activities and events; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion, at all levels, continue its unyielding support for the Pledge of Allegiance and its provisions of national loyalty and support for our democratic republic.

There were 4 resolutions approved as consolidated, 6 were received and recorded, and 9 were referred to the standing Americanism Commission.

The Following Resolutions Were Received and Recorded:

Resolution No. 17 (MA) 2003 NC: Support Purchase of American Made U.S. Flags
Resolution No. 43 (VA) 2003 NC: Retain November 11 as National Holiday Veterans Day

Resolution No. 97 (TX) 2003 NC: United States Citizenship Process
Resolution No. 100 (TX) 2003 NC: Strengthen Immigration Laws
Resolution No. 128 (WV) 2003 NC: Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Flag of the US
Resolution No. 144 (OR) 2003 NC: Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Flag of the US

The Following Resolutions Were Referred To The Standing Americanism Commission:

Resolution No. 24 (MA) 2003 NC: Flag at Half Staff Upon Death of Discharged Veterans
Resolution No. 36 (MS) 2003 NC: Establish Jr. and Sr. American Legion Fast Pitch Softball Program
Resolution No. 42 (IN) 2003 NC: Honorary Citizenship for British Prime Minister Tony Blair
Resolution No. 75 (PI) 2003 NC: Reopen U.S. Naturalization of Filipino World War II Veterans
Resolution No. 98 (TX) 2003 NC: Revise the Family Reunification Act
Resolution No. 102 (TX) 2003 NC: Annual Temporary Work Permits for Aliens
Resolution No. 110 (UT) 2003 NC: Educate America Act of 1994 and the Furtherance of Civic Education in Schools
Resolution No. 151 (CA) 2003 NC: National Day of Prayer
Resolution No. 156 (CA) 2003 NC: The English Language be Declared as the Official United States Language

Mr. Commander as a duly authorized Delegate to this Convention, I move the adoption of this report. ...*From the floor.* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Motions been made and second. Calling for the question? All those in favor say 'aye'. Opposed. The ayes have and so ordered. The report of Americanism is adopted.

At this time we will accept donations for the 9/11 Scholarship Fund. We will call on the Department of New York first.

MR. WONG, NEW YORK: As you recall a short three months ago, during our Washington Conference, I had the privilege and honor to present you with our first installment of the contribution from the great state of New York for $50,000.00. Today, I am proud and honored again with our new Department Commander Charlie Herschlag, we'd like to give you the second installment of our contribution, another $50,000.00 toward the scholarship fund.

DEPT COMDR HERSCHLAG: Commander Wong had asked me to donate this check. My post is Catshaw Warner in Webster, New York. We have a pretty good benevolence fund that we dedicate every year. About 75 percent of that goes to veterans. This year since 9/11, we've always given a substantial donation. This year it's a little bit less but it's a $250.00 check for 9/11 Scholarship Fund.

ALT NECman QUICK: At Convention this year we proudly raised $1,741.00 for the 9/11 Scholarship Fund for the Commander.

DEPT COMDR EASTRIDGE: I want to say as incoming Commander that my special project is the Legacy Scholarship Fund.

ALT NECman COCCIMIGLIO, DEPT OF PENNSYLVANIA: The Department of Pennsylvania is proud to give you another check. We have given you two checks in the past for $6,000.00. We are giving you another check for $10,100.00. We also have commitments from the Department of Pennsylvania, different posts, for the next nine years of commitments.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Dan's one hell of a writer but he can't add. *Laughter.* $61,991.00.

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., Trophy
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

The Frank Belgrano, Jr. Trophy is given annually to the Department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12 month period beginning August 1st, to the Boy Scouts Year of America Program. This year's winner is the Department of Maryland.

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the Department within the United States documenting the greatest activity using The American Legion's School Medal Program. This winning Department shows what can be accomplish by an act of involved organization. The winner is the Department of West Virginia.

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
Gordon Hall, Publisher
***Midland Daily News*, Midland, Michigan**

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy is one of the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents during each National Convention. It is named in honor of one of American journalism's most prominent, influential figures and given to the Department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs. The winning Department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of total resources, manpower, as well as financially devoted to the Americanism activities during the Legion program year. With us today to announce the winners of the 2003 William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy is the publisher of the *Midland Daily News* of Midland, Michigan, Gordon Hall.

MR. GORDON HALL: On behalf of the Hearst Corporation, we appreciate the opportunity to present the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy for the 65th consecutive year. I know the old man would be proud that this has been an ongoing tradition for us. I've had the pleasure of presenting this award in the past and it's always a privilege to be here with you to help honor all of you for your ongoing contributions and commitments to your country, and also the furthering of democracy.

We have presented this award for 65 years. The winner this year is the Department of Nebraska, a first time winner. Congratulations to the Department. In the letter of narrative that was submitted for consideration for this award, there were several examples of outstanding Americanism that was submitted by the Department. The one that really stood out to me was the Cornhusker's Boys State, which has been an ongoing program since 1947. This year 380 young men participated in the program that teaches the principles of representative government and citizenship. It's an outstanding program.

Here on the stage to accept the award, and I hope I have all the names right: The Delegation Chairman, Richard Baxter; Department Commander, Doug Bolt; Department Adjutant, Bob Craig; and Department of Americanism Chairman, Mike Hatfield.

DEPT COMDR BOLT, NEBRASKA: On behalf of the Department of Nebraska, The American Legion family, we do accept this award.

Presentation: 2003 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

Next we honor a member of law enforcement for setting an example in community service. Our 2003 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year is an eight year veteran of law enforcement with a track record for high work ethics, attitude and off-duty community service. He is a United States Marine Corps veteran, and is currently the Police Officer of the Year at the Howard County Police Department in Ellicott City, Maryland. He has been recognized numerous times for sound judgment, productivity, dedication, community involvement and devotion to duty. Our Law Enforcement Officer of the Year was nominated by the members of The American Legion Post, Adams, Hannah, Moore Memorial Post 156. I am proud to present The American Legion Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to Police Officer, 1st Class, Timothy Wiley.

The award reads: "America's Finest. The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award presented to Timothy C. Wiley for distinguished service above and beyond your assigned duties, rendered through selfless dedication to community service and professional achievement. By your demonstrative performance you have personified the versatility of police officer's who represent 'America's Finest'. The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in your career. Awarded August 27, 2003, at the 85th Annual National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri."

OFFICER TIMOTHY WILEY: I am honored to be here today and sincerely grateful to have been recognized as The American Legion's National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. I would like to thank Howard County's Chief of Police, Wayne Livesay, and my wife, Kim, for being here with me.

Numerous members of The American Legion were involved in the process. I'd like to mention just a few. Thank you Commander Conley for your hospitality. A special thanks to Mr. Bacon, Mr. Duggan and Mr. Milligan for all that you gentlemen have done. Unfortunately, Mr. Bill Vulnick could not be here today. Mr. Vulnick and the members of Post 156, Ellicott City, Howard County, Maryland got the ball rolling and have been very supportive throughout the entire process. On behalf of Chief Livesay and our department, I would like to thank all of you.

As a police officer I have had to make sacrifices. However, the sacrifices that I've made pale in comparison to those made by many of you here in this room today. I'm honored to be in your company and feel privileged and humbled to be surrounded by so many who truly understand the meaning of service and sacrifice.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
The Chapel of Four Chaplains

The chair now recognizes Reverend Terry Klasek representing The Chapel of Four Chaplains for the purpose of an award.

REV. KLASEK: I always find it an honor and privilege. I'm also awed and humbled when I get to make these presentations. All of you should know by now the story of the *USAT Dorchester* and the four chaplains. In the frigid icy waters of the North Atlantic Ocean in February 1943, a U.S. troop ship was torpedoed. It was full of soldiers who were sea sick, scared and frightened, not knowing what was going to happen. They also had four chaplains there who only cared about one thing, helping other people irregardless of who they are.

As the ship was sinking, these four chaplains, two Protestants, one Catholic and one Rabbi, started pulling life vests out handing them to these frightened people. And by the accounts of the survivors, they took off their life jackets and put them on, sometimes forcefully on these scarred young children—and that's who went to war was the children—so that they may be saved. They went around comforting each person as best they could, bringing them comfort and solace, praying for whoever they were, it didn't matter what religion or faith they were. All they cared about was to voluntarily help somebody else.

It takes a special kind of person to volunteer to sacrificially give of themselves and help others. Some do it by volunteering through VA, others hospitals, elderly residences, but the most horrible thing I can think of is to be the National Commander of any huge organization. Not one of our Commanders knows what his bed looks like. People who are on the go all the time, at the beck and call of people all over this country. Ronald Conley has given of himself, so far beyond what is normally expected for a recipient of the Legion of Honor that they have the Bronze Medallion of the Legion of Honor.

I'd like to present right now the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion to your Commander, Ronald F. Conley. With it goes this plague.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I accept this award on behalf of all Legionnaires who keep the memory of Four Chaplains alive in the minds of countless Americans.

The chair recognizes Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Children and Youth for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 24, 2003, in the Renaissance Grand Hotel, Majestic F, 2nd Floor in St. Louis, Missouri. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio as Chairman and delegate Robert D. Scott of Oregon as Secretary. There were 45 members of the committee present.

There was one (1) resolution considered by the committee and referred to the Standing Commission on Children and Youth.

Resolution No. 137 (NY) 2003 NC: National Child Safety Day

Discussion was heard on the important work of the National Commission on Children & Youth.

On May 29, 2004,—Memorial Day Weekend—the United States will dedicate the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, honoring the 16 million American servicemen and women who served, fought and died to preserve freedom, liberate the oppressed, and rid the world of the scourge of tyranny.

The Commission salutes these brave patriots, knowing that they fought not for their countrymen and themselves alone, but for their families, and for all the children who would follow in the years ahead.

Today, there are men and women from the World War II generation living in every community across this nation, who will be unable to participate in the celebration in Washington, DC, yet deserve the opportunity to be honored for their service to God & County.

National Dedication Day, authorized by Resolution 17, Spring NEC 2003, encourages American Legion Family posts, units and squadrons to coordinate community celebrations on Memorial Day weekend 2004, for the purpose of:

- Acknowledging the men and women who served their country during World War II;
- Advancing the ideal of responsible citizenship, to include caring for the legacy the veterans of World War II fought to ensure, namely our nation's children; and
- Remembering those who paid the ultimate price in the pursuit and preservation of our freedom and the freedom of peace loving peoples everywhere.

Elements of these community celebrations should include:

- Day-long community events honoring America's World War II veterans in conjunction with the dedication of the World War II Memorial; and
- Community Walkathons to raise money to secure urgently needed healthcare for the millions of American children whose parents are unable to pay for proper medical treatment, thus further honoring the legacy of the "greatest generation."

To assist our members in this mission, a booklet, similar to "A Day To Remember," has been developed and is scheduled for distribution to all Posts in September. This booklet takes post officials through the suggested steps for coordinating a successful Memorial Day weekend event.

The American Legion will host activities in Washington, D.C., surrounding the dedication of the National WWII Memorial, to include a prayer breakfast, a hospitality tent open to all Legion Family members, and a celebrity reception in the evening following the dedication.

A National Candlelight Walkathon will be held in Washington, DC on Friday, May 28, 2004. Its purpose is twofold: to honor those individuals who served our country during World War II and to care for the legacy they fought to ensure—our nation's children.

Post, Units and Squadrons throughout the nation are encouraged to send at least one representative to participate in the Walkathon. Each representative will carry with them the

names of persons within their community that served during World War II. The entire listing will be gifted to the WWII Memorial Committee for entry into the WWII registry.

One of our corporate partners, Children's Miracle Network, will produce a National Memorial Day Concert that will air on Sunday evening, May 30, 2004. This two-hour nationally televised special will feature patriotic music provided by nationally famous choirs, major symphony orchestras and military music groups.

Children who have shown incredible courage in facing overwhelming medical challenges will be viewed meeting those brave men and women coming from the ranks of WWII veterans. This will symbolize the joining of those who gave us our legacy of freedom, with those who have shown the courage to carry its flame for future generations.

Our Areas of Concern for the 2003-2004 year deal with quality of life issues affecting America's children. They are: Missing Children, Youth Suicide Prevention, and Child Abuse & Neglect. These are timely topics that impact the lives of all young people.

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.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered Delegate for the Department of Ohio, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second? *From the floor*: Second.

Motion's been made and second to accept the report. Calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye'. Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered. The report of Children and Youth is adopted.

We will now take any contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation.

NECman LEO MCKERNAN: Department of New Jersey, I have with me our immediately Past Department Commander, Billy Mack and we would like to introduce Past Department Commander, Joseph English for the purposes of a donation.

PDC ENGLISH: On behalf of the Department of New Jersey and the Legion family New Jersey, I'm proud to present this check to the Child Welfare Fund for $5,000.00, from American Legion Post 338.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Besides giving money to the Child Welfare Foundation, I need to tell you about another project that this gentleman did in his state last year as Department Commander. A small state like New Jersey, and he went out and the Legionnaires of that state supported him. They raised over $100,000.00 to buy a Bluebird Bus so the disabled veterans in wheelchairs could be able to go out to picnics, to fishing ponds, to the shopping malls and so forth. One hundred thousand dollars was raised to take care of disabled veterans.

PNC SMITH, NORTH CAROLINA: I would like to present a check to you for the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount $500.00.

NECman WEST, NEW HAMPSHIRE: We are very pleased, from the Department of New Hampshire, to present a check for $500.00 for the Children Welfare Foundation.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Six Thousand Dollars for the Child Welfare Foundation.

Sometimes the perception of all veterans legislation being a national issue needs to be dispelled. Our next speaker is certainly capable of tackling that challenge. Elected to the Missouri State Senate in 1996, she continues to make a difference for the "Show Me" State. Earlier this year the veterans of this state honored her for her continued efforts to pass legislation that benefits veterans. Please welcome to The American Legion convention stage The Honorable Anita Yeckel, Missouri State Senator.

Address: The Honorable Anita Yeckel
Missouri State Senator

It's an honor to be here. I'm here to present a resolution to the veterans of The American Legion.. On behalf of the Missouri Senate and the State of Missouri, it is an honor to welcome you all. In Missouri, we pride ourselves as being the 'Show Me' State, and American veterans have certainly shown us the true meaning of patriotism. American veterans represent the very best in this nation. Since World War I, time after time armed forces have literally saved our world. However, your bravery on the battlefield has almost

been overshadowed by your good works when you return home. In the history of the United States the most remarkable thing about veterans in general is that they come home as motivated in peace as they were in war. Calvin Coolidge once said, "A nation which forgets its defenders will be forgotten." But I've always thought that it would be more accurate to say, "That the nation whose defenders forget them will cease to be a nation."

When soldiers returned home, whether it is the men who fought in the War of 1812, or the Civil War, or World War II, we've used the lessons they learned during the war to help postwar America. Not only have the veterans thrown their energy into business and family, they have dedicated much of their free time and extra money to making the world a better place. Some volunteered in hospitals, or joined the Rotary Club, while others dished out soup in a soup kitchen.

The American Legion itself is an example of veterans good works. The sole purpose of this organization is to assist their fellow veterans. Just one example is the Legion's involvement in the passage of the GI Bill of 1944. The efforts of the Legion were key in putting together and passing the legislation which shaped the American dream and helped a generation of leaders to propel America to greatness. The American Legion is such a remarkable organization whose membership is made up mostly of remarkable individuals. It was Missouri's own Harry Truman who said, "The American Legion shall live forever in the hearts of those who love justice, and of all those who seek triumph of freedom and right." I can't think of a way to say it better than actually now that he has been named one of our greatest presidents.

NATL VICE COMDR JOHNSON: Another national issue that has roots in hometowns all across this nation is the war on terrorism. Our next guest is serving his second term in the Missouri House of Representatives. He holds many key positions, among them on the newly formed statutory Joint Committee on Terrorism, Bio-terrorism, and Homeland Security.

Delegates to this 85th National Convention, please welcome The Honorable Russ Carnahan, Missouri House of Representatives.

Address: The Honorable Russell Carnahan
Missouri House of Representatives

It's great to be here and see so many wonderful visitors from around our country. I am honored to represent a district here in St. Louis in our Missouri House, and honored to work with Senator Yeckel who proceeded me. She has been a great champion of veterans in many issues here in our state, and I have the honor to serve on our Veterans Affairs Committee and Homeland Security Committee. I thank you for the work you do. It's great to have this national meeting right here in my hometown, but also a city that has so many great roots in the history of The American Legion. I, too, have prepared a resolution from our Missouri House which I will present. I will read one particular line from it: "The American Legion held a caucus meeting on May 9, 1919 in St. Louis, at which the organization's name and constitution were approved along with the Preamble beginning 'For God and country we associate ourselves together.'" That motto, I think, has served your organization well and our country well and certainly the men and women who have worn our uniform for years and years.

So welcome to St. Louis, hope you have a wonderful meeting and a wonderful time in St. Louis. Come back soon.

NATL VICE COMDR JOHNSON: The chair recognizes Marty Conaster of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Membership and Post Activities for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Section on Credentials and Other Membership Matters, Section III
Martin Conatser (IL), Chairman
Sunday, August 24, 2003

Forty-seven members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), met in the Renaissance Conference Plaza, Majestic B, 2nd Floor at 9:00 am.

Steve Bartos (NE) nominated Martin Conatser (IL), seconded by James Vialard (NJ) as Chairman. Motion carried. John Pellegrini (MT) nominated Gerald Goetzinger (MT), seconded by Howard Darter (CA) as Secretary. Motion carried.

Jim Davis (WV) made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Marti Addleman (AK).

Diane Pollard (CO) made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to make technical corrections to the Resolution(s) reported out of the Committee to insure proper wording and form without changing the substance of meaning of the Resolution. The motion was seconded by Barb Thurlow (ID).

No resolutions were considered.

Discussion was held concerning the 2003 and 2004 membership campaigns.

As a duly elected Delegate of this convention, I move for the adoption of this report.

NATL VICE COMDR JOHNSON: You've heard the motion is there a second? *From the floor*: Second. On the question? Hearing none, all in favor of the motion now signify by the usual sign of 'aye'. All opposed 'nay'. The ayes have it and the motion is adopted.

If the mind conceives it, the heart believes it, the hands will achieve it. Many of you took this to heart in 2003, and we are happy to be afforded the opportunity to recognize you for your efforts. The Departments and individuals on the stage took membership to another level. Their hard work paid off. They have shown during the year that without active growing American Legion programs, membership would lose strength and our voice would be weakened. Membership is our strength, and that strength has been made even stronger by their efforts.

Partnerships on the Children's Miracle Network, Recruiting Command, "I Am Not A Number Campaign," and active and reserve military components expand the opportunity of The American Legion to reach out to younger veterans and their families. Couple that with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities, and we can clearly see why The American Legion will have such sustained growth. I know all of you and the millions of American Legion members you represent feel as I do. America needs the values represented by The American Legion. It is my pleasure to make membership awards presentations. At this time I ask National Vice Commander Jeff Luginbuel to assume duties at the microphone.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
Jeff Luginbuel, Colorado, National Vice Commander

NATL VICE COMDR LUGINBUEL: During the past year, three Departments took their membership efforts to an all-time high. For each of those commanders, their membership chairman and their adjutants, we have rings. In addition, a plague is presented to the Department commander for their Department efforts. The first Department is Nevada. The presentation is to Commander Harry Cowan, Membership Chairman Tim Tetz, and Department Adjutant Lionel Motta.

From the Department of Delaware, Commander Robert E. Voll, Membership Chairman Art R. Chick and Department Adjutant Ed Phillips.

From the Department of Florida, Commander Clarence E. Hill, Membership Chairman Lawrence White and Department Adjutant Dyke Shannon.

A total of 16 Departments topped the 100 percent mark in membership this year with DMS; Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Virginia, Nevada, Idaho, South Carolina, Florida, France, Utah, New Hampshire, Texas, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and Tennessee. Seven of the 16 Departments accomplished this task through additional efforts. Simply put, this means they were able to replace expected loses through increasing the number of new members signed up excluding DMS members and the number of renewed members.

At this time will the Department commanders for Delaware, Georgia, France, Arizona, Virginia, New Hampshire and Idaho, please join the Commander. Accept this flag as a token of my personal appreciation for your Department's membership efforts.

Before we proceed, I'd like to point out that Commander Conley hosted a reception on Monday for Departments who obtained 96 percent or better of their membership through

traditional efforts. They were given a shirt and a watch recognizing their great membership year.

The next award is to a man who set the standard for recruiting during this membership year. The National Recruiter of the Year gathered 313 new members to The American Legion fold. Please give a warm welcome to a dedicated Legionnaire Walter Saffold of Post 267, Columbus, Georgia.

Walter, this is but a small token of appreciation for the job you've done without a doubt you are one outstanding recruiter. Commander Conley is presenting you with a plague and a Legion cap signifying your accomplishments in 2003, for earning the title of Recruiter of the Year for 2002-2003.

DEPT COMDR SCAFFOLD: It's a pleasure for me to be here. One of the things I think about is membership, membership, membership. I don't care what program we talk about or how many programs we talk about, we always wind up back on membership. Why is this? Because without membership you couldn't support the programs that we have in The American Legion. Membership is the livelihood of The American Legion.

About five years ago, I really started working membership. This is my fifth year as a Gold Brigade recipient, having recruited more than 50 members per year. At the beginning, we started within our post with a membership of about 470. At the end of this Legion year, we had increased our membership to 2,286 members. The reason for this wasn't really the effort that I put in to go out and recruit new members. What we did was to train the membership team of our post.

When we first got started, many members would ask me what to say when you have a prospect, a member that you think wants to join. At this time I figured what we need to do is really train this membership team. So I started having workshops every quarter. Every Saturday morning, I would have a breakfast at the Post and have the members on my membership team and other people who wanted to participate to come out. I guess we used to call that back in the army 'train the trainer.' We would train these people that I had on this membership team to go out and help recruit and bring in new members so they would know what to say when they started talking to veterans who we were trying to recruit to the Post.

I think every eligible person should be afforded the opportunity to become a Legionnaire. A lot of people say that they hate to go out and ask a veteran for their money or to have them pay to become a member. I told them it's not what you pay to become a member, it's what you pay to be eligible to be a member of The American Legion.

NATL VICE COMDR LUGINBUEL: Remember, membership is critical to The American Legion. Remember, without an active growing membership and the effort from individuals like Walter, our programs would lose strength and our voice will be weakened. Our commitment to service veterans, their families and communities will suffer.

Congratulations to those individual Departments who we honored today. A new membership year is underway. Let's look forward to seeing another group of deserving volunteers on stage next year in Nashville.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Commander Jeff, if you need a job I'll be your agent. I think you make a pretty good public announcer. You've got a great voice there.

The chair now recognizes Paul Morin from the Department of Massachusetts, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Chairman

I highlight Resolution 147, which was submitted by 14 departments throughout our great organization. This year was an exception by our National Commander as he traveled his journeys throughout America, he visited more VA medical centers than has ever been accomplished. We as an organization and a committee feel that this worthy cause must not be let go. I submit to you Resolution 147.

Resolution No. 147: A System Worth Saving: National Commander's VA Facility Report
Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated to this are: #9 (NC); #10 (KS); #23 (MA); #54 (CO); #67 (IL); #86 (MD); #111 (FL); #113 (WI); #126 (WY); #132 (NY); #142 (OR); #149 (PA); #152 (CA); #159 (IA)

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall continue nation-wide site visits of the Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and other health care facilities; and; be it further

RESOLVED, That such site visits by the National Commander or his designee include a full report of each facility submitted to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission of The American Legion, to include the submission of a questionnaire completed by the staff of each facility visited; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all information garnered through these facility visits will be compiled as part of a "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" or similar document; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" and the quality of VA health care provided the Nation's veterans be ever held as priority issues in the portfolio of The American Legion, and that the National Commander use all means available to communicate and advocate the importance of same to the President, his Administration and the Congress of the United States.

And now I call on Pat Phillips of Georgia, Secretary, for continuation of resolutions. Written report follows:

Report: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Chairman

83 members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 24, 2003, in the Renaissance Grand Hotel, Conference Plaza, Majestic D, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Carol Rutherford (MD), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Mark Regan (MD), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Paul A. Morin (MA), 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 (GA), as Committee Secretary; Thomas Cook (GA), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and John Hickey (IN), Secretary; K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and R. Michael Suter (NY), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Carol Rutherford (MD), Director, and Philip Wilkerson (MD), Deputy Manager, to Claims and Rating. Cathleen Wiblemo (VA), Deputy Director and Mark Regan (MD), Assistant Director, to Hospital and Medical Services.

As has been the custom for the 59 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 action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by Paul A. Morin, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 4—Julius H. Walsh (LA), Secretary
REGION 5—Tracy L. Davis (MO)
REGION 6—James K. Tull (KS)
REGION 7—Melissa DeHaai (UT)

REGION 8—Leon Bertram (AK)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-sixth National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 49 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	13
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	14
Referred to the Standing Commission	6
Received and Recorded	8
Rejected	8

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

A report of action taken on the 6 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved Resolutions or Approved with Amendment

Resolution No. 60: Exempt Former POWs and Purple Heart Recipients from Prescription Drug Co-Payments
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Under the new category system at VA hospitals, former POWs and those who were awarded the Purple Heart have been singled out as a special group of veterans deserving special consideration for their service and sacrifice to their country; and

WHEREAS, This special group of veterans has been placed in Category Three; and

WHEREAS, Category Three veterans do not have to make any co-payment for any of their in-patient or out-patient care; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans, if they are rated under 50% service-connected disabled or receiving prescriptions for a nonservice-connected condition, are charged a $7 co-payment for each 30 day supply of medication; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt all former POWs and those who were awarded the Purple Heart from any co-payment for prescription drugs.

Resolution No. 61: Allow Helpless Children to Retain $90 of Their Pension while in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child of a veteran who is receiving pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 also receives Medicaid-covered nursing home care, their VA pension is used to pay for their care and they are allowed to keep only $30 for their incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with no dependents and widows who are receiving pension benefits under PL 95-588 and also receive Medicaid-covered nursing home care, are allowed to keep $90 of their VA pension benefits for their incidental expenses; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to change the Medicaid-covered nursing home care provision to allow helpless children who are receiving VA pension benefits to keep $90 of their

check for incidentals.

Resolution No. 62: DIC Benefits for Surviving Spouses of Certain Filipino Veterans
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Approved as amended

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Enactment of Public Law (PL) 106-377, section 501(a) on 10-27-00, corrected the longstanding inequality of benefit payments to veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Guerilla Service of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East, who are U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens, by allowing them the full statutory rate of compensation for service-connected disabilities under Chapter 11, title 38, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Because PL 106-377 did not similarly amend Chapter 13, title 38, USC, the surviving spouses of these veterans continue to receive only one-half the statutory rate for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), thereby creating fundamental inequity and economic hardship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to allow payment of the full statutory rate for DIC benefits to the surviving spouses of veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army and the Guerilla Service of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East who were U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens.

Resolution No. 63: Reduce the Number of Years of One-Hundred Percent (100%) Service Connection Required for DIC Purposes
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans don't reach the 100% level until they are much older and their condition has worsened; and

WHEREAS, They often pass away due to other then their service-related condition well before they have been receiving the 100% rate for the required length of time; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary care giver and companion for these disabled veterans throughout the veterans lifetime and the VA compensation has been a primary means of support; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse in many instances can no longer count on VA benefits for assistance due to 100% rating of less then ten years; and

WHEREAS, This causes a dramatic change in the quality of life of the surviving spouse; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to reduce the number of years a veteran must be rated 100% from 10 years to 5 years for eligibility to DIC payments.

Resolution No. 85: The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin [TCDD]); and

WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported Public Law 96-151 which mandated that VA fund a non-government scientific body to conduct a major epidemiology study of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; and

WHEREAS, Information has recently been released by the Department of the Defense on numerous locations other than Vietnam where the herbicide was tested, sprayed, and stored, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York, in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 1968-69; and the storage of unused herbicide on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific from 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, set forth certain presumptions that apply to claims for service connection based on herbicide exposure by veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in other locations during these periods who may have been exposed to the herbicide and who may have developed one of the recognized Agent Orange-related diseases, set forth in title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, are not entitled to presumptive service connection for their disability, rather they must meet the more stringent requirements for direct service connection; and

WHEREAS, This inequity was not contemplated at the time of the enactment of Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as amended, due to limited available information on the full extent of the United States' use of Agent Orange testing, spraying, and storage activities; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, benefits are payable to children of veterans that served in the Republic of Vietnam during period January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, who suffer from the birth defect spina bifida; and

WHEREAS, Prior to and during this period, Agent Orange was also sprayed by U.S. armed forces in numerous areas other than the Republic of Vietnam, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 1968-69; and the storage of unused Agent Orange on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific in 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, The children of veterans who served in these locations who were possibly exposed to Agent Orange would be denied entitlement to compensation for spina bifida under the current statute and regulations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming

exposure to Agent Orange be provided examinations and treatment which are thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1116, to provide entitlement to these presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in areas other than the Republic of Vietnam where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, to provide entitlement to spina bifida benefits for the child or children of any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange as the result of service in the Republic of Vietnam or in other locations where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored.

Resolution No. 118: Expand Pension Eligibility to Veterans Placed in Imminent Danger Under "Warlike Conditions"
Origin: West Virginia
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The purpose of the pension program is to provide monthly payment to needy wartime veterans who are permanently and totally disabled as a result of disability not related to military service; and

WHEREAS, The pension program also provides monthly payments to needy surviving spouses and dependent children of deceased wartime veterans; and

WHEREAS, A wartime veteran is eligible for the pension program if the veteran is discharged from service under anything other than dishonorable conditions; and

WHEREAS, A wartime veteran is eligible for the pension program if the veteran served 90 days or more of active duty with at least one day during a war; and

WHEREAS, A wartime veteran is eligible for the pension program if the veteran has disabilities that keep the veteran from working a regular, full-time job; and

WHEREAS, A wartime veteran is eligible for the pension program if the veteran has a countable family income below a yearly limit set by law; and

WHEREAS, Wartime veteran is defined in section 101 (12), Chapter 1, title 38, United States Code (USC) as "any veteran who served in the active military, naval, or air service during a period of war"; and

WHEREAS, Period of war is defined in section 101 (11), Chapter 1, title 38, USC as "the Spanish-American War, the Mexican Border Period, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, the Persian Gulf, and the period beginning on the date of any future declaration of war by the Congress and ending on the date prescribed by Presidential Proclamation or Concurrent Resolution of the Congress"; and

WHEREAS, All other veterans are considered not to be wartime veterans, even though they may have been placed in imminent danger in such places as the Korean Peninsula, Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama in which "peacetime" hostile actions occurred and military decorations, to include the Purple Heart, for such service were awarded; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That Congress should amend title 38, USC, to expand eligibility for the pension program to veterans placed in imminent danger under "warlike conditions"; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That "warlike conditions" should be defined as any military assignment posing a real threat to hostile fire or aggression by combatants or noncombatants; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs be authorized to waiver the pension program "period of war" requirement for any veteran deemed worthy based on service under "warlike conditions."

Resolution No. 120: Discontinue Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Pension Maintenance Centers
Origin: South Dakota

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Approve as amended

WHEREAS, The American Legion is the largest organization of wartime veterans in the United States; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of American Legion members are disabled from non-military causes; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of these nonservice-disabled members qualify, financially, for VA pension; and

WHEREAS, Maintenance of this benefit requires annual verification of family income and medical expenses; and

WHEREAS, In early 2002, VA created three Regional Pension Maintenance Centers to process the annual income and medical expense questionnaires with the goal of improving the timeliness of adjustments in pension claims; and

WHEREAS, After 18 months of operation, these centers continue to experience substantial case backlogs and processing delays; and

WHEREAS, Once the records have been transferred to one of the centers, it is very difficult for claimants and/or their representatives to find out information concerning the status of a case or locate missing or lost documents, which makes it extremely difficult for local department service officers to effectively "represent" them; and

WHEREAS, In many instances benefits are interrupted, because requests for waivers of overpayments are not timely processed, which causes considerable frustration and unnecessary financial hardship for veterans and their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been opposed to the consolidation or centralization of regional office adjudicative functions, due to VA's lack of success in achieving promised operating efficiencies and service improvements with similar centralization initiatives in the past; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That the Regional Pension Maintenance Centers be discontinued; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the VA regional office in each state regain control of and responsibility for all pension accounts of claimants of that state.

Resolution No. 129: Adjustments to the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) Funding Model
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Approved as amended

WHEREAS, Veterans were promised by the Federal Government that for their service to the country they would be provided a lifetime of health care services; and

WHEREAS, After years of documented, widespread disparity among the regions of the country with regard to historical budgets and the consumption of resources per veteran treated, Congress directed the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a new allocation system; and

WHEREAS, The current allocation system for appropriations made to VA for medical care, the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) formula, was established pursuant to section 429 of Public Law (PL) 104-204; and

WHEREAS, The VERA formula has resulted in a system of inequitable care as veterans in some regions of the country are forced to compete with veterans in other regions for critical medical care; and

WHEREAS, The VERA system should be providing the funding necessary to meet the health care needs of all veterans, regardless of where they live; and

WHEREAS, The VERA system counts only those veterans assigned to Priority Group 1 through Priority Group 6, excluding Priority Group 7 and the new Priority Group 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Priority Group 7 veterans represent the largest segment of growth: in FY00-FY01 there was a 53% increase of new enrollees; and

WHEREAS, VERA allocates appropriated medical care funding down to the VISNs only; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion support legislation that would require the VERA model to count all veterans enrolled in the VA health care system, thereby allocating comparable resources for comparable workloads; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VERA allocate appropriated medical care funding down to the VA medical centers and require the VISNs to analyze the effectiveness of VERA's allocation.

Resolution No. 130: Oppose Increased Co-Payments and an Enrollment Fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 Veterans to Receive VA Health Care
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law (PL) 104-262, that authorized eligibility reform and open enrollment process, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has experienced a dramatic growth from 2.5 million veterans to over 6 million veterans enrolled in VA Health Care; and

WHEREAS, FY 2002 saw the astronomical growth of Priority Group 7 veterans seeking health care at their local VA medical facility and the creation of a new priority group 8; and

WHEREAS, VA, upon creating the new Priority Group 8, placed an immediate suspension on all new Priority Group 8 enrollments; and

WHEREAS, The VHA is authorized to bill, collect, and retain co-payments and Third Party insurance payment revenue streams of Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA plans to increase the outpatient co-payment from $15 to $20 and the prescription co-payment from $7 to $15 per 30 day supply and levy a $250 enrollment fee on Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The co-payment increases and enrollment fees could suppress the demand for VA services at the expense of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who may not be able to afford the co-payment increases and $250 out-of-pocket enrollment fee; and

WHEREAS, VA believes these initiatives will ultimately drive 1.2 million veterans away from the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any effort to increase co-payments or impose an enrollment fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans to receive VA health care.

Resolution No. 133: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims for the Department of Veterans Affairs
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There are over 25,000,000 honorably discharged veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, There are approximately 500,000 veterans who have claims pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 100,000 of those claims are over one year old; and

WHEREAS, The Nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,000 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, The United States House of Representative has offered legislation which is designed to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA; and

WHEREAS, The National Association of County Veterans Service Officers has offered to partner with VA in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veteran's benefits; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of the County Veterans Service Officers who are members of the National Association are in fact accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation allows the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a County Veterans Service Office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any Federal, State, or County veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a County Service Officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran and service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and Power of Attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any Federal legislation requiring an American Legion-accredited representative to develop claims for VA.

Resolution No. 138: Restore and Increase Burial and Plot Allowance
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the Community, State and Nation; and

WHEREAS, Benefits for deceased veterans include a burial and a plot allowance to assist families in providing a proper burial of their loved one; and

WHEREAS, The National Cemeteries Act (Public Law 95-73) enacted in 1973 established a burial allowance of $250 for eligible wartime veterans, and a $1500 burial allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 limited the payment of the burial plot allowance of $150, which was previously paid to all honorably discharged wartime veterans, to only those veterans who are indigent or who are in receipt of VA disability compensation or pension; and

WHEREAS, Although there have been subsequent increases in the allowances, the infrequent incremental increases have meant that the current $300 burial plot allowance and respective $300 and $2000 burial allowances have not kept pace with inflation and increases in the cost of living throughout the years; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-73 originally covered 13% of a private burial plot, and now only covers 3%; and

WHEREAS, The $250 burial allowance under Public Law 95-73 represented 22% of the cost of an average funeral of a wartime veteran, at the time; and the current burial allowance reflects only 6% of the cost; and

WHEREAS, The corresponding allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition covered 73% of the same average burial; and now only covers 39% of the current average funeral cost; and

WHEREAS, Increases, based on the VA's Price-Waterhouse-Cooper Study, "Assessment of Burial Benefits Administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs" (December 2000), would help to restore the amount and percentages of the allowance payments relative to current burial and plot costs; and

WHEREAS, Tying these allowances to the Consumer Price Index, thus requiring VA to adjust the allowance for inflation annually, would eliminate the need for periodic legislative action to bring the allowances in line current with burial and plot costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) §§ 2302 and 2303 be increased from $300 to $1135; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service-connected condition as set forth in 38 USC § 2307 be increased from $2000 to $3712; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial plot allowance be increased from $300 to $670; and,

be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index.

Resolution No. 147: A System Worth Saving: National Commander's VA Facility Report
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Consolidated to this are: #9 (NC); #10 (KS); #23 (MA); #54 (CO); #67 (IL); #86 (MD); #111 (FL); #113 (WI); #126 (WY); #132 (NY); #142 (OR); #149 (PA); #152 (CA); #159 (IA)

WHEREAS, The Founders of The American Legion recognized the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation program as a pillar of the organization; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a leading role in the establishment of the Veterans Administration, and its subsequent elevation to cabinet level status as the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is charged with providing health care services to eligible veterans, their spouses and dependents through its Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, VA is struggling to meet the needs of eligible veterans seeking care through VHA; and

WHEREAS, More than 230,000 eligible veterans are currently waiting for as long as one full year or more for primary care appointments within VA; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, combined with the aging veteran population will place increasing demands on an already overburdened system; and

WHEREAS, VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process is designed to realign the use of VA properties to provide the space and resources to serve the health care needs of veterans in the years 2010 to 2022; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, in an advocacy role to ensure that CARES does not overlook gaps in service to today's veterans, has representatives in the process at every VISN level, and the National Commander has established the VA Facility Advisory Committee to the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was represented on the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for our Nations Veterans, which closely scrutinized the operation of the VA health care system prior to developing its final report; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, through the "I Am Not a Number" survey has taken a proactive approach in illustrating the obstacles hundreds of thousands of veterans are experiencing in their attempts to receive health care through the very system created to meet their unique needs; and

WHEREAS, The first-hand information gained through site visits by the National Commander to VA medical centers across the Nation has proved invaluable in The American Legion's efforts to urge Congress and the Administration to fully fund VA at a level that will enable all eligible veterans to receive quality health care in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, Detailed questionnaires filled out by medical center staff provide valuable statistical information on the exact situation of each facility visited; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has a strong history of advocating for the improvement of accessibility and delivery of quality health care to all eligible veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion shall continue nation-wide site visits of the Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and other health care facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That such site visits by the National Commander or his designee include a full report of each facility submitted to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission of The American Legion, to include the submission of a

questionnaire completed by the staff of each facility visited; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That all information garnered through these facility visits will be compiled as part of a "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" or similar document; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" and the quality of VA health care provided the Nation's veterans be ever held as priority issues in the portfolio of The American Legion, and that the National Commander use all means available to communicate and advocate the importance of same to the President, his Administration and the Congress of the United States.

Resolution No. 162: Ensure A Domestic Source of White Marble for Standard Government Headstones and Flat Markers in National Cemeteries and for Other National Monuments

Origin: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee

Submitted by: Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, White is the color symbolizing the purity of selfless sacrifice of the service rendered by this Nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, Only three marble quarries exist within the continental United States that produce monument-grade marble. They are located in Georgia, Vermont and Colorado. Of these three, only two currently provide marble to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and of these two, only one, the Colorado quarry, produces white marble; and

WHEREAS, The white marble used in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was quarried at the Colorado site and the white marble slab for repair of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was quarried at the Colorado site and is now being fabricated; and

WHEREAS, As a cost-saving measure, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has begun to install gray marble headstones and flat markers in National Cemeteries, intermingling them with traditional white marble headstones and flat markers; and

WHEREAS, Because of VA's lowered specifications for headstones and flat markers allowing for gray marble and for other economic and technical reasons, the Colorado quarry has been put at a serious competitive disadvantage that could result in the permanent loss of this invaluable national resource through financial difficulties; and

WHEREAS, Loss of this quarry would mean white marble for headstones, flat markers and monuments would become unavailable domestically; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urge the Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs to make a determination in keeping with his commitment to restoring all National Cemeteries to shrine status, to require that the specifications for National Cemetery Administration Standard Government marble headstones shall include the requirement to use white marble only; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That in the absence of a determination by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, The American Legion support legislation to this end.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No.		
7	AK	Urge VA to Utilize and Work w/DoD Health Care Facilities to Ensure Adequate and Timely Medical Care for Veterans
14	MA	VA Provide Appropriate Care for Gulf War-Related Illnesses
20	MA	Support Full Funding for the State Veterans Home Program
52	CO	Establish Private Provider Network to Serve Medical Needs of Veterans of Northwest Colorado
73	PI	Support Legislation Granting Equal Rights and Benefits to Filipino Veterans
74	PI	Equal Benefits for Filipino Veterans Residing in the Philippines
119	DC	Urge Congress to Provide Mandatory Funding
125	WY	Department of Veterans Affairs POW Regulations

Referred Resolutions

Resolution No.		
29	UT	Training Curriculum for Service Officers
39	PR	Establish VA Medical Specialty Coverage at the Ambulatory Care Clinics of Puerto Rico
57	IL	Increase Special Monthly Compensation—K Award
59	IL	Exempt Income for Services as an Election Judge in Determining VA Pension
139	NY	Eliminate the Means Test as a Criteria for VA Health Care
141	NY	Use Accumulated Percentages of Disability to Determine Priority Group Status for VA Health Care

Rejected Resolutions

Resolution No.		
48	OH	Name Patient Tower at VAMC Dayton, OH in Memory of Marine Cpl. Tony Stein
58	IL	Eliminate the Benefit Payment Loophole for Certain Incarcerated Veterans
64	IL	Name the New VA Regional Office Building in Honor of Juel F. Marifjeren
70	IL	Support Passage of Senate Bill 50 Regarding Guaranteed Veterans Health Care Funding
76	PI	Support Passage of Senate Bill 68 Regarding Veterans Benefits
117	WV	Urge Congress to Fix the Asbestos Litigation System
136	NY	Establish Unified Cost-of-Living Calculations
146	OR	Support the WWII Merchant Marine "Just Compensation Act"

CHRMN MORIN: Mr. Commander, Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, as a duly elected and registered Delegate to this convention, I move for the adoption of this report respectfully submitted.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Motion's been made and seconded. Calling for the question? All those in favor in 'aye.' Opposed? Ayes have and so ordered. The report of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is adopted.

Announcement: Winning Department of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

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 that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors. For the 2002-2003 program year the trophy is awarded to the Department of North Dakota.

MR. HALL, DEPT. OF NORTH DAKOTA: We in the Department of North Dakota, where we put veterans first, want to thank you for this award. I also publicly want to thank our VSO Officer who does such a wonderful job for us in the State of North Dakota.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The chair recognizes Larry Beeson of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs for the purpose of making a report.

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

Forty members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected

Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Chairman, and James C. Young of Texas as Permanent Secretary, and considered sixteen resolutions, fourteen of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and two which were created by the committee. Of these, two were approved; six were referred; and eight were rejected.

Recommended Action on Resolutions
Approved

Resolution No. 163: Replacement of the Marble Monument on Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery
Origin: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The marble tomb at Arlington National Cemetery that is the final resting place for American warriors "known but to God" has become an immortal shrine, representing American ideals of valor, service, duty, and patriotism; and

WHEREAS, This "Tomb of the Unknowns" is symbolic of the spirit of freedom, democracy, and unity that are the cornerstones of our Republic in peace and in war; and

WHEREAS, Due to two large cracks that extend partially through the full length of the stone, authorities at Arlington National Cemetery are in the process of replacing the stone that sets atop the 82-year-old burial crypt; and

WHEREAS, U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish ®-NY), a Founder of The American Legion and Past National Commander (by action of the 61st National Convention of The American Legion, 1979), was instrumental in the creation of the Tomb and introduced federal legislation (H.R. 426) in 1920 to bring an "Unknown Soldier" home from Europe and place his remains in what has become known as the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has a rich history of sustaining efforts that have supported improvements to and the care of the Tomb as a National Shrine, and which include a permanent maintenance contract for the perpetual care of the lighting system that illuminates the Tomb and the Temple façade of the Memorial Amphitheater, further dignifying that which Hamilton Fish described as, "the tomb of our unknown comrade in arms who paid the supreme sacrifice that we might live at peace with all the world"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26-28, 2003, That The American Legion supports efforts by the Secretary of the Army to replace the damaged marble stone at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, thereby maintaining the dignity of the National Shrine.

Resolution No. 164: Appreciation to Host City
Origin: Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The 85th National Convention has been held in St. Louis, MO, August 26-28, 2003, and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Missouri, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of St. Louis, Missouri, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, that we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Missouri, Governor Bob Holden, Mayor Francis Slay; the city officials of St. Louis, Missouri, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2003 National Convention Corporation Officers, James F. Mareschal, President. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable Convention.

Referred to the Internal Affairs Commission

Resolution No. 45
Subject: Crediting Department with Authorship of Resolution When Possible

Origin: Virginia
Resolution No. 46
Subject: National D-Day Memorial
Origin: Virginia
Resolution No. 69
Subject: Establishment of American Legion Technology Committee
Origin: Illinois
Resolution No. 71
Subject: Region Six Information Meetings To Be Held in Fall
Origin: Minnesota
Resolution No. 153
Subject: Preserve World War I Veterans Memorial in Mojave Desert
Origin: California

Referred to the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee

Resolution No. 8
Subject: American Legion to Establish Color of POW/MIA Ribbon
Origin: Alaska

Rejected

Resolution No. 40: Eligibility for the Sons of The American Legion
Origin: Indiana
Resolution No. 51: Expand Eligibility of American Legion National College
Origin: Colorado
Resolution No. 72: American Legion Family Bowling Tournament
Origin: Minnesota
Resolution No. 78: Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Dues
Origin: Philippines
Resolution No. 80: Eligibility for Sons of The American Legion
Origin: New Mexico
Resolution No. 112: Black Star Banner
Origin: Florida
Resolution No. 145: Create Committee to Establish Expansion of Eligibility
Origin: Oregon
Resolution No. 157: Support for The American Museum of Military History
Origin: California

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Permanent Committee Chairman and Permanent Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

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

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

...*From the floor*. Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Motion's been made and properly second to accept the report, calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The report of the Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section II is adopted.

We will now accept contributions for the Disaster Relief Fund.

ALT NECman McKERNAN, New Jersey: I have with me immediate Past Department Commander Billy Mack, and I want to introduce Past Department Commander Joseph English for the purposes of a donation.

PDC ENGLISH: On behalf of the Department of New Jersey and American Legion

Post 338, Leonardo, New Jersey, I am proud to present the National Relief Fund a check for $5,000.00.

ALT NECman LEWIS: The State of Connecticut donates $1,001.00 to the NEF.

NECman REHBEIN: It's my pleasure to introduce the outgoing Department Commander, Mr. Dave Klingensmith for a presentation.

DEPT COMDR KLINGENSMITH: The Department of Iowa would like to present this $500.00 check to Commander Conley for his Emergency Fund.

NECman HEDRICK: Mr. Commander, on behalf of all the states in the southern block caucus from the fines we collected at our breakfast I'd like to present the NEF a check for $6,051.00.

PNVC SALMEN: For 18 years the Department of Nevada, Idaho and Montana have an activity called 'fun days.' This year we raised $1,000.00 for NEF in one day. With me is the NEC from Montana Art Sells, their Commander and Idaho's Past Commander.

NECman WEST: On behalf of all the Legionnaires in the Department of New Hampshire who have been very fortunate not to have needed to utilize this fund in years past, would like to do our part for those that will. At this time our Department Commander Bob Wyman will present you a check for $1,150.00, bringing our total up to a little over $5,000.00 for the year.

NECman PIROLLI: Mr. Commander, from your great state Pennsylvania, we have a check here for over $9,738.69 for The American Legion National Emergency Fund. And we hope our Adjutant could say a few words.

DEPT ADJ WATSON: I want to thank our District Commanders and our section Commanders. We have a second year project that helps raise these funds that makes it a little more painless on the department.

MR. DUNAWAY: Post 42, Grand Canyon, Department of Arizona has a check for $1,000.00 for the National Emergency Fund.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The grand total is $25,440.69.

The chair now recognizes Judge Vincent Gaughan, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments for the purpose of making a report.

CHRMN GAUGHAN: Commander Ron Conley, brother and sister Legionnaires I have some good news for you but I always have to categorize it like a lawyer. This should be the last report and this report should be short.

Report: Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Vincent M. Gaughan, Chairman

To the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2003 at the Renaissance Grand Hotel, Conference Plaza, Westmoreland/Kingsbury Rooms. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that forty (40) 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 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.

Honorable Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman on motion by Raymond P. Jacquez (MD), seconded by Alan Lennox (CA) and unanimously approved.
Cathy Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary by motion made by Charles G. Mills (NY), seconded by Roger Martel (VT) and unanimously approved. The Chairman and the Secretary 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.

A motion was made by Charles G. Mills (NY) and duly seconded by Alan Lennox (CA) 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 carried.

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.

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 Nos. 101 (TX), 123 (SD) and 124 (SD) were out of order. 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. T. Les Galloway (OR) made the motion, and it was seconded by Kenneth Dittenber (MI). The motion carried.

Bill Bryant (VA) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Tony R. Navarrete (NM). The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected Delegate from the Department of Illinois, I ask that this report be adopted.

...*From the floor.* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: A motion has been properly made and second for the adoption, calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? Ayes have and so ordered.

I call on the National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for administrative announcements. Before he does that, the grand total of money collected here at the podium today for the three various funds was $93,531.69.

Announcement: Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutant

The Western States Caucus is meeting in this hall immediately following the recess of the today's session of The American Legion Convention.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Two other things before we close. The video will be cancelled and played in the morning. There was a lot of talking going on this morning, but that video is there as an inspiration. We hope it will inspire you because we do need to remember.

The other thing is the secretary made a comment about the CARES Commission and there's no facilities targeted to be closed unless Congress appropriates the money as far as any new construction. There's seven facilities that I know of right now that are on the block to be closed. There is no funding that I know of to build any new facilities to replace them. So you have to be vigilant as this CARES process moves forward at a rapid pace. You have to stay engaged and involved as far as each Department.

My greatest concern about those facilities is that they house the mentally ill, the dementia, and the Alzheimer's patients. They're the weakest members of our society besides those who have lost their legs or are totally blind. So you have to be vigilant and make sure that when they are telling you that there's going to be a replacement building, you better see that ground of dirt being turned over and a foundation going down.

Will all the Delegates please join me by standing and we'll render a proper hand salute to the flag of our country. One, two.

I now declare this convention in recess until 9:00 o'clock, tomorrow morning.

...At 2:55 p.m., the Convention recessed to convene the following day, Thursday, August 28, 2003, at 9:00 o'clock a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, August 28, 2003

...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 85th Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

NATL COMDR CONLEY: This Convention will come to order. Delegates will please stand. Again I'm going to go off script and give the honor to the salute to the colors to the National Sergeant-at-Arms Mike Murphy.

Salute to the Colors

The Colors of our nation being in place, please render the proper right hand salute, one, two. Uncover for the National Chaplain Norris A. Keirn.

Invocation
Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana, National Chaplain

Shall we join together in the spirit of prayer. Oh gracious Lord we lift Your name on high and we love to sing Your praises. You have been a gracious and wonderful God blessing us in this great nation, and empowering us to bless other nations. We ask You to send forth Your spirit on this assembly this morning, that You would guide us and strengthen us, that all that we do and all that we say would be according to Your glory. And we pray as we gather here this morning that You would safeguard and protect our flag and our pledge that our nation can always lift Your name up.

We ask this in Your holy name. Amen.

NATL SGT-AT-ARMS MURPHY: Remain uncovered and repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance.

...Delegates recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Please be seated. The Convention is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding journalism which has a positive impact on a community. The American Legion Forth Estate Award is difficult to earn because it puts all types of media together to measure the impact of its entries. Every year the judges have a difficult time in coming to a decision. This year the *Detroit News* earns the honor for their special series "Fixing Wayne County's Justice System." The judges wrote that this was a powerful report series on the tremendous shortcomings and the criminal justice in Detroit and the surrounding Wayne County.

It documented how a little known program to ease jail overcrowding by releasing thousands of dangerous accused felons was simply not working. Nearly half of the felons failed to return to court and some committed serious crimes while free. The newspaper depicted thousands of rapes, killings, car jackings, and other violent crimes that followed prompted local officials to end the jail releases.

With this morning to accept The American Legion Fourth Estate Award on behalf of the *Detroit News* and his fellow investigative reporters is Norman Sinclair.

I'll read what the awards says: "The American Legion 2003 Fourth Estate Award for outstanding achievement in the field of journalism presented to *Detroit Daily News* for Fixing Wayne County's Justice System. Presented at the 85th National Convention, August 29, 2003, St. Louis, Missouri."

NORMAN SINCLAIR: I introduce my wife, Deborah McCullough, who may not have written any of the copy but she's an important part of the support team. We especially appreciate this award coming from The American Legion because your organization is built

on public service. We feel sometimes in journalism we expend great effort and fail to see any real results. In this particular series of stories we certainly have made an impact in Detroit.

The county jail which for 20 years operated at full maximum capacity to the point where they were letting folks out the back door when the brought new felons in the front door, is no longer in an overcrowded situation. In fact, within a month after the series ran the entire community came together—the courts, the police departments, the sheriff's departments—to work out the new system to move cases through the courts faster so people wouldn't sit in jail for months at a time waiting to go to court to be given probation and release. Today the country jail, which for 20 years had been running over capacity, has more than 300 empty cells. They can now rent cells to other jurisdictions who are suffering the same problem.

In the meantime, as a part of this series, we tracked 26,000 suspected felons with warrants for their arrest roaming the county free. Nobody was looking for them. We went out and found 53 of them ourselves. That series led to the formation of a fugitive justice team with the Detroit Police Department and the Wayne County Sheriff's Department. The team, 33 members, hit the streets in February and as of yesterday, they had apprehended almost 1,400 hardcore felons from first degree murderers on down.

So we are very pleased to accept this award for the Detroit News.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Now to bring us up-to-date on key issues which impact the employers of those men and women in the military, here is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs Craig Duehring.

Presentation: Statement of Support
Employer Support of The Guard and Reserve (ESGR)
Craig W. Duehring, Principal Deputy Assistant
Secretary of Defense of Reserve Affairs

I'm here today representing not only the Department of Defense, not only the 1.25 million members of the National Guard or Reserve Forces of the United States, but also the employer support of the Guard and Reserve which we call simply ESGR. ESGR is a full-time office of 50 dedicated individuals who work for the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs on behalf of guardsmen and reservist, as well as their employers. In addition, we have over 4,100 volunteers nationwide and in Europe who prevent problems before they arise and help solve them once they do.

The core of this team is a group of 250 trained ombudsmen who will go to the workplace and talk directly to the parties concerned. In addition, we provide assistance to students when their military obligations conflict with their academic schedule. Employers, employees or students merely contact us through the web at esgr.com, or esgr.org, or our 1-800 number and a real, live human being begins working the issue.

Prior to the events of 9/11, we were all very involved in the routine; the predictable, the mundane. But in a few hours that Tuesday morning our lives were changed forever. It didn't make much difference if you were at the Pentagon, as some of us were, or at the World Trade Center or not. Millions of previously separate lives suddenly converged and were aligned in one direction. Suddenly old phrases took on new meanings, consider "one nation under God indivisible," or consider one of my favorites, the third and fourth verses of *America the Beautiful* written over a hundred years ago.

Now we all know the first verse by heart, but these verses which before 9/11, merely sounded nice. After 9/11, I believed were revealed as prophecy. For just a moment, visualize a group of soldiers standing at a check point on a road in Iraq trying to help a distressed pregnant woman only to be blown up by a terrorist using the woman as a shield. "Oh beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife. Who more than self the country loved and mercy more than life." Or, think of the World Trade Center and the total transformation that stirred the soul of New York City, a city that up until that time had a reputation for rudeness. As I repeat these words, "Oh beautiful for patriots dream that sees beyond the years. Thine alabaster cities gleam undimmed by human tears." How could Kathryn Lee Bates sitting on top of Pikes Peak have seen all the way to New York City and into the future. I believe her

words are inspired.

The attack of 9/11, unlike the attack of December 7, 1941, was directed not against our military force but against us as a nation, as a people simply because we were Americans. We as Americans fought back. We sent our best from among us for our survival is at stake. For some it meant giving up fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, friends and cousins and watching them go into battle. Others contributed what they could, donating money, blood, calling cards and items the soldiers might need. All over the land, American flags appeared on cars, homes and even bridge overpasses. No one told them what to do, people simply did it.

Employers responded magnificently by allowing over 295,000 of our guardsmen and reservists to leave when they were called. Those of you who are employers took care of the families who remained behind: you calmed their fears; you kept the soldiers jobs open and often your business suffered as a result. But you did it willingly and you continue to do so today. Just how many employers are involved? The Reserve Officer's Association has kept a list of employers on their web page who go beyond what is required by law to support the guardsmen and reservists who work for them. The combined total of companies who are voluntarily providing additional benefits, such as the pay differential for lost wages or the continuation of health coverage, runs into the many hundreds. The size and scope of companies runs from the Fortune 500 list to state and local governments, and companies who employ only a few guardsmen and reservists. The level of voluntary support for our men and women in uniform is truly astounding and something that every American can view with pride.

Now even small companies lend a hand where they can. I'm from Minnesota originally and I heard of a small company up in the Midwest with fewer than 10 employees who spent an entire day cutting fire wood for the family of a deployed soldier so his wife and children could heat their home this winter. American employers simply do what they can. Let us pause for a minute and hear from some of those employers directly.

...At this time the Delegation viewed a pre-recorded video.

Where do we find such men and women. We find them of course in St. Louis; in Denver; in New York; Live Oak, Florida; Turkey, North Carolina. We find them in our own homes. We see them in our churches. We applaud them when they graduate from our schools. We thank them when they mow our lawns and clean our sidewalks. We slow down when we see them in their patrol cars, or we pull over when they race by us in red trucks with flashing lights. We pray for them when they are absent risking their lives for all of us. We clutch them upon their return and shower them with kisses and tears that were held back just for them.

And for the hundreds of them who can no longer feel our caresses, nor hear our words of welcome, we stand in awe. For having given everything for their country, they have been embraced by our sacred banner and elevated forever beyond our reach and even our gaze. They are no longer ours but now belong equally to all Americans. For they are our heroes.

I'd like to thank my fellow members of The American Legion in their roles as family members, friends, neighbors and as employers. All of whom are having to sacrifice so that our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coast guardsmen can continue to take the war to the enemy on his soil instead of on ours. Let us remain committed to our President and to the members of our fighting forces in the years that it will take to bring about a lasting peace.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The chair recognizes Tom Bock of Colorado, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Foreign Relations for the purpose of making a report.

Report: The Foreign Relations Convention Committee
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2003, 42 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in room 120, street level of the America's Center, St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. Thomas L. Bock (CO) was elected Chairman.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and

Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of 22 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

Following this initial meeting, ad hoc Subcommittees met in separate locations to consider the resolutions that had been assigned to them. The following were appointed Chairmen:

General Foreign Policy: Chairman Thomas L. Bock (Colorado)
Regional Affairs: Melvin 'Doc' Simon (Vermont)

The Convention Committee report contains resolutions, which will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide an effective and viable Foreign Relations program for 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.

Approved

Resolution No. 2: Support for the Republic of Korea
Origin: Alaska
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, The Republic of Korea is politically and militarily vital to the United States and to the defense of the Asia Pacific region, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) and United States security alliance based upon the ROK U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty has made and continues to make, significant contributions to the deterrence of war on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. military forces stationed in Korea are very important and necessary to the stability of the Far East Asia region as well as South Korea; and

WHEREAS, That North Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction has an important effect on the neighbor countries' military buildup; equipping their forces with high-tech weapons. It also poses a threat to the world as well as the United States, and the U.S. government believes North Korea to have ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States by 2015; and

WHEREAS, North Korea expelled international nuclear inspectors from North Korea in December 2002 and announced its withdrawal from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty on January 10, 2003, and North Korea is now running its nuclear facilities in the Youngbyon area; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of Korea President Roh Moo-Hyun emphasized that "North Korea's nuclear development can never be condoned, and It is up to Pyongyang whether to go ahead and obtain nuclear weapons or to get guarantees for the security of its regime and international economic support," and urged North Korea to promptly give up its nuclear program in his inaugural speech on February 25, 2003; and

WHEREAS, Not only the South and North Koreas' dialogue but also the U.S. and North Korea talks are vital for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the East Asia Region; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges that the government of the United States should support South Korea to more actively persuade Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program, with the result that the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula be resolved through dialogue without a war on the Korean Peninsula, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that the United States in concert with its allies, including South Korea, should bring political pressure to bear on North Korea to immediately cease its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, which can only escalate the threat to stability and peace not only on the Korean Peninsula but also the world.

Resolution No. 3: Support for the Republic of China
Origin: Alaska

Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is long-time friend, having fought with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II and against communism during the post-war period; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is major trading partner, and democratic ally of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is strategically located and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Asia-Pacific region; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations act (Public Law 96-8), the United States is committed to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, that The American Legion supports sales of the latest American weapon systems, including naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, high-tech electronics and communications equipment, and air-defense missile systems to the Republic of China.

Resolution No. 37: Puerto Rico Self Determination
Origin: Puerto Rico
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee

WHEREAS, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States as a result of the treaty concluding the Spanish-American War of 1898; and on February 12, 1900 a mounted battalion of Puerto Rico was added to form the Puerto Rican Regiment U.S. Volunteers; and

WHEREAS, Over 200,000 United States citizens from Puerto Rico have served valiantly in every war and armed conflicts our nation has fought, including the current war against terrorism; and four heroic Puerto Ricans, Hector Santiago-Colon, Euripides Rubio, Carlos James Lozada, and Luis Fernando Garcia, were awarded the Medal of Honor; and four other courageous Puerto Ricans were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for their valor in defending American democracy and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, The United States Constitution promises equal protection under the law to all U.S. citizens, and yet the island's current political status treats U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico differently than citizens residing in the 50 states of the Union, reminiscent of the "separate but equal" standard of a past era which, although eventually overturned, causes our society to continue to struggle with its repercussions; and

WHEREAS, There exists and ever-growing consensus among American veterans and leading Hispanic organizations, such as the American GI Forum, the largest organization of Hispanic veterans of the United States, that the time has come to empower Puerto Ricans men an women who have served with courage and distinction in the armed forces of the United States, and their fellow Puerto Ricans to make a decision regarding their island's ultimate political destiny; and

WHEREAS, In 1997 the legislature of Puerto Rico petitioned the United States Congress to respond to the democratic aspirations of the United Sates citizens of Puerto Rico by means of a federally sanctioned plebiscite to be held no later than 1998 and Congress has yet to respond to said petition; an the continued disenfranchisement of the island's 3.8 million residents constitutes a clear violation of the civil rights of these United States; and

WHEREAS, The legislature of the State of California passed a joint resolution, SJRR 21, on September 12,2001 supporting self-determination for the 3.8 million U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico, including the thousands of Puerto Ricans who have served with distinction and valor the armed forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, Department of Puerto Rico, declares that the time has come to enable Puerto Rico to exercise its right to self-determination and urges all citizens of the United States to support the enactment of a federal law leading to full self-government for Puerto Rico within the context of a congressionally sanctioned plebiscite; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion, in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, that The American Legion requests that the Congress pass, and the President sign into law, legislation that would define the

political status options available to the United States citizens of Puerto Rico and authorize a plebiscite to provide and opportunity for Puerto Ricans to make an informed decision regarding the island's future political status.

Resolution No. 66: American Leadership In The New Millennium
Origin: Illinois
Submitted By: Foreign Relations Committee
Consolidated with 22 (MA), 81 (MD), 131 (NY), 150 (PA), and 158 (IA)

WHEREAS, The attack of September 11, 2001 has forced the United States of America to take a leadership role in world affairs to ensure the security of our country and our allies; and

WHEREAS, In response to terrorists and rogue regimes, we have embarked on a global campaign on terrorism that has brought about major shifts in international relations and America's role in the world; and

WHEREAS, The United States has deployed diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement and military forces to every major area of the globe to fight, identify and oppose terrorists and those that sponsor terrorist activity; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have been critical and unsupportive of America and its coalition's efforts to eliminate terrorism at its sources, especially the war in Iraq; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion through previous resolutions supports the United States government's efforts to wage a global war on terrorism and to liberate Iraq and to rid that region of its weapons of mass destruction capabilities; and

WHEREAS, United States forces that have been stationed in Germany, South Korea and elsewhere are experiencing increased local government regulation of training activities and increasing antagonism toward them and any U.S. presence; and

WHEREAS, Other allies of the United State coalition, namely the United Kingdom, Australia, Spain and Poland have stood by the United States even in the face of stubborn opposition from other countries; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, MO, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, that The American Legion supports a bipartisan American foreign policy that secures peace and security for the United States and reflects our values and national character, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the United States Congress and the President to reevaluate our strategic relationships with other countries as well as our collective security commitments, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this reevaluation should determine if reductions, relocation to other regional partners or even removal of United States forces stationed in other countries would be beneficial to United States and regional security interests; and that this reevaluation should also include a review of all diplomatic relations and collective security agreements, and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this reevaluation be conducted expeditiously and incorporate the views of all elements of American society including those that reflect our national goals and values and that The American Legion encourages a vigorous debate on these reevaluations as part of the upcoming 2004 national elections.

Resolution No. 148: Free Trade Area the Americas
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Foreign Relations Commission
As Amended

WHEREAS, The United States government began an new era of economic and democratic development in this hemisphere on June 27, 1990 when it introduced the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative with its goals of establishing an hemispheric free trade zone and the stimulation of regional prosperity by relying on economic reform and investment rather than monetary aid; and

WHEREAS, The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative has assisted and continues to assist countries of this hemisphere develop their economies and democratic governmental institutions; and

WHEREAS, The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative provided part of the basis for

the implementation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, celebrated between Canada, Mexico, and the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Executive Branch of the United States government has been active in promoting the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and

WHEREAS, The FTAA negotiators, including the U.S. government's representative have stated that the FTAA will promote economic integration which will promote increased productive capacity and competition, improve macroeconomic stability, strengthen democracy, create prosperity and realize human potential throughout the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS, The FTAA is designed to promote trade liberalization which will result in generating economic growth and prosperity in the hemisphere and create an open and balanced global trading system; and

WHEREAS, The FTAA can co-exist with and not inhibit existing bi-lateral or sub-regional trade agreements; and

WHEREAS, The representatives of the 34 nations negotiating the FTAA have recommended that the agreement become effective in January of 2005; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation and trade between nations may be enhanced by the efforts of individual citizens who understand the cultural and institutional differences that may exist between the peoples and societies of different countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled St. Louis, Missouri on August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion supports the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas no later than January 31, 2005, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to support the long-term goals of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative that enhance economic growth and cooperation between the governments and peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Resolution No. 161: Latin American Student Exchanges and Scholarships
Origin: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Throughout the decade of the 1990s the legislative program of the American Legion called for increased numbers of scholarships to be made available to Latin American students, and

WHEREAS, During the decade of the 1990s the National Convention of The American Legion passed on five occasions, resolutions calling for increased foreign exchange programs for the purpose of allowing the future leaders of countries in this Hemisphere to become acquainted with governments and peoples of the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS, The legislative program of The American Legion did, throughout the 1990s, support the intent of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative to promote regional growth through cooperation between the governments and peoples of the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the aforementioned resolutions adopted by the various National Conventions of The American Legion have yet to be made effective in a meaningful manner; and

WHEREAS, Multilateral economic ties are increasing throughout the region; and

WHEREAS, Cooperation and trade between nations may be enhanced by the efforts of individual citizens who understand the cultural and institutional differences that may exist between people and societies of different cultures; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled St. Louis, Missouri on August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion believes student exchange programs between the United States and Latin American countries should be conducted to acquaint the future leaders of all countries in the hemisphere with their neighbors, and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U.S. Government to provide an expanded number of scholarships to Mexican, Central American, Caribbean and South American students, particularly those lacking funds to attend undergraduate and appropriate vocational-technical programs, provided said students promise to return to their home countries after completing their education.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Foreign Relations

Resolution No. 26: Reinvestigation of Gulf War I Aircraft Loss Incident
Origin: Montana
Resolution No. 53: Status Reclassification of Major Paul Jennings Weaver, USAF
Origin: Colorado

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 25: Opposition to the International Criminal Court
Origin: Montana
Resolution No. 82: Terrorism
Origin: Maryland
Resolution No. 83: Priority POW/MIA Actions
Origin: Maryland
Resolution No. 84: United Nations
Origin: Maryland
Resolution No. 103: War in Iraq
Origin: Texas
Resolution No. 140: Support for the New Government in Iraq
Origin: New York

Rejected

Resolution No. 27: Support for POW/MIA Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Lawsuit
Origin: Montana
Resolution No. 47: U.S.S. Liberty
Origin: Ohio
Resolution No. 135: Foreign Participation in Iraqi Reconstruction
Origin: New York

That completes the report of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations. I would like to thank the support of our Washington staff; Mike Schlee, Mike Duggan and John Petersen for their terrific encouragement and support of this Committee.

As a duly elected Delegate from the Department of Colorado, I move the adoption of the report of the Convention Committee on Foreign relations.

...*From the floor*. Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It's been properly moved and second to adopt all in favor indicate by saying 'aye.' Opposed? Ayes have and so ordered. The Report of the Foreign Relations is adopted.

The chair recognizes Allen Titus of Indiana, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security for the purpose of making a report.

Report: The National Security Committee
Allen L. Titus (IN), Chairman
John Michalski (IN), Secretary

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 24, 2003, 195 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in the Ferrara Theater of Americas Center in St. Louis, Missouri. 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. Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) was elected Chairman and John Michalski (Indiana) was appointed Secretary.

The six authorized Convention Committees (Aerospace, Defense Civil Preparedness, Law and Order, Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, and Naval Affairs) met in separate

meeting rooms. An additional Ad Hoc committee was appointed for General Security resolutions which required special attention. In compliance with NEC Resolution 18, a subcommittee on Conservation of Natural Resources was appointed. The following were elected Chairmen and Secretaries of the Convention Security Committees:

General Security Ad Hoc	Nancy L. Carder, Chairman (Illinois) Ken Krizan, Secretary (Iowa)
Conservation of Natural Resources	Donald T. Clarke, Chairman (South Dakota) Robert P. McCreery, Secretary (Wyoming)
Aerospace	Daniel M. Dellinger, Chairman (Virginia) Terry Huisman, Secretary (Alaska)
Defense Civil Preparedness	Erwin Gus Williams, Chairman (Connecticut) Melvin Goslar, Secretary (Iowa)
Law and Order	George W. Wehrli, Chairman (Florida) Harry Easley, Secretary (Washington)
Merchant Marine	Charles Moreland, Chairman (Florida) Charles Powell, Jr., Secretary (Virginia)
Military Affairs	Clayborn Lofton, Chairman (Illinois) Marie A. Rhyne, Secretary (Virginia)
Naval Affairs	Gerard W. Cheffer, Chairman (Illinois) James L. Van Horn, Secretary (Alaska)

On Sunday afternoon, August 24, 2003, the delegates again assembled in the Ferrara Theater in America's Center for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on Security. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 31 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates.

I will now call for the report of the Committee Chairman, General Security Ad Hoc, Nancy L. Cardner, Chairman.

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Nancy Carder (IL), Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 41: Buy American
Origin: Indiana
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armament, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These large corporations must rely on subcontractors for the production of, and overhaul, of individual components and subsystems to be used in the construction of these pieces if equipment; and

WHEREAS, There are occasions where the same component or subsystem may be manufactured by two or more subcontractors; and

WHEREAS, Subcontractors may be located in the United States or in foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, The corporation constructing a system or systems may choose to enlist the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries over those which have comparable equipment and comparable costs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has had little or no input as to the choice of subcontractors; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the corporation not only can affect the security of our Nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military services to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 91: Funding Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the new Department of Homeland Security as well as a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, Although the Congress has appropriated funding for the Department of Homeland Security and its numerous agencies and functions, appropriations continue to be required to fund homeland security tasks and functions at regional, state and local levels across the Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges the Congress to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress also fully fund those homeland security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 95: Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported legislation in the early 1970s to establish the F. Howard Herbert School of Medicine and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), thus creating the Nation's only military medical school dedicated to the provision of uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists who will ensure readiness, retention, force health protection, the medical response to natural and man-made disasters and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and medical support during humanitarian missions; and

WHEREAS, USUHS was created by Congress under the Department of Defense in 1972 to provide the Uniformed Services of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) with a cadre of dedicated, career medical officers who would ensure continuity, leadership, and medical readiness for the medical corps; due to both the extensive military-unique training provided in the multi-Service environment of USUHS and the extraordinary retention rates of the USUHS graduates who serve, on average, at least 18.5 years, USUHS has met, or has exceeded, the goals set by Congress; and

WHEREAS, In return for their education, USUHS School of Medicine (SOM)

graduates must fulfill a service obligation of at least seven years following their residency training, while the service obligation of scholarship graduates is a year of obligated service per year of education, normally on the side of four years; due to their excellent retention rates, the 2,526 USUHS graduates on active duty in the Army, Navy, and Air Force currently represent twenty-one percent of the 11,907 physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces (in addition 94 USUHS SOM graduates continue on active duty in the USPHS); following their board certifications, USUHS graduates remain on active duty for an average of nine years, three times longer than scholarship graduates; in addition, of the USUHS SOM alumni who have completed their residency training, approximately one out of every two USUHS graduates holds an operational or leadership position ; and

WHEREAS, Since the first USUHS graduation in 1980, USUHS has graduated 3,268 uniformed physician officers and 183 advanced practice nurses who ensure continuity for the Military Health System (MHS); in addition, the SOM has conferred 727 advanced degrees to include 229 Doctors of Philosophy; 11 Doctors of Public Health; 69 Masters of Science; 386 Masters of Public Health; 4 Masters of Science in Public Health; 25 Masters of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; and, 3 Masters of Military Medical History; and

WHEREAS, The General Accounting Office documented in a 1995 report that USUHS, when compared to other sources of military physicians, is an economical source of career medical leaders based on expected years of service and all federal costs; in addition, the Joint Meritorious Unit Award granted to USUHS by the Secretary of Defense on December 11, 2000, officially recognizes that USUHS annually generates over $24.6 million in documented cost avoidance for the Department of Defense through the provision of clinical services by the USUHS faculty in the military treatment facilities and the University's continuing education programs; and

WHEREAS, For over 25 years, USUHS has been the only University in the United States to integrate WMD-related education and training throughout its standard SOM curricula; Public Law 107-287, has directed that the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) work with USUHS to assist the VA health care professionals in preparing to respond to WMD-related incidents; and

WHEREAS, The USUHS has led a collaborative effort with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Offices of Homeland Defense and Health Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Reserve Components, and the United States Public Health Service to coordinate the cost-effective sharing of WMD-related expertise and training among the above listed offices and departments; in addition, the VA Satellite Communication Network and video studios will be utilized by three WMD-related USUHS Centers to access the Internet for the cost-effective provision of multi-source, quality-ensured, WMD-related training and expertise to all National responders and health care providers who have access to the Internet; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has strongly endorsed the continuation of USUHS annually through legislative direction since 1993 and the Department of Defense has officially recognized the value and cost effectiveness of the University through its presentation of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to USUHS in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Since the matriculation of its first SOM class over 27 years ago, there has been no additional construction on the USUHS campus; and, the accrediting organizations for USUHS have directed that additional space be provided for the Graduate School of Nursing and other University educational programs; on September 25, 2001, USUHS was notified that its construction project has been included in the TRISERVICE Medical MILCON Program for Fiscal Year 2006; and, accelerated design was approved on January 7, 2003 for the design process to begin in May of 2003; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges the Congress to continue its determination to retain and expand the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences as a continued source of uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; and be it further;

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly endorses the funding of the USUHS Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, the USUHS Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, and the USUHS Casualty Care Research Center

to endure the cost-effective provision of quality-assured, weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related training and expertise, via the Internet, for the uniformed, Federal, and civilian emergency responder and health care provider communities; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly supports accelerated new construction at the University campus immediately upon the completion of the on-going accelerated design to fulfill the urgent need for small classrooms and housing for the USUHS Graduate School of Nursing, the School of Medicine, and the Graduate Education Programs.

Resolution No. 115: Support for the Armed Forces and Their Families
Origin: Wisconsin
Submitted By: National Security Committee
As amended

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces and allied forces are performing their missions with great courage and distinction in carrying out air, land and sea attacks against Iraqi military targets; and

WHEREAS, The ability of the Armed Forces to successfully perform their mission requires the support of their nation, community and families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion commends and expresses the unequivocal support and appreciation of the Legionnaires here assembled, to the members of the United States Armed Forces who are carrying out their missions with excellence, patriotism, and bravery; and to the families of the United States military personnel who are providing support and prayers for their loved ones currently engaged in military operations.

Rejected

Resolution No. 55: Medical Benefits for Congressional Members
Origin: Colorado

Mr. Chairman, that concludes the Report of the General Security Ad Hoc Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: Thank you, Chairman Carder. At this time I would call for the Report of the Conservation of Natural Resources, Chairman Donald T. Clarke.

Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke (SD), Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 109: Domestic Energy Production
Origin: Utah
Submitted By: National Security Committee
As amended

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 50 to 60 percent or more of its oil while its domestic production continues to drop to its lowest levels in over 24 years, thus further compounding our foreign trade deficit at a time when our energy demands continue unabated; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and the continuing conflict in the volatile Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Like our domestic oil and gas resources, nuclear energy is a safe resource where price and supply are not subject to manipulation by foreign countries; and nuclear energy is our second-largest source of electricity in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National

Wildlife Region even though such exploration could have reduced our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urge the Congress and the administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include:

1. **Increasing U.S. petroleum exploration and production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America's reliance on foreign petroleum.**
2. **Building new nuclear energy plants and renovating America's electrical grid.**
3. **Implementing domestic oil and gas exploration.**
4. **Development and implementation of sources to separate and recycle domestic recyclable materials thus reserving our natural resources for future generations.**
5. **That the provisions of the Energy Act of 1992 be fully implemented and carried out as mandated the Act**
6. **That conservation of energy and natural resources be more actively pursued in the American private and public sectors.**

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 108: Modern Plutonium Pit Facility at the Savannah River Nuclear Power Plant
Origin: South Carolina

SUBCOM CHRMN CLARK: Mr. Chairman, that completes the Report of Conservation of Natural Resources.

COM CHRMN TITUS: Now, I will call for the Report on Aerospace, Daniel M. Dellinger, Chairman.

Aerospace Committee
Daniel Dellinger (VA), Chairman

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 116: Support for Investigation of Friendly Fire Incident
Origin: Wisconsin

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 28: Increasing Endstrengths of the United States Air Force
Origin: Montana

SUBCOM CHRMN DELLINGER: Mr. Chairman, that completes the report of the Aerospace Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: I'll call for the Report on Defense Civil Preparedness, Erwin Gus William, Chairman.

Defense Civil Preparedness Committee
Erwin Gus Williams (CT), Chairman

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 15: Continued Support for The American Legion Blood Donor Program
Origin: Massachusetts

SUBCOM CHRMN WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman, that completes the Report of the Defense Civil Preparedness Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: Thank you, Chairman Williams. At this time I will call for the Law and Order Report, Chairman George Wehrli.

Law and Order Committee
George W. Wehrli (FL), Chairman

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 1: Recognition of the Memorial Blue Candlelight Vigil for Fallen Police Officers and Fire Fighters
Origin: Missouri

SUBCOM CHRMN WEHRLI: Mr. Chairman Titus, that completes the Report of the Law and Order Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: I will call for the Report of the Merchant Marine, Charles "Chuck" Moreland, Chairman.

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland (FL), Chairman

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 122: The Merchant Marine Flag
Origin: South Dakota

SUBCOM CHRMN MORELAND: Mr. Chairman, this completes the Report of the Merchant Marine Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: I call for the Report of the Military Affairs, Chairman Lofton from Illinois.

Military Affairs Committee
Clayborn Lofton (IL), Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 44: Age 55 Military Retirement for Reservists
Origin: Virginia
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, The American Reserve and National Guard forces are an integral part of the defense posture of our Country; and

WHEREAS, With reduction in the manpower our Active Component forces, service in the Reserve and National Guard forces is no longer a part-time commitment; and

WHEREAS, There are presently more than 220,000 Reserve/Guard forces on active duty in support of Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, The continued usage of the Reserve and National Guard in support of peacekeeping missions and the war against terrorism demonstrates that members of these components are truly a vital part in our National Defense; and

WHEREAS, Reserve/Guard soldiers who have served at least 20 years and are eligible for retirement must wait until they reach a minimum of sixty years of age to draw their retirement; and

WHEREAS, Congressmen Jim Saxton of New Jersey has introduced legislation to amend Title 10, United States Code, to reduce the age for receipt of military retired pay for non-regular service from 60 to 55; and

WHEREAS, Joann Davis, Virgil Goode, Bob Goodlatte and Tom Davis from Virginia along with over 70 cosponsors have signed on in support of this legislation; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That the American Legion support legislation

which reduces the age requirement from age 60 to 55 in order to receive Reserve retirement pay.

Resolution No. 77: Use of Overseas On Base Facilities By Military Retirees
Origin: Philippines
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, There are retired United States Army forces military personnel residing in countries overseas where on-base US active duty military personnel are assigned; and

WHEREAS, Retired United States armed forces military personnel residing in an overseas country should be authorized use of on-base privileges that active duty military personnel enjoy; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees, for example, should be allowed to send their children to schools on a "space available" basis; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees should be allowed to use Department of Defense Schools and on-base banking facilities as well; and

WHEREAS, Military retirees should also be authorized to use on-base postal services as well; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled In St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That retired United States armed forces military personnel residing in overseas countries be allowed access to all on-base active duty facilities.

Resolution No. 87: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

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 "wavering 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 640,000 total disabled military retirees (rated 0% - 100%) who qualified for military retirement yet, during their military careers, sustained non-career-ending injuries, combat wounds, and other ailments which subsequently may have 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, 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; and

WHEREAS, Congress has authorized a Severely Disabled Compensation (SDSC)

which can be paid to disabled military retirees with 60 percent and higher related disabilities who had received their disability ratings within four years of retirement and whose special compensation pays are capped; and

WHEREAS, Congress in the Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act authorized Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) pays for two groups of disabled military retirees: Those retirees with Purple Hearts who had rated disabilities; and a second group composed of retirees with disabilities rated at 60 percent and higher attributable to combat situations, combat-oriented training, hazardous duty or the instrumentalities of war; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion strongly urges Congressional action to fund the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay for longevity and disability compensation for all disabled retirees; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress modify the Severely Disabled Special Compensation pays by eliminating the four-year requirement, and by amending the Combat-Related Special Compensation by including disabled retired Reservists and Guardsmen and TERA early retirees.

Resolution No. 88: Department of Defense Healthcare for Military Beneficiaries
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee
As amended

WHEREAS, The promise of free health care for life in exchange for 20 or more years of creditable military service was contained in recruiting and retention and was recognized as such by active duty personnel, Reservists and military retirees and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The passage of TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Programs for Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents has essentially fulfilled the promise of lifetime military healthcare; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has had a number of concerns with TRICARE healthcare programs to include, for example, TRICARE business practices and benefit portability need to be improved; claims processing reform is direly needed; and reimbursement rates to providers need to be increased; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion recommends that the following guidelines be incorporated as part of the Department of Defense healthcare package for military retirees, dependents and military survivors:

1. **Administrative barriers to an effective TRICARE system to include raising TRICARE provider reimbursements; program portability between TRICARE regions; reducing delays in claim payments; and increasing electronic claims processing need to be removed. Improve TRICARE enrollment procedures, beneficiary education, decrease administrative burdens, eliminate non-availability requirements and eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements.**
2. **That the TRICARE programs to include the TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy programs which are used by 1.3 million Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents be fully funded annually.**
3. **Restore TRICARE reimbursement policy to pay up to what TRICARE would have paid had there been no other health insurance as was the policy before 1993.**
4. **That dual eligible disabled retirees continue to receive health care from both military treatment facilities and VA medical centers. TRICARE Prime Remote should be included for military retirees, eligible funding members and military survivors.**
5. **That all military beneficiaries be authorized to receive dental and visual care at military treatment facilities.**
6. **That retired Reservists and their dependents be eligible for TRICARE coverage after the age of 55. In accordance with Public Law 105-85, The American Legion urges Congressional oversight of pre-and post-deployment physical and mental screenings and examinations.**
7. **That adequate military medical personnel, to include graduates of the Uniformed**

Services University of Health Sciences and members of the Commissioned Officer Corps of the Public Health Service, should be retained on active duty to provide health care for active duty and retired military personnel and their dependents.

Resolution No. 89: The Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, There are more than ten countries that have or are suspected of developing biological warfare agents; and

WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the anthrax vaccination in 1970; and

WHEREAS, Anthrax is considered to be one of the major biological warfare threats to U.S. Forces because it is lethal, easily produced and weaponized; and

WHEREAS, There are no other means of protection available, at this time, other than the anthrax vaccination from contacting the disease anthrax if encountered; and

WHEREAS, Over 525,000 servicemembers have received at least one anthrax vaccination shot and the Department of Defense's (DoD) Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program (AVIP) had initially planned to vaccinate all 2.4 million active duty and reservists as a part of its Force Health Protection program; and

WHEREAS, Studies on efficacy of the licensed anthrax vaccine and long term health effects are currently being conducted; and

WHEREAS, The sole manufacturer, BioPort Corporation, has had numerous problems with financial insecurity, building violations, and repeated failures to pass FDA inspections; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned problems with the manufacturer and its facility caused a shortage of FDA approved vaccine, necessitating DoD to institute a slowdown of AVIP in July 2000, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that BioPort finally received FDA approval in early 2002, AVIP and BioPort continue to be plagued by controversy and skepticism; and

WHEREAS, Even with recent FDA approval of BioPort, vaccine shortage remains a problem necessitating continued slowdown of AVIP, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas for more than 15 days; and

WHEREAS, Numerous adverse reaction reports have been filed, and some servicemembers are refusing to take the vaccine, thus ending military careers as well as adversely impacting overall morale and an unknown number have seriously questioned the implementation of this program; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and General Accounting Office have noted the passive surveillance reporting that DoD has employed is flawed as a tracking device for reaction rates; and

WHEREAS, The DoD has failed to adequately follow-up on vaccine reaction rates and track pertinent data for entry into individual medical records; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the progress of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program, urge comprehensive congressional oversight and conduct outreach to servicemembers, veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the DoD to seek production of a newer vaccine proven for efficacy, safety and with a shorter inoculation regiment than the current six inoculations, all in accordance with FDA regulations; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend that the Department of Defense expeditiously develop a second manufacturer of anthrax vaccine, and in the quantities necessary, which surpass the funding, credibility and FDA inspection issues which are currently under criticism; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to re-evaluate the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program and maintain individual medical records with the greatest of accuracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide timely medical assistance and health care to those

participants who experience vaccination reactions.

Resolution No. 93: Quality of Life Features
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

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, Over 220,000 Reservists had been activated for homeland security and the war on terrorism and with Reservists performing active duty missions for longer periods of time, their benefits need to be significantly expanded and improved; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment 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 St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund such quality of life features including but not limited to, the following:

1. **Military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers are direly needed. Pay raises must be competitive with the private sector.**
2. **Adequate medical, mental and dental health services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities. The Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services.**
3. **Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components and annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) paid at the same rate and concurrently with other Federal retiree COLAs; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and would undermine morale and readiness.**
4. **Requiring that the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating veterans.**
5. **Fully funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees.**
6. **Amending Public Law 99-145 as to eliminate the automatic age 62 offset of Survivors' Benefits Plan benefits with Social Security benefits and the offset of Survivors' Benefits with DIC benefits, particularly for those survivors who have earned Social Security benefits in their own right. Also, SBP premiums should be paid up after payment for 30 years or until age 70 whichever comes first.**
7. **TRICARE for Life and the Tricare Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors,**

should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans should be paid.

8. **For the active duty military, increasing danger pay and family separation pay, deployment pay, capital gains tax exclusions, tax-free and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea.**
9. **Congressional re-enactment of Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents.**
10. **Adequately protecting the American public and the Armed Forces from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions.**
11. **Urging the Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in Homeland Security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force. Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized at age 55. Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists should be the same as active duty; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills.**
12. **Military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances.**
13. **Whenever a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is conducted, The American Legion will urge that certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families.**

Resolution No. 96: Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee

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 has threatened 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, Military members must have at least 20 years of creditable service before being eligible to receive retired pay, and the spouse of a military member now qualifies for a share of military retired pay immediately upon marriage; 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 St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, 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 as a minimum should be modified as follows:

1. **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 rather than federal law.**
2. **Currently, former military spouses receive payments for life, even when they remarry. This practice should be discontinued prospectively, not retroactively. Lifetime division of retired pay should be allowed only for marriages that lasted 20 or more years. However, if a service marriage lasted for 18 years and retired pay had been shared already for 12 years, only six years of payments would be made.**
3. **Payments made to former military spouses should be based on the pay grade of the military member at the time of divorce, not at the time of retirement.**
4. **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.**
5. **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 reinforced. This would require amending 42 United States Code Section 669 to eliminate the inconsistency between that Code and 10 USC 1408 (USFSPA).**

Resolution No. 99: Repealing The Law That Prohibits Concurrent Receipt
Origin: Texas
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, Last year, the majority of our leaders from Congress led us to believe that they were finally going to rectify a long held discrimination against military retiree veterans to receive both retirement pay and service- connected disability compensation; and

WHEREAS, Since passing a bill to rectify this unjust law has proved to be futile; and

WHEREAS, We need a pro-active approach to repeal the old law that prohibits military retirees from drawing concurrent retired pay and disability compensations; and

WHEREAS, Inasmuch as the US House of Representatives and the US Senate have pledged their support for "concurrent receipt"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges Congress to repeal the unfair law that prohibits military retirees from receiving both retired military pay and disability compensation concurrently.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 56: Concurrent Receipt for Medically Retired Veterans
Origin: Illinois
Resolution No. 127: Overseas Healthcare Active Duty Personnel, Military Retirees and Veterans
Origin: France
Resolution No. 134: Including Operations in Lebanon (1958), Grenada and Panama (1984, 1989) as Recognized Periods of War in Title 38
Origin: New York

Received and Recorded

Resolution no. 92: Military Funeral Honors
Origin: Maryland
Resolution No. 121: The Cold War Service Medal

Origin: South Dakota
Resolution No. 155: The Cold War Medal
Origin: California

Rejected

Resolution No. 50: Purple Heart Ribbons for Next of Kin
Origin: Colorado
Resolution No. 79: The Disabled Veterans Tax
Origin: Georgia
Resolution No. 90: Modifying the Feres Doctrine
Origin: Maryland

SUBCOM CHRMN LOFTON: That completes the Report of the Military Affairs Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: I will call for the Report of Naval Affairs, Gerard W. Cheffer, Chairman.

Naval Affairs Committee
Gerard W. Cheffer (IL), Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 4: Fully Funding the United States Navy and Marine Corps
Origin: Alaska
Submitted By: National Security Committee

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting U.S. power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and

WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to US Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Resolution No. 94: Support the United States Coast Guard In Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted By: National Security Committee
Consolidated with Resolution No. 5 (Alaska)

WHEREAS, By public law the United States Coast Guard is at all times one of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorism attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours and its homeland security missions have doubled; and

WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard are law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction and interception of illegal aliens; environment protection, maritime safety including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and National Security to include port security and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the

U.S. Navy; and

WHEREAS, Each year the Coast Guard saves about $2.5 billion in property, saves 4,000 lives, repaying to the American taxpayer about seven times their annual operating budget for search and rescue. During 1999, the Coast Guard seized drugs worth more than $3.9 billion—five times more than the Coast Guard's annual operating expense budget for drug interdiction. This kept 28,872 pounds of marijuana and a record-level 111,689 pounds—506 million doses—of cocaine from reaching our nation's streets and school yards; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, these homeland security missions will continue during the War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be attracted and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserves and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard has proposed an "Integrated Deepwater System" to modernize and recapitalize its deepwater assets that was strongly endorsed by the President's Interagency Task Force on Coast Guard roles and missions as a "near-term national priority." The Deepwater Program compromises the acquisition of integrated surface, air, sensors and communication assets that will allow the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in St. Louis, Missouri, August 26, 27, 28, 2003, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully fund the United States Coast Guard budget so it can achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement, environmental protection, maritime safety and other missions as assigned as well as the funding of its "Deepwater" initiatives; and be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States.

SUBCOM CHRMN CHEFFER: Mr. Chairman, that completes the Report of the Naval Affairs Committee.

COM CHRMN TITUS: 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 Minnesota
Individual Participation - Department of Ohio
Category II - 70,000 to 99,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Wisconsin
Category III - 40,000 to 69,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Georgia
Category IV - 25,000 to 39,999 members
Post and Individual participation - Department of Washington
Category V - 10,000 to 24,999 members
None
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:

Most of the fifty Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A

total of over 13,000 medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2001-2002 are the Departments of Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota and Montana which speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

Commander Conley, this concludes the report of the Convention Committee on National Security. As a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Indiana, I move the adoption of this report.

...*From the floor.* Second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It's been properly moved and second for the adoption. Calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered. The report of the National Security is adopted.

Final Remarks: Ronald F. Conley
National Commander, Pennsylvania

I thank the leadership for the opportunity to serve in this position as National Commander of The American Legion. I hope that as we travel throughout the country, the people have a better feeling about this organization. I hope that you at this convention have a better feeling about this organization. I hope you realize the tremendous responsibility that not just lies with the National Commander of The American Legion, but rests with each and every one of us to make sure that what we do and how we serve is for the good of this country, and the good of men and women who serve this country and continue to serve today.

I don't know which way to go here because I know I'm going to have a difficult time either way. So, I think I'll continue my thanks of some special people. The first person I want to thank, and will ask him to join me here, is Dr. Sebastianelli. I worked with him in Pennsylvania for so many years. He has contributed most of his life to serving The American Legion, particularly the national organization. I would ask you to join me in recognizing Dr. Elmo Sebastianelli.

Another person travels with me. I think we do it because we make a pretty good set of bookends. He's about the same size I am and I use to be as skinny as he until I became the National Commander. Then I gained all this extra weight. I'd like to recognize John Mann.

I went over to the National Headquarters office this morning. There's four women who work over there. A lot of you don't necessarily get a chance to connect to them because most of the time they're behind the scenes. But I'll tell you what a first class group of ladies who work in the executive office to The American Legion. They're not here right now. One of the things I've asked throughout the year is that many times we forget to thank the employees because we expect them to do what they do. But they still deserve our thanks. I'd like to publicly acknowledge them: Nancy [Vaughn], Linda [Demaree], Mary [Rooney] and Peggy [Judd].

When I took over as National Commander, I asked that as I visited each state to make sure that we got into at least one VA hospital. Not realizing how this was going to develop— there wasn't no master plan— we knew there was a problem. But there's a lot of people out there that made me look good and they did an excellent job for this organization. That's the people who work in the Public Relations area; the people who work in the Legislative area; the people who work in the Magazine area and, of course, the people who work in VA and R. That's not to take away from the other employees who are also truly dedicated. But those four areas definitely helped pull this sad story about the veterans of this nation together.

You have an opportunity when you serve, as all past national commanders can attest to, and those coming in will get to know, that you have the top leadership of this organization who helps give you the right guidance, gives you moral support and they become your friends. I would like to recognize them: Dan Wheeler, Ron Brooks and John Sommers. And most of all I want to recognize Ruth and Bob Spanogle. I mentioned John Sommer and sometimes in Washington they get a disconnect because they're in Washington and everybody relates to Indianapolis. But you have two secretaries there that are truly wonderful people and that is Denise [Boyd] and Wanda [Tallakson]. If you get an opportunity to go to Washington, you need to stop in and give them thanks, also.

I'm going to save my family for last because I think I have to tell you this story one

more time. If you were here in the hall yesterday or this morning, you saw the video that played. The music kind of gets you beating, gets your foot stomping, maybe your fingers snapping. You looked at the pictures of what they represented: the 9/11, the Pentagon, the World Trade Center, people in New York, people in Washington, D.C. And then you looked at the troops as they try to fight a war on terrorism, fight this war in Iraq. You look at that and being a former military person, if you're a couple of years younger, a few pounds lighter, you were ready to stand here at the beginning of this convention and raise your hand to do it again, to serve your country, to fight terrorism, to fight dictators, to give people a chance at life. And that's what is so great about The American Legion because its principles definitely are defined in serving other people.

I listened to the news last night on Channel 5. They did a one-on-one interview with Secretary Principi and my stomach again turns. We try to put on a great face that there is really not a tragedy in this country dealing with the veterans of this nation. But there is, there truly is.

They talked about the increase in the budget. Most of the reporters that I've talked to don't understand it. You have to explain it to them. Well, he's not going to explain it to them because he wants this rosy picture out there. Forty-six billion to $66 billion over the last several years is supposed to be a rosy picture. It's not rosy, and that's not real money. That's why we're wanting mandatory funding. They went to the VA hospital in that series and he interviewed some veterans. They mentioned that the veterans told them how they were waiting in line and waiting months before they could see a doctor.

But they didn't want to criticize the VA on TV. A lot of veterans get a disconnect. They're afraid that the VA might rebel against them if they say something. Unless you become a high profile veteran and the Deputy Secretary is put on the spot and he's going make sure to say that the veteran is going to get that care. He's going to make sure to say that Sgt. Turner is going to be taken care of in a VA. Well, when he goes out of office as the secretary, is he still going to maintain that commitment?

The American Legion does maintain that commitment. It's not a one year or four year commitment. For this organization, it is a lifetime commitment.

They also said in that piece that VA health care is free. Bull! Total bull. The veterans of this nation are going to pay $2.1 billion for health care this year and that's part of the budget that the secretary proposed to the Congress of the United States. We're not against veterans paying who can afford to pay. You listened to Congressman Rodriguez yesterday. We talked about the high income $27,000.00. I want to know about the people in the beltway, whether they in Congress, or if they work for the VA, if they all want to live on $27,000.00 a year. I don't think so.

You have a responsibility. Hopefully this convention has energized you. Hopefully you're going to go back to your local area— and you have to— for the good of this country. You have to get on the Congress of the United States, both the Senate and your Congressman, to put money back in VA health care. It's a real tragedy you will see as you travel around and to what happens to the veterans of this nation. You passed a resolution at this convention that it's now mandated that we continue to monitor and make a yearly report about the health care of the veterans of this nation.

It was a tremendous experience this year, one that I will never forget. In that video that you saw, the second song says "I won't back down." That was the song, and they are the words I commit to you. You need to make that same commitment, "I Will Not Back Down." And this organization will not back down from its core values of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, Americanism, Children and Youth, and National Security.

Most of my family that was here went home. I had one daughter who wasn't able to make it. As we served this year, we had a tragedy in our family where we lost one of our granddaughters. She was 21. That was a difficult time because I saw so many kids who came to the funeral, lives that she touched. Then I had to travel up to Massachusetts— I thought about the young men and women who are fighting the war in Iraq and how many lives they've touched. We have a responsibility to protect them.— That tragedy had a ripple effect because our other daughter was pregnant. She got so emotional about losing her niece that she ended up with a miscarriage. So it was a difficult time. But as everybody has difficulties in their lives, they stand up and face them. And we did that. And we continue to do that. My family's greatly appreciative of everything that all of you have done for us and they, too,

need to be acknowledged because they've truly supported not only me this year, but the 37 years I've dedicated my life to The American Legion.

Representing the children, I'd like to have my oldest daughter Christina and her husband Brian and the twins and little Brian come up and represent all our five children and our nine grandchildren. The next person has stood beside me for 40 years, and out of our 40 years, 37 of them have been in The American Legion. She's supported when we started a new post up and put it in our home, my wife Barbara. Sitting back there is my sister-in-law, Patty and Barbara's sister.

I did better than I thought I was going to do because this is a very emotional and difficult time. Like I said, we're not going to back down. We're going to continue to be actively involved. We're going to have a demonstration to save the VA hospital, hopefully in Pittsburgh on September 6th. We're going to have at least 500 people there. That we know of right now. I'm going to try to salvage the hospital in Butler. We're going to continue to work to try to get the country to realize that we need to maintain that commitment to the veterans of this nation.

I now call upon the National Vice Commanders for their remarks.

Remarks

NATL VICE COMDR BOURNIVAL: Commander Conley, please join us at the podium. I believe I speak for all your Vice Commanders when I say, it is a great pride and honor that we had the opportunity to serve as National Vice Commanders this year. Under your leadership, I truly believe that we made a difference in the lives of our veterans, our communities and our nation. On behalf of your Vice Commanders, please accept this gift as a token of appreciation for all you do for our veterans. It is a Past Commander's ring with year and office on one side, the state and his Post 290 on the other. It's very nice.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I really didn't want a gift. I want to thank you not just for the gift. I threatened Bob Spanogle. I wasn't going to call on them because I didn't want them to do this. I truly appreciate this and as my word I'm going to always remember the five of them. I'm so proud how they served this organization. I think that you should join me and give them a standing round of applause.

I call on the National Adjutant Robert Spanogle.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: I'd like to enter into the record, correspondence received by the National Convention addressed to you.

Correspondence from Senator Tom Daschle, U.S. Senate

As you know the United States Senate recently expressed its appreciation to Korean War veterans by passing Senate Concurrent Resolution 62. The resolution which I introduced with Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, Senator Carl Levin of Michigan was passed in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Korean armistice signed July 27, 1953. I recognize the outstanding efforts of The American Legion to honor our nation's veterans, and in appreciation of your efforts have enclosed a copy of the resolution. Thank you for all your good work. I look forward to continuing to work with you and my colleagues in Congress to ensure that all our nation's veterans receive the recognition and the benefits they deserve. We wouldn't be here today if not for them. With best wishes, I am Tom Daschle, The United States Senate.

That will be entered into the record.

I have the opportunity and the great privilege to serve with the leaders of this great organization. And I admire that in your term of office, that you have been the voice of those who have no voice. With your homeless program that you started in Pennsylvania and sticking up and being the voice for those with dementia and those with Alzheimer's. And you've always had the vision and the understanding that when a veteran is hurting, his or her family is hurting. You're also a student of American Legion history and you patterned your "I'm Not A Number" after Past National Commander Galbraith of Ohio in 1922 and 1923. But really it's all about principles that you've taught us so well. It's about integrity and you did not fail those with whom you served and you will not fail those still serving.

To you and Barb and the family, God bless you all. You are indeed a comrade to all of us in The American Legion Family and you will be with us, I'm sure, in the battles and challenge that face us in the future. We will admire your counsel.

I'd like to have Dan Wheeler and John Sommer join me. Ron Brooks, our Executive Director of our Marketing Services, group underwent some surgery and could not be with us at this convention. But we know in that battle it's going to be a battle of speeches and words so we'd like to present you with a little gift. It's a laptop computer and it's fully loaded with all the software. I'm sure that you'll make great use of it in saving that Butler hospital in Pennsylvania and the Highland Drive Hospital.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I don't know what to say? Truly we've become great friends. I'll always appreciate our staff and particular Bob and Dan and John Sommer, Ron Brooks. Thank you very much for your dedication, your service and your commitment.

I'd like to now turn the gavel over to National Vice Commander Bournival. Please take the gavel and preside over the next order of business.

Presentation of Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John P. 'Jake' Comer, Past National Commander (Plaque)
John H. Geiger, Past National Commander (Colors)

NATL VICE COMDR BOURNIVAL: I am honored to preside over the next order of business during the 85th National Convention. This is the time when we present to our National Commander Ron F. Conley of Pennsylvania, a plague and the colors of his year in office. I now call on Past National Commander John P. 'Jake' Comer to present the plague to our outgoing National Commander.

PNC COMER: This singular honor given to me this day in presenting the plaque to my friend and our Commander, Ron Conley, is very special. 1987-88, I was privileged to have Ron as one of my Department Commanders from Pennsylvania. I received a plaque as he is receiving today. It hangs in my den very proudly. I read the words on that plaque often and I know Ron will do the same. And Barbara will do the same when she dusts it. Ron, this plaque represents one year of service to an organization that has never given up on America and certainly your theme throughout this year, you have never given up on our veterans of this nation and we are all proud of you.

The words on this plaque have traveled with you throughout the length and breath of this nation and world. It so meaningful how you have represented us. We are all proud with emotion that here we are, one year later, returning to another convention city and knowing that our friend and our commander has done an outstanding job, one that will go down in history as one of the greatest. So, we thank you for the words that you will be receiving and all that you have done. You represent the words that I use in so many of my speeches, "That when we hear, we forget. And when we see, we remember. It's when we do, we understand." God bless you. God bless Barbara, your family and to your great Department for giving you to us for an outstanding year.

...Standing applause.

The words on this plaque: "National Commander Ronald F. Conley elected by National Convention to serve the high office of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 2002-2003, in appreciation of his dedicated leadership, in recognition of his devoted service to God and country and in token of the high esteem of his fellow Legionnaires, this citation is presented to him by authority of the National Executive Committee, given on the 28th day of August, 2003, before the delegates assembled at the 85th National Convention, St. Louis, Missouri."

NATL VICE COMDR BOURNIVAL: At this time, I call on Past National Commander John H. Geiger of Illinois to present the colors.

PNC GEIGER: When we were here 50 years ago at a National Convention, and in 1919, this is where the Legion started in the city of St. Louis. So we're here together again in National Convention and one of our responsibilities as delegates is to honor our retiring officers who have served us. Jake Comer has made some great remarks as he always does, presented the plaque which will be permanently displayed in the Commander's family home or in his office. We have another symbol that we'd like to present now. So, would the

delegates of this convention please rise and join me in presenting his official set of National Colors to our retiring National Commander?

Color Guard, present the National Commander's Colors to this Station. Hand salute.

National Commander, Ronald F. Conley, we're approaching the final hours of your year of dedicated service to The American Legion. One year ago as a candidate you offered us your skills and the courage gained in your experiences as a local and state leader. Now you've earned our commendations and thanks for skillfully and energetically carrying The American Legions campaign to preserve and protect our nation's war veterans and their families in every corner of our country and in Washington. Your supportive family, the loyal Legionnaires of Pennsylvania and each of your officers who have served with you stand proudly today to honor you for your substantial contributions.

Commander Ron, last year in Charlotte this National Colors the honored Flag of the United States and the Crimson Banner of the National Commander were presented to you in trust that they would be respected and protected. Your personal commitment and accomplishments have truly demonstrated that our trust in you has been faithfully justified.

On behalf of every member of The American Legion and of the American Legion Auxiliary, it is my honor to present to you National Commander Ronald F. Conley your own National Colors to be proudly displayed in your home or office as a testimony of our love and respect for you and Barbara. Congratulations.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: That's probably the greatest gift that you receive as the National Commander, the Colors not only of our country but of our organization. I thank the Delegation and the national organization. I want to thank John Geiger and Jake Corner in the presentation of the plaque but most of all, the presentation of the colors of our country. That's what you live and you die for.

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers
National Commander

NATL COMDR CONLEY: We have now come to a special order of business, the election of the National Officers. I call on National Judge Advocate, Phil Onderdonk of Maryland, will read the rules of convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NJA ONDERDONK: 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 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 from 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 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 a majority vote shall be declared elected and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified; except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22. The convention will nominate and elect a National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Rule 23. At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each

Department Delegation Chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

That completes the reading of rules pertaining to the rules of election of National Officers.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: As Chairman of this Convention, I now appoint as Judge of Election, Kit Watson, Adjutant Department of Pennsylvania and as Tellers of the election, Michael Palmquest, Adjutant, Department of Texas; Patrick Lafferty, Adjutant, Department of Michigan; Charles "Pat" Smith, Adjutant, Department of Colorado.

Will the Judge and the Tellers of the election please come forward, take your seats. National Adjutant Robert Spanogle will now call the roll of the Departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American Legion.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Alabama.

DEPT COMDR PAUL LOCKE (AL): Alabama is proud this year, we have 615 young men went to Boys State. Two of those went on to be President and Vice President of Boys Nation. I had a long speech, but for some reason Texas wants me to yield, so at this time I'll yield to the Department of Texas.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Alabama yields to Texas.

MR. BLAKE HICKS, (TX): Request permission, for a paid-up-for-life member from American Legion Post 75, Mineral Wells, Texas. The Honorable Governor of the state of Texas, Rick Perry, approach the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Granted. Governor of Texas is now recognized.

...Applause.

GOVERNOR PERRY: It is a great honor to be with you today, as it is the rest of you patriots, supporters of America. As the Governor of the great State of Texas, as a lifetime member of American Legion Post 75, it is a distinct honor to stand before you today in front of the membership of one of the greatest organizations in America.

But it is a special honor to stand before you today to nominate for the position of National Commander, a friend of more than 30 years, a man of character, a dedicated public servant, a veteran of the United States Army, a patriot's patriot, Mr. John Brieden.

...Applause is heard during this and the many of the following nominating speeches.

My friendship with John goes back over 30 years, back to the days that we were freshman at Texas A&M together. We were both members of a proud organization called the Fighting Texas Aggie Core Cadets. Although John was a member of the Fighting Texas Aggie Band, I didn't hold that against him and we became very close, very tight friends.

We became roommates the summer of 1969, selling Bible books about 40 miles down the road south of here in a small Missouri town. If we thought being freshman in the Core Cadets of Texas A&M was tough, we really found out what was tough living in an un-air conditioned second floor room about 500 yards from the Mississippi river in Festus, Missouri.

Throughout the years, John and I have remained very close, even when the United States Air Force took me halfway around the world and the Army took him in another direction. John's service speaks for itself. During his five years of active duty he lived up to the immortal words of General Douglas MacArthur, duty, honor, country. He earned the Soldiers Medal of Heroism, and he was hand-picked to serve in the first Ranger Battalion since World War II, following in the footsteps of another very famous Texan, General James Earl Rudder.

John has left his imprint in many ways on his community and on the State of Texas, as an insurance agent taking care of neighbors' needs; as a Sunday school teacher for 11 years; as a member of many civic groups like the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, the American Cancer Society just to name a few of those affiliations. And, of course, he has been a leader for so many years in our organization, The American Legion, as a two term Commander of the Buddy Wright Post 48, the Commander of the 10th District in Texas, the Commander of the Third Division and most recently the Commander of the Department of Texas.

The long list of civic organizations that have benefitted from John's service only tell a part of the story, though. I can think of no greater family man, no greater friend than John Brieden. To him words like duty, honor and country are not just words, they are a way of

life. John Brieden lives his life as if it may be the last day that the good Lord allows him to live on this earth. It may be the last opportunity to make a difference to his fellow man. His spirit is unflappable. His values unshakeable. He's the right individual to lead a proud organization like The American Legion.

I couldn't think of an individual more prepared by life's experiences than John Brieden to do this important job. He knows the American Legion is more than a group of us old soldiers who tell stories about years past. It's a special group of individuals that help shape the future of our country. It's seeing John Brieden in Austin, Texas every summer making a difference in young men's lives as he has worked with Boys State for so many years.

Whenever America considers military action, we need the voice of prospective provided by those who have served before, those who know the price paid for freedom because they've paid it. John Brieden will be an unwavering voice for this heroic organization. He will stand resolute for the interest and the rights of veterans and of current military personnel.

As we say in Texas, in John there ain't no quit. There is no hesitation. He does what is right. He does what is honorable and he does it without equivocation. He lives the words of another great Texas hero, a man who was the President of the Republic of Texas, a Governor of our great state, a Senator from Texas, Sam Houston, who lived by the motto do right and risk the consequences.

So it's my great honor to come here today, all the way from Austin, Texas, to nominate as the next National Commander of The American Legion a soldier, a statesman, a knightly gentleman and my great friend, Mr. John Brieden.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Alaska.

DELEGATION CHRMN JIM VAN HORN: As the Delegate Chairman for the Department of Alaska, the Department of Alaska yields to the Department of Massachusetts for the purpose of a second.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Massachusetts.

DELEGATION CHRMN JAMES ARMY: I am delegation Chairman of the Department of Massachusetts, the Great Bay State where it all began in home of Past National Commander John P 'Jake' Comer, we ask that the Chair recognize Delegate Paul A. Morin for the purpose of a second.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Chair recognizes Paul Morin.

DELEGATION CHRMN PAUL MORIN: It is an honor and a privilege to stand before this distinguished body today and second the nomination of John Brieden as our next National Commander.

John has a long history of selfless dedication to our great organization. John began his American Legion service after his discharge from the United States Army in April of 1977. As a member of Post 48 in Texas, John held every Post office, and was elected Post Commander in 1983 and again in 1988. John also served as District Commander in 1992, and Department Commander 1995.

John's involvement in The American Legion is a family endeavor. His wife, Terri, is always by his side as he works to advance the interest of The American Legion. John is well versed on the programs of The American Legion. He knows through experience the importance of our national programs. He has worked in his Post, his District, Department on such programs as Boys State, Americanism, American Legion Baseball, Oratorical Contests and the Legislative Council. John also started a Color Guard at his own Post.

John's service at the national level reflects his ability to lead our great organization. He has served on the POW/MIA, Merchant Marine, Americanism, National Security Commission. He has chaired the Foreign Relations Commission, the Economic Commission, the Legislative Commission. John also has proven himself as a member of the Advisory Committee to the National Commander.

I had the privilege of serving with John as his Employment Chairman when he was Chairman of the Economics Commission, and as his Vice Chairman when he served as Chairman of the Legislative Commission. After serving with John, I can confidently state that he is a good listener, a firm decision maker and a strong and fair Leader. The best interest in the future of our great organization are the defining factors in John's decision. John's passion for legislation and deep understanding of the political process will enable The American Legion to continue its proud history of affecting positive change for America's

veterans.

John is not one to shy away from an opportunity to discuss the importance of veterans issues with a member of Congress and advance the goals of The American Legion. His selfless dedication to improving the lives of America's veterans is indeed a qualifier for his nomination as National Commander. As National Commander, John will carry on the great tradition of all our Past National Commanders as a true advocate and do what is right for American's veterans.

I proudly second the nomination of John Brieden as National Commander.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Arizona.

DELEGATION CHRMN D.M. 'JOE' AGUILAR: Arizona, the proud state of Arizona, the Grand Canyon state, home of the world champion Arizona Diamondbacks and the unwilling home of the same football team, the St. Louis Cardinals, which we would like to send back and the home of the University of Arizona Wildcats and Arizona State Sun Devils, yields to Illinois for a second.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Illinois.

DELEGATION CHRMN ROGER BENNETT: As duly elected delegate from Illinois, and the Delegation Chairman, from the land of Lincoln, I'd like to ask the Chair to please recognize Marty Conatser, Past Department Commander, presently Chairman of the Membership and Post Activities for purpose of a seconding speech.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Chair recognizes Marty Conaster.

PDC MARTY CONATSER: I rise to second the nomination of John Brieden for the high office of National Commander for the membership year of 2003-2004.

You've heard many of the accomplishments made during a lifetime of service, service to his country, service to his community and service to his fellow man. John displays a passion, a passion that has driven him to many accomplishments talked about earlier, the passion, the commitment that it takes to be Ranger Officer. Airborne School takes that same commitment. John truly desired to be the best he could be.

John talks about being able to make a difference. I believe he can. And I believe he has. As a Sunday School teacher, a father, a counselor at Boys State and Boys Nation and a successful businessman, he has the ability to touch, to lead and motivate others. He is the man who always steps forward to tackle the hard jobs. A busy man that didn't know how to say no, he always took on the extra jobs, but always got them done. He is a man that never looked for awards, but has received many, one being Man of the Year named by the Central Texas Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors.

The quality of this man is clear. His commitment clearly shows that special passion surely show the passion for The American Legion and the entire American Legion family. It is a passion that has led John to this point in time, the time to step forward and lead this great organization.

It is with great pride that I second the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Arkansas.

DELEGATION CHRMN CLAUDE CARPENTER: As the Chairman of the Delegation from Arkansas, and we are happy to second the nomination of the next Commander of The American Legion for John Brieden of our favorite Tennessee home.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: California.

DELEGATE HACKNEY: James Hackney, a Delegate from the great state of California, passes.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Colorado. *The National Adjutant will continue to call upon each Department delegation in turn.*

DEPT COMDR DOUG WINTER: I'm Doug Winter, Department Commander and duly elected Delegate from the great state of Colorado to this 85th National Convention. On behalf of the great state of Colorado, it is truly a Rocky Mountain High and my personal honor and privilege to second the nomination of a great Legionnaire, Mr. John Brieden, for the high office of National Commander of our American Legion.

DELEGATE BOYD SAXTON: From the great Nutmeg State of Connecticut, we proudly seconds the nomination for John Brieden of the high office of National Commander.

DELEGATE TOM BURNS: A delegate for the state of Delaware, the First State, we proudly second the nomination for John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN DENNIS KURRE: As the designated Chair of the Delegation of the District of Columbia, we are pleased and proud to second the nomination of Mr. John Brieden for the next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN CLARENCE HILL: Duly elected and registered Delegate and Delegation Chairman from the Sunshine State, having just completed our third consecutive All Time High, are proud to second the nomination of John Brieden.

DEPT COMDR JOHN MILLER: The Commander of the Department of France, the original birth place of The American Legion, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATE RAY HENDRIX: Registered Delegate to this Convention proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATE HARRY HURT: Delegate from the Department of Hawaii proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden from Texas.

DELEGATE CHUCK PRICE: Elected Delegate to this Convention from Idaho proud home of Past National Commander Al Lance. Idaho, who if you flattened her majestic mountains down, would be the largest land mass state in the union, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for the office of National Commander.

MR. ROGER BAKER: Department of Indiana proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN DAVE KLINGENSMITH: Department of Iowa seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN DAMON CHRISTENSEN: Kansas seconds the nomination.

DELEGATE RANDALL COFFMAN: Delegate from the great Department of Kentucky proudly seconds the nomination of our next National Commander, John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN HAROLD BURSON: Delegation Chairman of the great state of Louisiana, home of Past National Commander Bill Detweiler, home of the gumbo, jambalaya, swamps, bayous, alligators, lots of snakes and the Louisiana Fighting Tigers, proudly seconds the endorsement of National Commander, John Brieden. Commander, I also have my Texas tie on today.

DELEGATE ROBERT OWEN: Delegate to this 85th National Convention of The American Legion proudly endorses the second of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN ALBERT WHITE: Delegate Chairman from Maryland, proudly endorses John Brieden for the next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN MARK A. WALKER: Mexico with five Latin American countries proudly seconds John Brieden as the next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN JERRY LYNCH: Delegation Chairman, Department of Michigan, home of our National Adjutant Robert Spanogle, home of our future candidate for National Commander, Thomas P. Cadmus, proudly seconds the nomination for John "you will make a difference" Brieden.

PDC DON HAYDEN: Immediate Past Commander, great state of Minnesota. Home of the National Oratorical Winner and the home of our Legion Baseball Winner, and the home of our Past National Commander, Dan Ludwig, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

NECman CHARLES LANGLEY: NEC from Mississippi proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden from the state of Texas.

PDC: CLARK POINTER: Immediate Past Commander of the Department of Missouri, home of the first caucus held in the United States in 1919, home of Harry S. Truman, President, "The buck stops here", the first American Legionnaire President, also the home of Joe Frank, Past National Commander, and the host of the 85th National Convention here in St. Louis, proudly seconds John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN CARL NORDBERG: Delegation Chairman from Montana, the Big Ski Country, home of the headwaters of the great Missouri River, proudly seconds the nomination for John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN RICHARD BAXTER: Delegation Chairman from the Department of Nebraska, proudly seconds the nomination for John Brieden.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Nevada seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN BOB WYMAN: Delegation Chairman for the state of New

Hampshire with a hundred percent Department, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATE LEO MCKERNAN: Delegation from the great state of New Jersey, The Garden State, and the home state of Chris Smith, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, we proudly second the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN VIRGIL BROWN: Delegation Chairman for the great state of New Mexico, we also second the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN WONG: Delegation Chairman of the great state of New York. The Empire State proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN COLEY HUNSUCKER: As Delegation Chairman for the state of North Carolina, we proudly support the nomination of John Brieden to be our next National Commander.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: North Dakota is proud to second the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN GLENN HICKMAN: As Delegation Chairman for the great state of Ohio. The home state of the No. 1 national football champions, Buckeyes, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN DONALD SCHULENBERG: Oklahoma proudly endorses John Brieden, number two in football: Oklahoma's number one.

DELEGATION CHRMN TOBY POTTER: As Delegate Chairman from the great state of Oregon, we're proud and pleased to endorse the candidacy of John Brieden for National Commander.

DEPT COMDR BOB SHALALA: I'm the Department Commander of the great state of Pennsylvania, the largest department within our great organization and the chairman delegate. We humbly and certainly with high great gratitude to our Past National Commander Ron Conley who has inspired us with his vision of caring and sharing, taught us that the hand believes what we all do; the mind has conceived the inspiration and the help to serve all our veterans, and that the heart believes in what he has taught us to do for all our veterans, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN BILL KELLY: As Delegation Chairman for the Philippines, I proudly second the nomination of John Brieden for the high office of National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN JUSTO PEREZ: The whole Delegation from Puerto Rico endorses John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN PAUL THERRIEN: As Delegation Chairman for the Ocean State, home of the Rhode Island Red, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN JOHN PALMER: Delegation Chairman from the great state of South Carolina, the home of the late E. Roy Stone, Past National Commander, and Senator Strom Thurman, seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DEPT COMDR WAYNE VETTER: Department Commander of South Dakota, birthplace of American Legion Baseball and the home of National Vice Commander Don Mason, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN BUCK BARRETT: As Chairman of the Department of Tennessee, home of the 86th Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, Grand Old Opry, we proudly endorses John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN DAVE MATERN: Current Department Commander and this year's Delegate Chairman. Home of the 2002 Winter Olympics and host for the upcoming 2006 National Convention, strongly supports and seconds John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN RODNEY SHERMAN: As duly elected Chairman for National Convention for the state of Vermont where the falls are beautiful and the winters are cold and the syrup flows, seconds the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATE GEORGE LUSSIER: I'm duly authorized and elected Delegate from the Department of Virginia, home of Past National Commander Butch Miller. Virginia looks forward to supporting our new Commander with another hundred percent year, and proudly seconds the nomination of Mr. John Brieden for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN MIKE MONTANEY: As Delegation Chairman, Department

of Washington, the Evergreen State and the Apple capitol of the world, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden as National Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATE FRED BUCHANAN: As duly elected Delegate from West Virginia, the proud Mountain State, home of Past National Commander Miles Epling, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden.

DELEGATION CHRMN DAVID KORTH: I'm delegation Chairman from Wisconsin. Home of Past National Commander Keith Kreul. We are excited to second the nomination of John Brieden for National Commander.

DEPT COMDR BARBARA EASTRIDGE: Delegate and incoming Commander of the Department of Wyoming. Wyoming, the state of high altitudes, low multitudes, and great attitudes, proudly seconds the nomination of John Brieden for our National Commander.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, that completes the Roll Call.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Microphone three, please.

DELEGATE RUST: Julie Rust from the Department of Wyoming. In view of the fact that there is but one candidate for National Commander, I move 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 John Brieden be elected National Commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, as a duly elected delegate, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and that the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for National Vice Commanders.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: There is a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of National Commander and the nomination and election of National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of National Vice Commanders. The motion is non-debatable, and requires a two-thirds vote. Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded from the floor.

All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? They ayes have it and so ordered.

Microphone one.

DELEGATE TERESA DAVIS: Teresa Davis, duly elected Delegate from Minnesota. Mr. Commander, I move that the nominations for the office for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded from the floor.

The motion to close nominations is a nondebatable motion. It requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered.

Microphone two.

Election of the National Commander of The American Legion
St. Louis, Missouri
August 28, 2003

DELEGATION CHAIRMAN CLARENCE HILL, Florida: I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that John A. Brieden be elected National Commander by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...The motion was seconded from the floor.

There's a motion before us that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that John Brieden, III be elected National Commander by acclamation.

All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of John Brieden, III as the National Commander of The American Legion.

...Applause.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: I declare John Brieden, III elected National Commander of The American Legion. Will the Sergeant-at-Arms assist the new

National Commander of The American Legion to the platform? He's going to be escorted by Del Fuhrman, Kenneth Mueller, John Morris, Raymond Wildman and Tom Tvrdik.

...Standing applause.

The Chair now recognizes Past National Commander Joe Matthews of Texas, for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the new National Commander of The American Legion, John Brieden, III.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER MATTHEWS: As I stand here today to give the oath of office to our 2003-2004 National Commander, my mind goes back eight years to the election of National Commander Dan Ludwig. As Past National Commander, Dan Foley was nominating him and I thought, how proud Dan must be to realize that he was giving our Legion an outstanding Legionnaire to lead us in the 1995-96 year.

Now I have the same sense of pride as I give the oath of office to the man we have chosen to lead us in the ensuring year. This is a historic and momentous moment in the life of my fellow Texan, John A. Brieden, III.

Congratulations to you, John, to your loving family, and to all of those proud members of the Texas American Legion family who have worked so long and hard on your behalf to make this memorable occasion a reality.

Your proven leadership skills, your dedication and your enthusiasm must now be focused on promoting the aims and purposes of The American Legion as mandated by this Convention and other Conventions that have gone before and by future events that may impact our mission of service to America and to its veterans. You will be assisted in this endeavor by a superb National Staff and by every member of The American Legion Family.

National Commander John Brieden, if you are ready to assume this high office, please step forward. Raise you right hand and repeat after me, giving your name.

...National Commander-elect John A. Brieden, III repeated the Oath of Office following the lead of Past National Commander Matthews.

Congratulations, John, have a wonderful year.

...Standing applause.

NATIONAL COMMANDER CONLEY: The 2003-2004 National Commander of The American Legion, John A. Brieden, III.

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
John A. Brieden, III, Texas

What an honor! I want you to know that I sat in the back and as the governor gave the nominating speech, I wiped tears. And as the band struck up the Aggie War Hymn and marched through on the demonstration, I wiped tears. And I'm going to try to maintain my composure for a few moments here. I want to start with a few thank-you's.

The Governor of Texas made a special trip during a busy time with special sessions to be with me as his friend, and I want to thank my friend Rick Perry. Governor, thank you.

And to Paul Morin and Marty Conatser for the seconds, thank you very much. We've served together with both of them, and I thank you for your friendship and the seconds. I especially want to thank the members of the Department of Texas. Something of the magnitude as a candidacy of National Commander cannot happen without lots of support, and the support from the Texans has been more than I ever imagined and I am humbled, and I am grateful. I especially want to name two people, Del Fuhrman, the campaign manager and Kenneth Miller, the campaign treasurer who put in many, many hours and lots of time that they really didn't have to spend on the campaign, and I thank them very much.

I would be remiss if I did not thank many mentors that have helped me over the years. From my Post here today is John Richter, a past NEC, Past Department Commander, and Elgin Clausmeyer, a Past Post Commander, who have helped me

immensely. And there are many others, particularly those who have gone on to their reward.

From the Department of Texas is Joe Matthews, here a moment ago, to swear me in. He is probably the most outstanding person I have ever met in my entire life. Patsy Palmquist, a Past Department Commander, had surgery a couple of weeks ago and is home recuperating. I wish she were here. And I wish especially that Harvey Holcomb and Jim Limley could see this.

On the National level, in 1983 I believe, I was a District Sergeant-at-Arms and an escort for a National Vice Commander named Bob Turner who's been a friend and a mentor for years. In 1987, in San Antonio, I was a driver who picked up John Gieger at the airport and drove him to the Convention. I could go on, but I won't do that. There's many mentors on the National level, many friends, and I thank you all.

My wife, Terry, was here a moment ago by my side. I want you to know that you can't do this without support. I know that the other night as we went to bed, she said, "I hope you really want this, because this has really cost us a lot." And she's put up with that and she's supported me, and I thank you.

I have a lot of family members who are here. I want to try to quickly run through an introduction for you. My dad, John Brieden, Jr.; my son, John Brieden, IV—we know him as Artie; daughter Jolene McCubbin and grandson TJ; stepson Mark Dial, his wife Dena; also granddaughter Tracy and her boyfriend Nick; stepson Derek Dial and granddaughter Amber; step-brother Ken Bazat and his wife Judy. Have I missed any family? My sisters, that's terrible. Yes, my sister Judy Helmen; my sister Janice Poole, her husband Lieutenant Colonel Ron Poole who just returned from the Middle East; and their two children Kimberly and 1st Lieutenant John Poole who is now flying C-130s.

I also have part of my office staff. I'm a small business man, State Farm Insurance agent. When I'm off and gone, the people in the office have to do more and pick up the slack. They've done a great job and have been very supportive. Those with me today are Becky Bosse, the office manager who's been with me for more than 22 years; Connie Curlee; and Lorraine Teufel.

At a time like this, your mind is just racing, and it seems like there's just all kinds of things that's flashing into my mind. It reminds me of the end of the mini-series *Lonesome Dove*, where Captain Call, after the great adventures has come back to Lonesome Dove. And he walks the street and he looks and he remembers. There's a point where a newspaper man runs up to him and asks him, "You're Captain Call, aren't you?" And from that point, we see flashes of the mini-series.

That reminds me of The American Legion because we could have flashes of the caucus here in St. Louis in 1919; flashes of those World War I veterans having 20 hour parades at National Convention; those World War I veterans deciding on all the programs of The American Legion; the signing of the GI Bill. I could go on and on with memories. In fact, in that mini-series, Captain Call, after he thinks of the things that's happened, says, "Yep, a heck of a vision." And that can apply with The American Legion. But a vision is not hindsight, it's not something that's happened. A vision is something that is going to happen or can happen in the future. And I want to talk about a vision today.

Our organization a few years ago got together and appointed a 21st Century Committee to look towards the new century of what would this organization do. They charted a course for membership growth and more activity. They charted a course for this organization to be the premier nonprofit service organization in America. And one of the keys to their finding was, they wrote, The American Legion needs to have new Posts; we need to have new Posts wherever there's a high school. Now think about it a moment. McDonald's spends millions of dollars researching where to put a McDonald's. Dave Thomas from Wendy's doesn't spend the money. All he does is locate across the street from a McDonald's.

We know where the population growth is. The growth is where there's a new high school. And our youth programs key on that and we should have a Post supporting those high school and youth programs. That was the vision of the 21st Century Committee.

We've done a good job in a lot of areas but we need to work. I'm excited about the membership drive this year. Yesterday, I received an email and said, as of yesterday, we are 86,000 members ahead of last year, same date.

It's a great start and it's so much more fun to run when you're ahead rather than trying to catch up. But we also need to make sure that we keep our eyes on the fact that we are a nation at war, and we need to be in a wartime mode. I'm talking about the war on terrorism. And unfortunately, our country has a sound-bite mentality. It's easy for them to lose focus and I've watched that the country has begun to lose focus. That's why it's so important that we were the lead organization on the September 11th commemoration last year, and that we will be the lead organization on a second September 11th commemoration this year. Our citizens need to understand what happened on September 11th; be reminded of it so they understand why we're in a war on terrorism.

We need to support our troops. Every man and woman in uniform needs to understand that we're with them and that includes our Blue Star Banner program; that includes our Family Support Network; that includes the fact that we send them off and that includes that we bring them home to a celebration and recognition. We've been the lead organization in all of these things and we need to continue to be the lead organization.

We're also involved in a war on American culture, where courts tell us that the flag can be desecrated in the name of free speech; where the 9th Circuit Court can tell us that the Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional, and a whole section of the country the kids cannot say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag in the mornings. I could go on and on talking about the war on our culture. We've been a lead organization in the fight for the values of America, and we need to continue to be.

We're also in a war with those who would take away or denigrate our veterans' benefits. National Commander Ron Conley has done an outstanding job of documenting the problems and presenting to Congress what needs to be done to correct those problems. And we will continue to follow in getting that enacted and making sure that we're the lead organization on protecting our veterans benefits.

Commander Conley's report indicates that care from the VA is good, if you can access it. The problem is, is there's under-funding in the VA budget. And The American Legion for years has said we need an income stream to assist. Medicare reimbursement will be an income stream that would help the VA, would help veterans and we'll continue to fight that fight.

And as long as VA funding is part of the discretionary budget, where on the whims of politics it can be increased or cut, we'll continue to have problems. What we want is mandatory funding that says here's how many veterans we have, here's what it costs to take care of them, and we're going to allocate that budget to take care of them.

VA is in the midst of their CARES project. Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services is the name. We have to be involved. We are a major stakeholder. We must be involved in this process. The fear, based on what we've seen thus far, is that the folks that are looking at the CARES project, look at it as a way to cut the VA budget. We will not stand for that. The bottom line is that this needs to be a needs-driven process, not a budget-driven process.

And I've read a few things that said yes, but in 2015, here's what the need will be. And my response is, in 2015, budget for 2015. But in 2004, budget for the needs of 2004.

We have a challenge in veterans employment. We've had hundreds of thousands of Reservists and Guardsmen who have been called to active duty, more often and for longer periods of time than in the past. The law says they come home to their job, and we need to make sure that that happens.

And because of these frequent and long deployments, what we're seeing is Guardsmen and Reservists who are called to duty and now draw less pay than before. The wife is still there and the kids are still there, and the car payment is still there and the house payment is still there, and how do they handle it?

We need to make sure during times that they're not deployed, that we take care of the fact that there is a differential in pay. Or there is not a differential in pay, and, in fact, that is covered and they draw the same things so the family will have the same lifestyle

while they're gone and won't have that to worry about in addition to what they're already worrying about on deployment. And those that do come home and seek jobs, we need to make sure there's a veteran's preference in place that acknowledges the sacrifice they've made. They've earned that benefit and they should receive it.

The American Legion was founded after World War I for some of these very things we've talked about on the war on veterans' benefits. We were the lead organization then, we still are, and we will continue to be. I have a vision for The American Legion in the future. Membership growth; continuing to lead on the war on terrorism; the war on veterans' benefits; the war on American culture.

But I also see us doing many other things. This next year the World War II Memorial will be dedicated in Washington, D.C. There are many World War II veterans who haven't lived and will not live to see it. We will have an opportunity to bring that dedication to hometown America. Just like we do a September 11th commemoration, we want to do a World War II Monument memorial commemoration. We want hometown America to recognize the World War II veterans. We want to make sure those who will never get to DC to see that memorial are honored in their hometowns. We want to try to do something good while we're doing that. So we're talking about a Children Miracle Network walk-a-thon fund-raising where we call into a central location. Washington, D.C. is all part of it. You will be getting information. Just like we've been the lead organization of other things, we'll be the lead organization here and get America behind us as we commemorate the World War II Memorial.

Shortly after September 11th, our National Executive Committee met and realized what was going on with the telethons and the fund-raising to help the families of the victims of September 11th. And that's nice. But we knew that the war on terrorism would cause young men and young women to be deployed and would in fact cause some of them to give their life in the cause of freedom.

Unlike the people from September 11th where their families would receive hundreds of thousands, in fact, in some cases, millions of dollars, the families of these young men and women serving in our military would get a pittance, comparatively speaking. The American Legion founded our September 11th Scholarship, which we have changed the name to The American Legacy because some people were confused. They thought that it would be going to victims' families of September 11th. No, it will go to the families of the young men and women who are out there serving and sacrificing. That's going to be a special project this year. We want to raise that because we've got a commitment; the money better be there when the commitment comes due.

2004 will be the 50th Anniversary of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. I can tell you that they have designed a 50th Anniversary logo; they've got 50th Anniversary pins and other things that are designed to help kick off a really big project. I've talked with the new National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, the new Commander of the Sons of The American Legion, and together we will work on a project to really honor the 50th Anniversary of the Child Welfare Foundation and do it in a big way in fund-raising.

I know that in talking with some of the other organizations there was some concern. "Gee, who's going to get credit for this?" You know, we may lose our identity, but let me tell you today that I don't care who gets credit. Ronald Reagan said, "It's amazing what we can do when we don't worry about who gets credit."

I can't name a goal today because I found that we're going to have to go through the proper procedures. We're an organization that is run by resolution, and at the October Meetings there will be a resolution that will come forward and set the goal for the organizations. But I can imagine that it will be somewhere around $2 million dollars. We're going to set the bar high and I know that we can meet that goal.

As I've campaigned, I've traveled across this nation and have been impressed with what Posts are doing in individual communities. You make a difference. We want to continue and expand what our Posts are doing in communities, and we want to train new leaders for the future by getting them involved and in making sure that they have every opportunity. I've been fortunate because a while ago I talked about Jim Limley. He had a leadership college in Texas and I'm a product of that. I've also taken *The American*

Legion Extension Institute, the correspondence course, and I recommend that. If you want to hold office, then you need to be trained.

The American Legion has always been the heart and soul of America. We have always been this organization that says "we're for God and country and we live up to it." And we will continue to be. America needs us today more than ever before and The American Legion will still serve America. Oh, the things that we can do, if we will just grab that vision. Yep, it's a heck of a vision.

I want to close with a story about my dad. A lot of you have heard it as I have traveled across the nation. Dad has never heard it, by the way. He was there, but it was something that was minor and I don't think he paid attention. And I've got to qualify beforehand because there are those who think that what I'm trying to do is be negative about dad, and that's not the case. I'm proud of my dad.

He's a World War II veteran. He dropped out of high school to go to war because his older brothers were there; his brothers-in-laws were there. He felt he needed to be there. He was wounded. He was also a fairly young man and didn't have the points when others were coming home after the war. He had to stay and be part of the occupation force. When Dad came home, they talked about going to school on the GI Bill. He said, "Hey, my life has been on hold; time to get married, raise a family and go to work." And he's been this hard working guy all his life and I'm proud of him.

He has made sure that his kids have had opportunities that he never had. But you see, Dad and I are a little different and he didn't really understand what I do. About 16 years ago, my mother died of cancer and later, Dad started going to dinner with a widow lady in the church. And they got married. In fact, they had a great life going until she had some medical problems.

They lived in a part of Texas that I will describe as the middle of nowhere. It was 50 miles to the nearest doctor. In fact, to a good hospital, it was a hundred miles. And when she had medical problems and had a stroke, he would put her in the car at a 120 miles an hour down the road because you couldn't call an ambulance and just wait for it to come. The second time that happened, her kids and his kids talked it over and said, you know, we've got a problem. And what we decided to do was move them to Brenham, Texas.

Now, Brenham's a small town but we have a doctor and a hospital. But what we did not understand at the time was we were moving them away from all of their friends. And Dad said, "Not a problem. My son's here, he will be by to look in on us everyday." And then I ran for Department Commander of Texas and traveled all over the state, and I lost. And then I ran for Commander again, and traveled all over the state, and won. Boy, did I travel all over the state then.

I remember one particular occasion that we had been on the road visiting VA hospitals and outpatient clinics in Texas, and it was an American Legion Family group that was zig-zagging the state. I was gone for over two weeks, and knew when I got home that Dad would chastise me for being gone and being an uncaring son. And he didn't disappoint me, by the way. *Laughter.* I tried to explain to him what I'd been doing and why I thought it was important. I'll never forget this. He looked at me and said, "Son, you have a problem. And what's worse is, you don't even understand what the problem is." And if you've ever argued with him you'll understand why I chose not to. I stepped back and said, "Okay, Dad, what's the problem?" He looked at me and he said, "Son, your problem is you really think you can make a difference." And I had to smile. I looked at him and said, "You were listening to me after all, weren't you?" *Applause.*

Because I really think I can make a difference. Folks, you can make a difference. In fact, working together we can make one heck of a difference. And that's why I'm proud to be National Commander this year, and I look forward to working with you.

...*Standing applause.*

Election of National Officers

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Microphone four.

DELEGATE WILSON: I'm a duly elected delegate for this Convention from California. Since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that the

nominations of the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this convention.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...Second from the floor.

Calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? Ayes have and so ordered.

We'll now entertain the nominations for the offices of National Vice Commander from the floor. Microphone one, please.

DELEGATION CHRMN DAVE KLINGENSMITH: I'm Delegation Chairman Department of Iowa. I request that you, the Chair recognize Iowa's NECman Dave Rehbein at the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Chair recognizes Dave Rehbein.

NECman DAVE REHBEIN: I'm a Delegate from Iowa to this convention. It is my privilege to place into nomination for the office of National Vice Commander the name of an outstanding Legionnaire from the Department of Iowa.

Richard G. (Dick) Denbow has served The American Legion as a member of Gladbrook, Iowa Post Number 127 for over 30 years. During that time he has served in many leadership positions in his Post, District and Department, including having served as Commander at each level.

Dick's primary service at the District and Department level has been in the area of membership. Under his guidance as Membership Chairman his home District not only achieved the District's membership target, but each of the 72 posts in that District also achieved their target. This unique accomplishment was repeated for three consecutive years under Dick's leadership.

Dick also epitomizes leading by example, since he earned Gold Brigade status during each of those years. Currently, Dick is serving The American Legion as a member of the Department of Iowa's Finance Commission, and as a member of the National Resolutions Assignment Committee, serving this convention. Unofficially, he serves the Department of Iowa as a role model and as a trainer of future leaders. The American Legion is not the only organization to recognize Dick Denbow's leadership talents. He was chosen as President of his church board during a major building project, President of the local School Board and on the Finance Committee during the building of the local community center.

Dick has the ability, the knowledge and, most of all, the dedication to serve in one of the highest offices of The American Legion, that of National Vice Commander. He will gladly shoulder any responsibility and any duty given to him in this next year by our new Commander Brieden.

It is my privilege and my pleasure to nominate Richard G. (Dick) Denbow for the office of National Vice Commander of The American Legion for the coming year.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Recognize microphone four.

DELEGATION CHRMN BAXTER: I am Richard Baxter, Nebraska Delegation Chairman. I request you recognize our National Executive Committeeman Robert Zersen at the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Chair recognizes Robert Zersen.

NECman BOB ZERSEN: I'm National Executive Committeeman from Nebraska and a delegate to this convention. I'm here to place the name of Michael D. Helm in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander in The American Legion.

Mike has served his post, the Jack Hill Post 313 in Lebanon, Nebraska for more than 32 years. His involvement in the district and state level started in 1978, when he was elected the District 9 Commander. His service to our Department has been continuous every since that point. He has served in many committees and held all the elective offices in our Department. During his years as Department Commander 1987-1988, Mike helped found a Department Scholarship Program, which has awarded over $50,000.00 to Nebraska youth seeking higher education.

Mike Helm has served the national organization as both Alternate and National Executive Committeeman. He has served on the Children & Youth Commission as a member and as liaison. He is currently a member of the National Public Relation Commission serving as Vice Chairman.

Mike is a rural mail carrier. He served his community as a member of the city council. He's a cub master in the scouting program and teaches religion to youth at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church.

Mike and his wife, Debbie, have five children that many have watched grow up meeting them at conventions and other Legion functions. They are Aaron Michael, Rebecca Lee, Jacob Alan, Matthew James and Timothy Edward.

My fellow delegates, it is with great pride and pleasure that the entire Nebraska delegation place the name of Michael D. Helm in nomination for National Vice Commander.

DELEGATION CHRMN BOB NEVILLE: I'm Chairman of the Delegation from the Department of New York. I request the Chair recognize Frank Gee for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL VICE COMDR BOURNIVAL: At mike number four, the Chair recognizes Frank Gee for the purpose of a nomination.

DELEGATE GEE: I am privilege to place into nomination for the high office of the National Vice Commander someone who has proudly served our country as a dedication member of our armed forces and a devoted Legionnaire from the great Department of New York is Past Commander Fang A. Wong.

I have known Fang for over 14 years. We both joined the Lieutenant Kim Lo Post in 1990. Since then, we have traveled together frequently and became good friends. Over the years I have learned many things from him, and yet more about him. I learned that Fang is a man of compassion and high purpose with a deep desire to serve be it for his country where he has an outstanding military career covering 20 years of service in the Army, including two tours of duty in Vietnam. Or in his community where he has served on the planning board in his home town and has contributed his time and talent as administrator and trustee for the New Jersey Chinese School.

There is a saying in The American Legion that some of us are born Legionnaires. Well, Fang is truly one of them. Once you get a taste of American Legion, like many of you, he got hooked. He decided then that Legion work is what he wanted to do and he has never stopped doing it since.

Fang's contribution to The American Legion including service at all levels of our organization. He has distinguished himself while serving as the Past Commander, Adjutant, a Judge Advocate at Post level. He has served with distinction as Vice Commander and Commander of New York County. At the Department level as Americanism Chairman, as Commander's Aide, and he has just completed a successful year as Commander for the great Department of New York. He also served as a member of the Americanism Council at the National level.

I am proud to say that I know him better than most people. He is sincere. People trust him for that reason. He is visionary, a necessary ingredient for a leader. He has a profound sense for fairness, someone who can see beyond skin color. He never forgot where he came from and continues to cultivate Chinese heritage while embracing wholeheartedly American ideals, and the principle of democracy and freedom. And I could assure you that he will work hard, as always, for the common good of The American Legion.

It is in that spirit the great Department of New York is extremely proud and I am deeply honored to nominate Fang A. Wong for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Microphone two.

DELEGATION CHRMN COLEY HUNSUCKER: My name is Coley Hunsucker, Delegation Chairman from the State of North Carolina. I request the Chair recognize National Executive Committeeman Jerry Hedrick for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Chair recognizes Jerry Hedrick.

NECman JERRY HEDRICK: It's an honor for me to come before you to nominate an outstanding Legionnaire for the office of National Vice Commander. Clinton E. (Clint) Thompson is a 53 year member of The American Legion. Clint received his eligibility by his service in the United States Air Force 1948-1952.

He is a member of The American Legion Post 380 in Charlotte, North Carolina. He has held many positions in his post including four years as its Commander, and still

serves as his Post's Adjutant. In his District, he has served the 20th District as a Membership Chairman, as a District Vice Commander and a District Commander.

In 1994, Clint was elected the Department Vice Commander. In that year he was Vice Commander he was 100 percent in membership. Clint was elected to the high office of Department Commander in 1996-97, and did an outstanding job for the Department of North Carolina. He has shared his knowledge he has gained over the years as an instructor at our American Legion College each year. Clint also served as Vice President of the Charlotte Convention Corporation 2002, and his dedication was an inspiration to all the ones that worked with him.

Clint has been a member of the National Foreign Relations Council for the past 10 years. I have known Clint Thompson for many years. I know he will make an outstanding National Vice Commander, and I am proud to nominate Clint Thompson to the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Chair recognizes microphone three.

DELEGATE BARBARA EASTRIDGE: I'm Barbara Eastridge, a duly elected delegate from the Department of Wyoming. I request permission for the Chair to recognize Irvin (Tiny) Quick, our Alternate NECman, to approach the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Chair recognizes Tiny.

ALTERNATE NECman IRVIN (TINY) QUICK: You know, a year has passed. Last year there was a National Vice Commander from the western region by the name of Tiny. Well, I'm the other Tiny. He's a big man, and when I was born I was a real small person. I weighed two pounds and eight ounces. But, we survive.

It's my privilege to put the name of Todd E. White in for National Vice Commander for 2003-2004.

Todd is a native born in the State of Wyoming in Laramie. He attended the University of Wyoming where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in architectural engineering. Todd is currently employed by the Wyoming Department of Transportation and has earned his eligibility in The American Legion serving in the United States Army from 1967 to 1969, with service in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, with the 21st Transportation Command. He has been a member of The American Legion family for 29 years. Todd has served twice as a Post Commander, Floyd Minns Post Number 44, in Worland, Wyoming. He has served as District 4 Vice Commander, District 4 Commander and was a Wyoming Department Vice Commander and then served as Department Commander in 1994 and '95.

At the national level Todd has served for 12 years on the Public Relations Commission, served as the Alternate National Executive Committeeman from 1996 to 1998, and served as a National Executive Committeeman from 1998 to 2002. He currently serves on the National Veterans Preference Committee and was selected by Commander Conley to serve on the Special VA Facility Subcommittee for Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

In addition to his American Legion involvement, Todd has served as the Past President of the Worland JCs, the Past President of the Washhakie County Historical Society and has also served as Vice Chairman of the Worland Board of Adjustments and Planning Commission, and as Vice Chairman of the Urban Systems Commission. His service also extends to employees for the State of Wyoming, as he is a Past Director of the Wyoming Public Employees Association.

Todd also served two terms as the President of the United Veterans Council of Wyoming and has been a member of the VISN 19 Rocky Mountain Network Management Assistance Council for six years. He also has been reappointed by Governor Freidenthal of Wyoming to his third two-year term on the Wyoming Veterans Commission. And has been selected by his fellow Commissioners as Secretary of the Commission for his two-year term.

Todd is very qualified and a dedicated veteran to The American Legion. At this time I and the Department of Wyoming, proudly place the name of Todd E. White in nomination for National Vice Commander.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Microphone two.

DELEGATE TED HOWARTH: As a duly authorized delegate of the State of New

Jersey, also the proud state of Elsie Bailey who just served an outstanding year as the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, I move that the nominations for National Vice Commander be closed.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: This is a non-debatable motion. Calling for the question. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered. Microphone three.

DELEGATE LINDA THAYER: As a Delegate Department of Vermont, I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this convention, and that Richard G. Denbow of Iowa, Michael D. Helm of Nebraska, Fang A. Wong of New York, Clinton E. Thompson of North Carolina and Todd E. White of Wyoming be elected National Vice Commanders by acclamation.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Do I hear a second?

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed? The ayes have and so ordered. Call on the National Adjutant.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for: Richard G. Denbow of Iowa, Michael D. Helm of Nebraska, Fang A. Wong of New York, Clinton E. Thompson of North Carolina and Todd E. White of Wyoming for the offices of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I now declare the following Legionnaires have been elected National Vice Commanders of The American Legion: Richard Denbow of Iowa, Michael Helm, Fang A. Wong, Clinton E. Thompson and Todd E. White. Would the new Vice Commanders come to the platform?

The National Vice Commanders introduced themselves to the audience.

Presentation: Colors To Newly Elected National Commander

NATL COMDR CONLEY: I now call on Past National Commander Robert Turner of Georgia to present the Colors to our incoming National Commander.

PNC ROBERT TURNER: Will you all please rise as the National Color Guard from Henderson Smith Edmonds Post 86 of Rockville, Maryland presents the Colors of our newly elected National Commander of this session.

Color Guard please present the Colors of National Commander John Brieden.

Commander Brieden, you've been a true friend for many years and it is certainly indeed my honor to stand here this day and to share with you this moment. You have before you the Flag of our great country, as well as the Colors of our national organization. Our flag is our symbol, and I know that you will defend and protect it during your year of service and that you will continue that fight for the constitutional amendment. And our organization's national colors will travel with you across America and to several foreign countries as you promote the programs and ideals of our organization.

Our Flag and the Colors of our organization are proud symbols, and we know that you will be dedicated to protecting both. We know that you will guard them well. We look forward to your year of service and when we gather in Nashville, Tennessee, we will all be there with you to say 'well done, Commander Brieden, you have made us proud to be members of The American Legion.'

Response: Newly Elected National Commander
John A. Brieden, III, Texas

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Be seated. National Commander Bob Turner, thank you so much for the honor of presenting the Commander's Colors. I accept that challenge. I will guard them well and I promise you that we will do our best as National Commander.

Presentation: Newly Elected National President
The American Legion Auxiliary Katherine Morris, Texas

NATL COMDR CONLEY: It seems to me that for the coming year, The American Legion Family will be resting in the caring hands and hearts from Texas. The woman who has been elected as the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary is from Houston, Texas. She has worked hard for the American Legion Auxiliary, holding key offices at Unit, District and Department levels. Nationally, she serves as Chairman of several committees including, Legislative, Poppy, Education and Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

Please give a rousing welcome to the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary from Griffith-Zann Unit 594 in Houston, Texas, Mrs. Katherine Morris.

Response: Newly Elected National President
American Legion Auxiliary Katherine Morris, Texas

What a joyous day this is. Before I start, I introduce you to the new National Vice President, a dear friend of mine, Ms. Sandy Dutton from the Department of Maryland and our National Secretary, Ms. Peggy Sappenfield.

...Applause.

What an honor it is for me to have the opportunity to be standing here as the National President of the world's largest patriotic women's organization, the American Legion Auxiliary. What a special honor it is for me to have a great Commander, John Brieden. John and Terry have been friends of ours for many years. And let me tell you right now, he is going to do an outstanding job as your Commander and my Commander. I know what John can do. I've seen him work in Texas.

My theme this year is Hearts and Service. Of course, each letter of hearts has a meaning. I won't reveal that now because I did that in my acceptance speech earlier today. The membership theme is the 'Angels In Action.' Of course, you're going to see a lot of angels flying around and we need every one we can get this coming year.

I'm presently presenting a special award this year called the President's Recruiter Award to the Legionnaire and/or Son of The American Legion who signs up three members. It must be in by April 30, 2004, because you're going to help us get our membership this year, and I understand you're good at that. You're not going to prove me wrong, are you? You're going to help us. By the end, we will be presenting a pin, which is angel wings with a "3" on it. At the end of the year I hope to see each of you with your angel wings on. When I come into the Department I hope to see them flying.

There is no doubt in my mind the Legion family will excel in all of its endeavors this coming year. Today, we are very Texas-proud. I am so excited about being here. I'm so excited about working for The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary and for the Sons of The American Legion. I think we're a family and I think we are going to act like a family this year. We're gong to work together like they have in the past and we are going to make a difference.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Madam President, please remain with us for a few moments. I want the delegates to this Convention to greet you, our newly elected National Commander and the Commander of the Sons of The American Legion, Neal Warnken.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Call on the National Adjutant for announcements.

Announcements

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Pursuant to The American Legion's National Constitution By-Laws, the meeting of the post convention meeting of the National Executive Committee must be held in the city of the National Convention within 24 hours after the adjournment of the Convention. Therefore, I am announcing, that the Post National Executive Committee meeting of the 85th Annual Convention will convene

immediately following the adjournment of this Convention in the America's Center, this building, in room 130 on the first level.

NATL COMDR CONLEY: Is there any further business to come before this Convention?

If not, please rise and uncover as the outgoing National Chaplain, Norris Keirn, offers the Benediction.

Benediction
Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana, National Chaplain

Let us be joined together in the spirit of prayer. Oh gracious Father, as sequela, the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes says, "there's a time for all things." So we come to a time when we close yet another chapter of our lives. And we thank You for the honor and the privilege of service. And we open a chapter of new directions of service to God, country and our American Legion family.

We pray, Lord, that the mantle of Your anointing would rest upon our new officers as they give us leadership to this great organization. And, Father, we together with one heart and one mind implore You to watch over our brave young men and young women who serve in the armed forces of our United States. And especially those who this day will put their very lives in harm's way to preserve freedom not only for ourselves, but for other citizens of this world.

And we pray earnestly for all the family members who have lost loved ones in this our recent war and in all the past wars. And we pray that there would be a full accounting and release of those missing in action, those prisoners of wars from all the conflicts of this past century.

Send us forth as we give You glory in all that we do, for we ask it in Your Holy Name. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATL COMDR CONLEY: The Color Guard will retire the flags of the United States. The delegates will stand and render a right hand salute on my command.

I now declare this 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned. Sine die.

...At 1:35 p.m., the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Doctor Jeanne Mager Stellman and Doctor Steven D. Stellman

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity, and playing ability.
RECIPIENT: Jeff Bagwell, Houston Astros

Bob Feller Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT(s): Chris Mason, Cherryville, NC (69 strikeouts)

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Rochester, Minnesota Post 92

Dr. Irvin L. 'Click' Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT(s): Andy Console, Haddon Heights, NJ and Joey Briggs, Corvallis, OR (17 RBIs)

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.
RECIPIENT: North Carolina

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Maryland

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.
RECIPIENT: Jared Willis, Logan, West Virginia

The Howard P. Savage Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Minnesota

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack Williams stressed during his lifetime.
RECIPIENT(s): Tony Beck and Keith Kangas (coaches) for Rochester, MN

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.

RECIPIENT: Michael Badger, Rochester, MN
Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.
RECIPIENTS: Precision Team: Palmyra Wrecking Crew II (Pennsylvania); Palmyra Post 72, The American Legion of Pennsylvania, Leslie Angeli, Cody Rutter, Justin Sparks, & Brad Stepp
Precision Individual: Daniel Belluzzo, Itasca County 4-H Shooting Sports (Minnesota), McVeigh-Dunn Post 60, The American Legion of Minn.
Sporter Team: Homestead 4-H Shooting Club (Nebraska); Post 27, The American Legion of Nebraska, Jace Bures, Micaela Jochum, Nathan Jochum, & Clint Sejkora
Sporter Individual: Andrew Hahn, Humboldt Sharpshooters (South Dakota); William H. Crippen Post 62, The American Legion of South Dakota

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: Andy Console, Haddon Heights, NJ (.514 batting average)

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.
RECIPIENT: Department of West Virginia

Rawlings 'Big Stick' Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Joey Briggs, Corvallis, OR (41 total bases)

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.
RECIPIENT: Department of Minnesota

William Randolph Hearst Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports, and supporting Department narrative.
RECIPIENT: Department of Nebraska

Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans' organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): Crummell, Walter (Newfoundland)
Gray, Bob (Alberta)
Hesketh, Elfreda (British Columbia)

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post reports.
RECIPIENT(s): Delaware, Montana, Maine, and Wyoming

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.
RECIPIENT(s): Category I- Johns Manville, Defiance, Ohio
Category II - TRW, Killeen, Texas
Category III -ACS State and Local Solutions, Lake City, Florida

Employment Service Awards: Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.
RECIPIENT(s): LVER of the Year: Alonzo Philmore; Lake City, Florida
DVOP of the Year: Richard Perez; Yuma, Arizona
ES Office of the Year: Lewis Boren, Office Manager Central Texas Workforce Center; Killeen, Texas

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.
RECIPIENT(s): To be announced later

National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.
RECIPIENT(s): Department of South Dakota - (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Ohio - (One-Year Yearbook History)

National POST History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.
RECIPIENT(s): Samuel G. Cooke Post 267, Columbus, GA (One-Year Narrative History)
Harris Dennis Post 151, Mellette, SD (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.
RECIPIENT(s): Jesus C. Malilay (Philippines)
General Teng, Tsu-lin (Republic of China)

The Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.
RECIPIENT(s): Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham AND Rep. John P. Murtha

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members;

IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s): **Category I — Detachment of Wyoming**
Category II — Detachment of Vermont
Category III — Detachment of Georgia
Category IV — Detachment of Minnesota
Category V — Detachment of Pennsylvania

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

RECIPIENT(s): **Category I Not yet determined**
Category II Not yet determined
Category III Department of Georgia & Arizona (tied)
Category IV Not yet determined
Category V Department of Delaware
Category VI Not yet determined

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.

RECIPIENT: **Department of Wisconsin**

The Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.

RECIPIENT: **Department of Delaware**

The North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.

RECIPIENT: **Department of France**

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.

RECIPIENT: **Department of Delaware**

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.

RECIPIENT: **Cadet First Class Tyler W. Robarge**

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.

RECIPIENT: **Cadet Darby Schlaht**

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.

RECIPIENT: **Midshipman Preston M. Carnahan**

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.
RECIPIENT: **2nd Lt. Rory J. Petteys**

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: **Midshipman Joshua J. Lostetter**

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s): **Category I** - Depts. with 100,000 or more members
Post Participation: Department of Minnesota
Individual Participation: Department of Ohio
Category II - Depts. with 70,000 to 99,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: Wisconsin
Individual Participation: Wisconsin
Category III - Depts. with 40,000 to 69,999 mbrs
Post Participation: Georgia
Individual Participation: Georgia
Category IV - Depts. with 25,000 to 39,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: Washington
Individual Participation: Washington
Category V - Depts. with 10,000 to 24,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: None Awarded
Individual Participation: None Awarded
Category VI - Depts. with less than 10,000 members
Post Participation: Hawaii
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.
RECIPIENT: **Police Officer First Class Timothy C. Wiley,**
Howard County Department of Police (Ellicott City, Maryland)

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.
RECIPIENT(s): **Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, and Montana**

Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.
RECIPIENT: **Norman Sinclair, Investigative Reporter, The Detroit News**

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: **Wayne Newton**

The Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Joliet Band, Post 1080, Joliet, IL

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2003

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2003

The Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: Henderson Smith Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, MD

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Joliet Band, Post 1080, Joliet, IL

National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2003

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.
RECIPIENT: Department of North Dakota

Abbreviations

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AVIP	Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CARES	Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services
CAT	Computed Axial Tomography
CAV	Calvary
CHRMN	Chairman
COLAs	Cost of living adjustments
COMDR	Commander
CRSC	Combat-Related Special Compensation
DECA	Defense Commissary Agency
DIC	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
DMS	Direct Mail Solicitation
DoD	Department of Defense's
DVOP	Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
ESGR	Employer Support of The Guard and Reserve
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FOIA	Freedom Of Information Act
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
ID	Infantry Division
LVER or LVR	Local Veterans Employment Representative
MHS	Military Health System
MBRS	Members
MOPH	Military Order of the Purple Heart
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATL	National
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NEC	National Executive Committee(man)
NEF	National Emergency Fund
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PDC	Past Department Commander
PL	Public Law
PNC	Past National Commander
POW	Prisoner of War
POW/MIA	Prisoner of War/Missing in Action
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RBI	runs batted in
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SBP	Survivors' Benefits Plan
SDSC	Severely Disabled Compensation
SHAD	Shipboard Hazard and Defense

SMOCTA	Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act
SOM	School of Medicine
TAP	Transitional Assistance Program
TCDD	Tetrachlorodibenzo-*para*-dioxin
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
USAT	United States Army Transport
USC	United States Code
USFSPA	Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
USFSPA	Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
USPHS	United States Public Health Service
USUHS	Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
VA	Veterans Affairs
VA-HUD	Veterans Affairs-Department of Housing and Urban Development
VAC	Veteran's Affairs Commission (Republic of China)
VERA	Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VISN	Veterans Integrated Service Networks
VSO	Veterans Service Organization
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander Ronald F. Conley, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Membership was strong with 2.7 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; February 28, 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 or 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

J. Addington Wagner, Michigan
Preston J. Moore, Oklahoma
William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
John H. Geiger, Illinois
Joe L. Matthews, Texas
William J. Rogers, Maine
John M. 'Jack' Carey, Michigan
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Judge 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
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Richard J. Santos, Maryland

National Executive Committeemen

Clarence W. Jacobs, Alabama
Jimmie Foster, Alaska
Marco 'Tony' Valenzuela, Arizona
Claude Carpenter, Arkansas
William E. Wilkin, California
Joseph E. Ross, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Thomas L. Burns, Delaware
Dennis G. Kurre, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
Merwyn M. Beavers, France
Ray Hendrix, Georgia
LeRoy P. Pulawa, Hawaii
Dee Collins, Idaho
Lloyd R. Henderson, Illinois
Richard Quattrin, Indiana
David K. Rehbein, Iowa
U.S. 'Udie' Grant, Kansas
Randall Coffman, Kentucky
Russell J. Henry, Louisiana
Robert A. Owen, Maine
William B. Proctor, Jr., Maryland
James L. Flattes, Massachusetts
John E. Hayes, Mexico
Randolph J. Browne, Michigan
Robert Skallerud, Minnesota
Charles E. Langley, Mississippi
Sam Yancey, Missouri
Joyce D. Babcock, Montana
Robert H. Zersen, Nebraska
Ron Gutzman, Nevada
George V. West, New Hampshire
Franklin R. Sickle, Jr., New Jersey
Taurino J. Trevino, New Mexico
Theodore S. Coleman, New York
Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
Jerrold W. Wilson, Ohio
Donald H. Schulenberg, Oklahoma
T. Les Galloway, Oregon
Alfred Pirolli, Pennsylvania
Ernesto P. Golez, Philippines
Isidoro Cerpa Alicea, Jr., Puerto Rico
Richard E. Verrier, Sr. Rhode Island
Rennie M. Singletary, Jr., South Carolina

Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Ralph J. Reel, Tennessee
Delbert D. Fuhrman, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Clark C. Ferris, Vermont
George T. Blume, Virginia
Wayne Sharp, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
David A. Korth, Wisconsin
Joseph G. Sestak, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
Gene Franks, Alaska
Julius Maklary, Arizona
Bobby L. Wamble, Arkansas
John A. O'Leary, California
(vacant) Colorado
K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut
Donald E. Neil, Delaware
Ernest R. Sohns, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
William E. Marshall, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
Orland H. Taylor, Hawaii
Richard Hanni, Idaho
Jack W. Cover, Illinois
Ron Lowe, Indiana
Ivan E. Torkelson, Iowa
Damon C. Christensen, Kansas
Bernard D. Wells, Kentucky
Asa E. Stewart, Jr., Louisiana
Glenn P. Payne, Maine
Alfred M. Schmidt, Maryland
Mark A. Avis, Massachusetts
Jack D. Freitag, Mexico
Norbert J. Schollett, Michigan
Virgil V. Persing, Minnesota
Gayle Gorden, Mississippi
David N. Voyles, Missouri
Arthur E. Sell, Montana
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
Ernest E. McAvan, Nevada
Benjamin F. Talford, New Hampshire
Leo L. McKernan, New Jersey
Bruce Jorgensen, New Mexico
Robert F. Neville, New York
Walter F. Stancil (resigned 2/17/03), North Carolina
(vacant) North Dakota
Carl W. Swisher, Ohio
Charles R. John, Oklahoma
Robert D. Scott, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Ignacio F. Palad, Philippines
Miguel A. Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
Eugene Pytka, Rhode Island
Billy W. Bell, South Carolina
Larry L. Price, South Dakota
J. B. Loring, Tennessee
Ronald G. Cherry, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Donald T. Tetreault, Vermont
Rob R. Gordon, Jr., Virginia
Richard D. Smith, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
Arthur D. Herbison, Wisconsin
Irin A. Quick, 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
Jefferson P. Luginbuel, Jr., Colorado

Having the honor to serve National Commander Ron Conley as national vice commander of the Western region has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

One of the many duties of the position was to travel and visit the various departments in the Western region. The departments in the Western region are: Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Hawaii, Wyoming, Washington, Alaska, Montana, New Mexico, California, Oregon, as well as two foreign Departments—Mexico and the Philippines. The purposes of the visits were to promote a range of initiatives of the national organization and to get acquainted with the members of the individual departments.

Having said that, my wife Trudy and I discovered one important commonality—we all share the same dedication to the mission of the American Legion: (1) the caring for our nation's veterans and the enhancement of their benefits; (2) being mindful of the children and youth of our country; (3) improving the quality of life of our community, state, and nation by promoting our Americanism programs; and (4) maintaining a strong national defense.

Yes, we truly belong to a wonderful organization, an organization that continually takes the lead in fighting for what is right for our nation and its veterans.

Specifically, (1) passing legislation that will provide mandatory funding for veterans healthcare, thereby eliminating the long waiting lists at VA Medical Centers; (2) doing the right thing for our military retirees by pressuring congress to pass a concurrent receipt bill that will benefit all disabled military retirees; (3) and to finally pass the Flag Protection Amendment in the 108th Congress and send it back to the states for ratification—just to mention a few.

Our plate is heavy, our demands are great, but with the insistence of the entire legion family, these and other important issues will meet with inevitable successes.

A summary of my activities over the past year follows:

August, 2002

22-30 National Convention in Charlotte, NC, Elected and Installed

September, 2002

4-7 Brainstorming Sessions and Phone Calls to Dist./Depart. Commanders, Indianapolis, Ind.

9-11 Legislative Briefings and National Commander's Testimony, Washington, D.C.

20-22 Region 8 National Information Conference, Boise, Idaho

October, 2002

7 National Commander's Reception, Indianapolis, Ind.

8-10 National Vice Commander's Breakfast and Fall Meetings of the NEC Indianapolis, Ind.

18-20 Department of Idaho Food Convoy to Lewiston Veterans Home/attend District Meetings

31-Nov.3 Department of Arizona Fall Conference, Casa Grande

November, 2002

No Activity

December, 2002
13-14 Department of Utah Department Executive Meeting
January, 2003
17-19 Department of Oregon Mid-winter Conference, Corvallis
24-26 Department of Colorado Mid-winter Conference, Colorado Springs
31-Feb.1 Department of Washington Mid-winter Conference, Seattle
February, 2003
6-8 Department of Alaska Southeast District Convention, Sitka
21-23 Department of New Mexico Membership tour of Albuquerque Posts
March, 2003
3-5 Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.
14-16 Department of Nevada Spring Department Executive Committee Meeting
April, 2003
4-6 Region 7 National Information Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada.
11-13 Department of Wyoming District Conventions, Casper and Glendo
23-27 Department of Alaska Convention, Ketchikan
May, 2003
2-3 Spring Meetings of the NEC, Indianapolis, Ind.
16-18 Department of California Area 4 Meeting, Hawthorne/Armed Forces Day parade
27 Install new officers, Leydon, Chiles, Wickersham, Post 1, Denver, Colo.
June, 2003
8-11 Royal Canadian Legion Convention, Vermilion, Canada
19 U.S. Merchant Marine Academy Awards Ceremony, Kings Point, N.Y.
28 Department of Montana Convention, Missoula
July, 2003
11-13 2003-2004 Team Colorado Meeting, Peonia
August, 2003
24-28 National Convention, St. Louis, Missouri

I feel the wisdom gained while serving as national vice commander has broadened my scope of The American Legion, which will have a positive impact on my ability to serve this wonderful organization in the years to come.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Roy L. Kirkham, Louisiana

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as National Vice Commander of the Central Region of The American Legion, this year. We had an outstanding team of officers serving at the National Level this year that served well under the superior leadership of National Commander Ronald Conley. I believe our accomplishments this year will benefit The American Legion and its membership for several years to come.

Below is a summary of my activities, as National Vice Commander, covering the Central Region, which consists of Arkansas, France, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas. I had the pleasure of visiting every department within my area with the exception of France and Arkansas. I never received an invitation from Arkansas. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all the Department Commanders, National Executive Committeemen and Adjutants for the courtesies extended to me during my visits.

A summary of my activities of the past year include:

August 2002	
22-30	National Convention in Charlotte, NC, elected and installed
September	
4-7	Indianapolis, Ind for brainstorming sessions and phone calls to District and Department Commanders
9-11	Legislative Briefings and National Commanders Testimony, WDC.
20-22	Dallas Texas—Visited the Dallas VA Hospital with National Commander and attended the Region 4 National Information Conference
October	
7	National Commanders Reception, Indianapolis, IN
7-10	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN
21	Attended Post Meeting of Koran Post 388, Koran, LA
November	
11	Participated in Veterans Day Parade, Minden, LA Attended Post Meeting of Post 70, Arcadia, LA
12-15	Department of Kansas Membership Tour
January 2003	
18-19	Dept. of Louisiana Mid-Winter Conference, Alexandria, LA
23-26	Dept. of Texas Mid-Winter Conference, Austin, TX
February	
21-23	Dept. of Missouri Membership Workshop, Jefferson, MO
March	
3-5	2003 Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.
15	Attended a District Conference in Mineola, TX
April	
12-13	Dept. of Oklahoma AL Children's Home, Ponca City
May	
7-8	NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
15-18	Dept. Convention of Kansas, Topeka
26	U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO
June	
17-19	Accompany National Commander on Official Visit to Louisiana—Visited Koran Post 388; Camp Minden; War Veterans Home in Monroe; Post 13 in Monroe; Overton Brooks VA Hospital, Shreveport and Windshield Tour of Barksdale AFB, LA
19-22	Dept. Convention of Louisiana, Alexandria, LA
July	
7	Installed Officers at Post 13, Monroe, LA
20	Installed Officers at Post 81, Gonzales, LA
11-13	Dept. Convention of Mississippi at Diamondhead, Miss
August	
23-28	National Convention, St. Louis, MO

Again, it has been an honor and a pleasure for me to serve this great organization these past 12 months as a National Vice Commander. It was a very humbling experience. One I shall always remember.

Report of National Vice Commander
Robert M. Johnson

It is without a doubt, that this year of service has been the highlight of my American Legion career. Our leader, National Commander, Ronald Conley gave a new meaning to the phrase "Still Serving America". He truly has been an advocate for our veterans with his tireless effort to get better and timely health care for all veterans. Supporting Legislation to allow concurrent receipt for disabled military retired veterans, making sure that the American Legion become a true stakeholder of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services process (CARES), allowing Medicare Reimbursement at VA facilities, and lobbying the U.S. Senate to pass a Constitutional Amendment to give the authority to the Congress to protect the U.S. Flag from Physical desecration. Through the effort of Commander Conley, Nation wide attention has been brought to the forefront on the subject of Health Care for all of our veterans.

I have made numerous phone calls to the Departments of the South Eastern Region in order to get their help and to encourage them to double and triple their effort to reach their membership goals. My only regret for this year is, that we were unable to achieve our membership objectives in some of our Departments. Koodoos to those who met and exceeded their goals.

I would like to thank all of the members of the National Staff at Indianapolis and in Washington, who were so helpful to me throughout my year of service. They made this year of travel very painless and as exciting as it could possibly be for me. The receptions that I received in every Department was tremendous.

My travels for 2002-2003 years are listed below:

September 2002

4-7	Brainstorming Sessions & Phone Calls to District & Dept. Commanders, Indianapolis
9-11	Legislative Briefings & National Commander's Testimony,WDC

October 2002

7	National Commander's Reception, Indianapolis
8-10	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis
12-13	Dept. Of Virginia Membership Booth during Festival of Freedom at Manassas
24-27	Dept. Of North Carolina Fall Conference in Greensboro

November 2002

9-10	Dept. of West Virginia Membership and attend Veteran's Memorial Dedication Ceremony in Barboursville
14-17	Dept. of South Carolina Fall Conference at Myrtle Beach

December 2002

7	National Security/ Foreign Relations Seminar—Dept. of Maryland

January 2003

10-12	Dept. of Alabama Mid Winter Conference at Montgomery
24-25	Dept. of Tennessee Mid Winter Conference at Franklin

February 2003

No Activity

March 2003

1	Dept. of Maryland—Keynote Speaker— SAL National Commander's Banquet
3-5	Washington Conference, Washington, DC
14-16	Dept. of Virginia Spring Conference at Virginia Beach

April 2003

4-6	Region 3 NIC, Macon Georgia

May 2003

7-8	Spring Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis
26	Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony, Arlington, VA
30	U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY

June 2003

15-21	Dept. of Maryland—Counselor/Assist. Dir. Maryland Boy's State
26-28	Dept. Convention of Kentucky at Louisville

July 2003

8-10	Dept. of Convention of Maryland at Ocean City, MD
11-13	Dept. Convention of Florida, Orlando
15	National Commander's Testimony, WDC
25-27	Armistice Day Weekend of Events, Washington, DC

August 2003

19	Dept. Of Delaware Installation of Newly Elected Officers
24-28	2003 National Convention, St. Louis

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER

Robert G. Bournival, New Hampshire

It is with great privilege and honor to have been able to serve as National Vice Commander under the leadership of our National Commander, Ron Conley of Pennsylvania, a true advocate of our nations veterans. I think we have accomplished a great deal this year but there are a great number of issues still facing the American Legion such as V .A. Health Care, Medicare Reimbursement, Concurrent Receipt and the Flag Amendment to name a few.

The American Legion is still urging the Congress of the United States for mandatory funding for V.A. Health Care so our veterans will not have to wait up to a year for their first visit with their primary care physician in order to qualify for care in the V .A. System. These same veterans should not have to wait up to three years to have their claims adjudicated. Medicare Reimbursement would help the short fall in the V.A. budget by allowing the funds to stay within the V.A. system

The current system of Concurrent Receipt should be modified so our veterans would not have to pay for care at a V.A. hospital out of their retirement funds.

The American legion has spent a great deal of time and energy towards the passage of a Flag Amendment. We owe it to all of our veterans to protect the symbol, the flag of the country they proudly served and sacrificed their lives for, from desecration.

After a two year increase in membership, we now stand below last years membership level. We as an organization must continue to look for new and innovative ways to attract members into the American Legion family. The future of the American Legion is dependant on us attracting young veterans to continue the goals and principals of the American Legion.

I thank our National Staff for their dedication and support throughout this year. It was a pleasure to have served with the four other National Vice Commanders: Jeff Luginbuel of Colorado, Don Mason of South Dakota, Bob Johnson of Maryland and Roy Kirkham of Louisiana, four men truly dedicated to the American Legion. Thank you to the commanders, adjutants and membership chairmen in the Northeast who gave their extra effort towards increasing our membership base and above all to the Dept of New Hampshire for attaining 100% of their goal.

September 2002

4- 7 Brainstorming Sessions & Phone calls to District & Dept. Cmdrs., Indianapolis, IN

9-11	Legislative Briefings & National Commander's Testimony, Washington, D.C.
29	40-8 Merci Box Car Ceremony, Post 43, Manchester, NH
October	
6-8	National Commander's Reception, Indianapolis, IN
8-10	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings ofNEC, Indianapolis, IN
November	
11	Veterans Parade, Manchester, NH
22-23	Dept. of Massachusetts Legion College activities, Randolph, MA
23	Post 79 Tilton Veterans Home Dinner, Manchester, NH
December	
13-15	Dept. of New Hampshire Membership Roundup (home dept.)
January 2003	
4-5	Dept. of Pennsylvania Membership Meeting (Western Section)
10-12	Dept. of Connecticut Mid-Winter Conference at Trumbull
17-19	Dept. of Vermont Mid-Winter Conference at Burlington
26	Dept. Mid Winter Conference, Laconia, NH
31-February 2	Dept. of Connecticut Membership Activities
February 2003	
11-13	Dept. of Illinois Lincoln Pilgrimage
22	State Oratorical Contest, Hanover, NH
27	District 4 Meeting, Pelham, NH
March	
1	Post 1 Legion Birthday Party, Laconia, NH
3-5	2003 Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.
8	Post 23 Dept. Visitation, Milford, NH
12	Post 11 Dept. Visitation, Jaffrey, NH
21-22	Region 1 NLIC, Nashua, NH
22	Testimonial Dinner, Dept. of New Hampshire
April	
5	Jr. Oratorical State Contest, Bow, NH
8	Post 27 Installation, Londonderry, NH
13	Dist. 4 Spring Conference Post 2, Manchester, NH
25-27	Region 2 NLIC, Cherry Hill, NJ
27-29	Nat. Commanders Official Visit to NH
May	
7-8	Spring Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
9	Post 69 Memorial Services, Somersworth, NH
10	D.E.C. Dept. ofN.H., Hooksett, NH
17	Dept. Commander Testimonial, Keene, NH
18	Dept. President Testimonial, Newmarket, NH
20	U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT
30-31	Dept. Convention of Rhode Island, Warwick, RI
June	
1	Grand Opening Ceremony of the Northern Maine Veterans Cemetery, Caribou. ME
11-13	Dept. Convention of Massachusetts, Worcester, MA
14-17	National Baseball Hall of Fame, Cooperstown, NY
18-23	Dept. of N.H. State Convention, Manchester, NH

July	
16-17	Dept. Convention of New York, Syracuse, NY
18-19	Dept. Convention ofPennsylvania, Monroeville, PA
August	
16	Eastern Div. Vice Presidents Testimonial, Saddlebrook, NJ
24-28	National Convention, St. Louis, MO

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Donavon Ray Mason, South Dakota

It was an honor to have served the Midwest Region as National Vice Commander of the American Legion and certainly a privilege to work with Ron Conley as National Commander, a true advocate for the veteran.

Commander Conley had a very important agenda for his year as National Commander. He hit the ground running to improve health care for America's veterans. In my travels throughout the ten states in the Midwest Region promoting his agenda of informing not only America's veterans, but also the public, of the unacceptable waiting periods of initial and referral appointments with his, "I Am Not A Number Campaign" and Concurrent Receipts, I found the veterans very receptive to this program. It is absolutely essential that mandatory funding be available for V.A. Health Care for our Veterans.

It has been a very humbling experience being around the many, many volunteers who donate their time, many of them taking vacation time, to help with American Legion programs. An example, as I attended the beginning of the nine day Ohio's Buckeye Boys State program, nearly 1300 young men were registered in just over one-half hour to begin their involvement in this seminar in government. Well over 100 volunteers were involved in this well organized program, teaching young men the importance of learning about their government.

Working with the American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion, the entire American Legion Family, made me realize how important this volunteerism is. Through the combined efforts of the American Legion Family, the President has asked for nearly an 8% increase in the V.A. 2004 FY Budget to improve Health Care for America's Veterans. The largest dollar amount ever.

From the remote areas to the larger cities, in the thousands of miles of my travel, Legionnaires gathered to support the many programs of the American Legion such as Family Support Network, Blue Star Banners, Support Our Troops, Temporary Financial Assistance, American Legacy Scholarship, just to name some of them.

Membership is our organizations "life-blood" and going on the membership drives in the various states proved to be a worth while effort. The Posts we visited were very appreciative to the fact a National Vice Commander was there to lend a helping hand.

This year in my many miles of travel as National Vice Commander of the American Legion I had the opportunity to meet various naturalized citizens of the United States. Among them was an individual from the country formerly known as Malaya. He grew up during WWII with the Japanese controlling his country, later being controlled by the communist. A few years later he arrived in the United States and became a naturalized citizen. During the naturalization ceremony the American Legion presented him with an American flag which holds a predominate place in his office. After listening to his story we must realize how fortunate we are to live in the United States of America.

A special thank-you to the National Staff for their assistance and to the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin for the courtesies they extended to me on my official visits.

This has truly been an unusual and gratifying experience and I will continue to work with and promote the principals and aims of the American Legion.

Record of my 2002-2003 visits were as follows:

September, 2002

4-7	Brainstorming Sessions & Phone calls to District & Dept. Commanders, Indianapolis
9-11	Legislative Briefings & National Commander's Testimony, Wash. D.C.

October, 2002

5	National Commander's Reception, Indianapolis
8-10	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN.
12	Centeerville, SD Post Dedication
29	S. D. Minnehaha County Meeting

November, 2002

2	Dept. of Michigan Membership Rally, Post 416, St. Helen
11	Attended POW-WOW at Post 297 in South Dakota
15-17	Dept. of Illinois Egyptian Past Commander's Club Activities & tour of Marion Veterans Hospital
19-23	Dept. of Minnesota Membership Tour

December, 2002

2-4	Dept. of North Dakota Whistle Stop Membership Tour
6-7	Dept. of Ohio Membership Promotion at Various Posts

January, 2003

17-19	Dept. of Wisconsin Midwinter Conference at Baraboo
19-25	Dept. of Illinois Membership Promotion

February, 2003

7-9	Dept. of North Dakota Winter Conference at Mandan
12-16	Dept. of Iowa Membership Tour/Winter Conferene at Des Moines

March, 2003

3-5	2003 Washington Conference, Washington, D.C.
28-30	Region 5 NIC, Indianapolis, Indian

April, 2003

4-6	Dept. of Indiana Spring Conference & Homecoming Reception for National Chaplain Norris Keirn
25-27	Region 6 NIC, Sioux City, Iowa

May, 2003

2-3	Dept. of Michigan Spring Meetings at Boyne City
7-8	NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis
22-23	U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD
26	South Dakota—Memorial Day Speech
26	Veterans Memorial Dedication at Lennox, S.D.

June, 2003

5	Attended Memorial Service in SD for former Boys State Director
14-15	Buckeye Boys State, Bowling Green, Ohio
19-22	South Dakota Dept. Convention (Home Dept.)
27-29	Dept. Convention of Nebraska at Kearney

July, 2003

18-20	Dept. Convention of Iowa at Sioux City.

August, 2003

22-28	National Convention, St. Louis

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Rev. Norris A. Keirn, Indiana

It was my privilege to be appointed as National Chaplain at the National Convention in Charlotte, NC by National Commander Ronald F. Conley on August 29, 2002. I will always be grateful to him for this privilege. My theme for this year was, "Pray for our Troops" as we prepared for another phase of the "War on Terrorism".

My year began with the opening prayer for the National Executive Committee following the 84th National Convention. Early in September I wrote a suggested "Prayer for our Troops" to emphasize our concerns for the troops that were being deployed and who were serving in "Harm's Way". On September 11th, I was interviewed on the "Day of Remembrance" program hosted by the international LESEA Broadcasting Company. The topic for the interview was the Blue Star Banner for families who have a loved one in the armed forces.

In October, I attended the American Legion Fall Meetings and the National Executive Committee meetings. During these meetings I had the privilege of participating in memorial services including Ye STEIVOS. I presided over the Department Chaplains Conference October 25-27. For this conference I revised the paper "They've Asked Me to Do a Funeral and I Said Yes" and wrote the paper "A Look at Islam" as well as giving a presentation on this paper. These will be printed in the *Chaplain's "How to..." Manual*. It was a joy to meet and share with Emma Peoples, National Chaplain American Legion Auxiliary. I had the honor of giving the address at the Chaplain's memorial service at this conference.

In November, I wrote "The Veteran Lineage" which was published by American Legion *Dispatch*. On Veteran's Day, I was interviewed by Los Angeles KFSG 93.5 on Steve Boalt's prime time "Let's Talk" radio program. I wrote a prayer for veterans in a nursing home. The Dispatch published my article, "A Small Symbol Carries Powerful Message" in December and in February they published the article "Making a Sacrifice for Others."

I attended the Washington Conference of the American Legion in March. On March 3rd, I had the extreme privilege of being the "Chaplain of the Day" for the United States Senate and on the 4th to be the "Chaplain of the Day" for the 108th Congress. While in Washington, I attended several sessions with members of the Senate and Congress. I was also honored to become a life member of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada the United States Unit.

At the Department of Indiana Spring Conference in April, a surprise homecoming was held for me with both National Vice Commander Donavon R. Mason (ND) and leading candidate John Brieden (TX) attending and making presentations. In April. I also participated as a judge for quarter and semi-finals of the National Oratorical Contest, as well as led the interfaith worship service, and various prayers.

In May, I attended the National Spring Conference of the American Legion in Indianapolis and performed chaplain duties for the NEC. I toured Camp Atterbury along with several other national Legion officers. We conversed with numerous troops at various stages of deployment and received much information on the Reserve, National Guard, and the inter-service cooperation that exists in our armed forces. On May 18th, I gave an address at Post 139 in Sullivan, IN which was attended by Alternative NEC Jack W. Cover (IL). I also gave the address for the Memorial Day service at National Headquarters during this month.

July 6th, I presented a medal for the Chapel of Four Chaplains to National President Dorothy M. Oxendine of the American Gold Star Mothers during their national convention in Evansville, IN. I returned to Evansville on the 9th to be the keynote speaker at their banquet. July 19-20, I participated in Boys Nation held in Arlington, Virginia. I gave the

Memorial Address on Sunday the 20th. On Monday, July 21, I laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers with National Commander Conley. On July 23, I attended the Washington Brigade's Tattoo by invitation of the Commanding General followed by a reception at Fort McNair.

August 17th I participated in Veterans Day program at the Indiana State Fair and 23rd-28th I attended the eighty-fifth American Legion National Convention in St. Louis. There I hosted the American Legion Chaplains Breakfast, gave the memorial address at the Patriotic and Religious Service, and prayed various invocations and benedictions. I was interviewed by a local television station in St. Louis on Legion programs.

I have great appreciation for the work of the volunteers and staff of our national organization. I would also like to express my gratitude to National Security Commission Chairman Allen Titus (IN) and NEC Richard Quattrin (IN) as well as all the Hoosier Legionnaires who have supported me. I had one of the most memorable years of my life and I give God the glory for allowing me to have this privilege. May he bless our Legion family and all who defend the cause of freedom, justice and democracy.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
Donald F. Simons, Texas

Serving my fellow veterans as the 44th National Historian of The American Legion is the fulfillment of my aspirations. National Commander Ronald Conley of Pennsylvania enabled my appointment as one of the 12 national officers. My gratitude to the Department of Texas and especially to Past National Commanders Joe L. Matthews, and Jack W. Flynt runs deep for their encouragement and leadership.

In October 2002, the National Histories Contest was held during the Fall National Executive Committee meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana. With 53 entries judged by 38 members of the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL). The wining results are as follows:

- One Year Department Narrative History—Department of South Dakota
- One Year Post Narrative History—Missing Man Post 667, Universal City, Texas
- One Year Department Yearbook History—Department of South Dakota
- One Year Post Yearbook History—Earl Collier Post 153, Olathe, Kansas

My duties include the recording of history for The American Legion. During our March Washington Conference retired Major General Brady, chairman, Citizen Flag Alliance, who has led our efforts to protect the Flag from physical desecration, stated "If that flag is precious enough to cover their coffins, it's precious enough to be protected" (The American Legion Magazine, May, 2003, p. 53). The House of Representatives continues to pass with overwhelming majority, while the Senate falls short of the required 67 votes for its passage to let the people decide the final outcome.

- From the moment of his election as National Commander Ronald F. Conley has engaged the Department of Veterans Affairs to save the VA health care system.
- Beginning with his first visit to the Dallas VAMC in September 2002 he has visited 60 VA hospitals to date.
- Started the "I Am Not a Number" campaign for testimonies highlighting the indeterminate long waiting periods for America's veterans who want to be treated by the VA.
- Testified before Congressional Committees numerous times to focus attention on the plight of the unseen sick America's veterans.
- Urged passage of concurrent receipt payments to retired disabled veterans.
- Traveled to 55 Departments, the Far East, Korea, Taiwan, England, Ireland,

Germany, Kosovo and Bosnia.

- Battled for the right, and succeeded, to have the veteran service organizations seated at the table for the CARES process as the VA realigns the health care system in the future years for all veterans.
- Stumped for mandatory funding for VA, and a Medicare billing procedure.
- Carried the torch to "Support Our Troops" as they are in harms way to preserve our freedoms.

- Prepared and delivered his executive report to members of Congress, the President and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs "A System Worth Saving: A Special Report on the Condition of VA Health Care in America". It stands as The American Legion's official statement on the most vital challenges facing veterans today—the preservation and funding of the VA health care system.

The job of the historian is simply to record. The need for the individuals trusted and empowered to make decisions based on the record is left to them. The promises made and the commitments implied, yet to be implemented remains for our grateful nation to fulfill to every veteran.

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following twenty-four (24) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

- Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Utah, Inc., covering the convocation of the 2006 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Salt Lake City, State of Utah, has been executed.
- A maintenance contract by and between The American Legion and Kewill Electronic Commerce, Inc., whereby Kewill Electronic Commerce, Inc. will provide software and maintenance of same for use in Emblem Sales shipping process.
- Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the computer room sub-flooring.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Coach-Net Motor Club, Inc., whereby Coach-Net Motor Club will provide a benefit plan "American Legion Roadside Assistance" to members of The American Legion.
- An Indenture of Mortgage by and between The American Legion and American United Life Insurance Company, whereby a refinance of a mortgage in the amount of $3,200,000.00 on property owned by The American Legion located at 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, Indiana, has been executed.
- A lease agreement by and between The American Legion and Pac-Van Leasing and Sales, whereby Pac-Van Leasing and Sales will lease a 45 foot trailer for storage emergencies.
- A subscription service agreement by and between The American Legion and CQ.Com on Congress, whereby CQ.Com on Congress will provide Hyperlink subscriptions of congressional publications to The American Legion.
- Eight (8) Baseball Regional Tournament Contracts and the Contract for The American Legion World Series.
- Two (2) 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:

Barton-Cotton-Famous Hospitality, Inc.
Association Group Insurance Administrators (AGIA)

- Seven (7) Subcontractor Standard List ProtectionAgreements 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:
  Marsh Affinity Group
  Goodkind & Goodkind
  Union Fidelity Life Ins. Co.
  TransAmerica Affinity Services
  Advertising Specialties
  Webcraft, LLC
  JH Marketing Services

Litigation

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF FAYETTE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

ESTATE OF LISA R. MICKENS, by and Through JoAnn Mickens and William Mickens; and WILLIAM MICKENS and JOANN MICKENS, Parents and Survivors of LISA R. MICKENS, Deceased, Plaintiffs,	)	CIVIL DIVISION No.: 1112 of 1999 GD
VAUGHN STEVENSON, an adult Individual; AMERICAN LEGION #762, A Corporation t/d/b/a AMERICAN LEGION; and ROSE FAIDLEY t/d/b/a/ THE SHOWBOAT, Defendants.	)	

This is a wrongful death case in which Plaintiff alleges Lisa Mickens attended a bar or lounge called "The Showboat" and American Legion Post No. 762 and Defendant Stevenson entered Post No. 762 with a 9mm handgun. He was supposedly already visibly intoxicated yet was served more alcohol. Plaintiffs claim Lisa Mickens and Stevenson left the Post together and Stevenson allegedly shot Lisa Mickens. The Complaint was served on The American Legion but contains absolutely no allegations against the National Organization. Despite this defect, the case was referred to the insurance company who retained counsel. We have agreed that The American Legion will not file an answer. The case is continuing against the Post. We will continue to watch it.

ANNA C. GILKEY	)	Superior Court of California
	)	County of Orange
Plaintiff	)	Central Justice Center
	)	
vs.	)	
	)	Case No. 00CC09989
	)	
CITY OF ANAHEIM;	)	
ANAHEIM IN '99	)	
CONVENTION	)	
CORPORATION; THE	)	
AMERICAN LEGION AND	)	
DOES 1 TO 50	)	

This is a personal injury case wherein the plaintiff, Anna C. Gilkey, alleges in her complaint that while attending the National Convention in Anaheim, California she slipped and fell due to water on the floor. The case is pending.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT
NO. 00-5348
(C.A. No. 98-1183)

MARY LOUISE CUMMINGS
Appellant,
v.
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,
Appellee

In this case, The American Legion has filed an Amicus Brief in support of plaintiff as authorized by Resolution No. 19, adopted by the National Executive Committee, October 18-19, 2000.

Plaintiff was a Navy flier. Portions of her personnel file were given to a novelist who allegedly used the information in a novel about naval flying. As a result, plaintiff says she was forced out of the Navy.

The trial court ruled that the Feres doctrine prevented her from bringing a privacy action and suing the United States Navy. The American Legion believes this is an unwarranted expansion of the Feres doctrine which, in this case, is being used to take away the rights of a veteran specifically protected by Congress.

The Appellate Court accepted the amicus petition of The American Legion and the brief. It ruled 2-1 in favor of the position of The American Legion. Ms Cummings can now proceed with her case. Even though our participation has ceased for the moment, we will continue to monitor the case.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

ANN S. AZDELL and DONALD B. FISHMAN,	)))	
Appellants	)))	DOCKET NUMBERS DC-300A-97-0368-I-1 DC-300A-97-0369-I-1
v.	))	
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MGT., Agency,	)	

The American Legion as authorized in Resolutjon No. 2, adopted September 4, 2000 by the National Executive Committee is preparing to file an Amicus Brief in support of veterans' preference.

The matter is currently stayed procedurally. The brief will be filed when the stay is lifted.

In this case, the administrative law judge ruled against veterans' preference, labeling it "discriminatory". The American Legion is totally in favor of veterans' preference and will absolutely oppose such an unwarranted characterization. On February 20, 2003, the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued an opinion upholding The American Legion's position. The case is now over.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, NINTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR
ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: CIO 99-2206

MARY KABASAKALIAN,
Plaintiff,
Vs.
ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
Defendant.

This is a slip and fall case against the Orange County Florida Convention Center because plaintiff allegedly tripped over a cord at the Orlando National Convention. The defense was tendered to The American Legion pursuant to the lease for the hall. The matter has been referred to our insurance company.

NO. GN102586

ELVIN R. ISCHY, JR.,	§ §	IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
Plaintiff,	§ §	
vs.	§ §	TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS
CURTIS ISCHY, CURTIS "T. J." BELL, AMERICAN LEGION POST #317,THE AMERICAN LEGION OF	§ § §	

TEXAS, AND THE AMERICAN LEGION	§	
	§	
Plaintiffs.	§	201st JUDICIAL DISTRICT

This case grows out of an alleged bar fight at a Post in Williamson County, Texas. One of the participants filed suit against his opponent, the Post, Post Officers, the Department and the National Organization.

The insurance company has declined coverage going beyond the four corners of the complaint. This is totally contrary to all practice and course of dealing with this insurance company. While relying on the ability of the plaintiff's attorney to properly plead has its problems, it has the advantage of being a very clear, bright line to determine coverage. This has been the course of dealing of The American Legion with Travelers Insurance since the policy was originally purchased. Now the claims' examiner in Texas insists that she has the right to go beyond the terms of the complaint. A bad faith letter has been sent to the insurance company pointing out the deficiencies in their position.

In the meantime, counsel has been obtained and the defense is proceeding for the account of the insurance company. A Summary Judgment motion was filed. This motion was granted. The Department of Texas also filed a Summary Judgment motion, which was granted. The case is now over.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ROBERT E. POLES, PLAINTIFF	IN FORMA PAUPERIS
V.	
THE AMERICAN LEGION: NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA SIXTH DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA GEORGE T. CORNISH POST 292 And for each listed above: COMMANDER 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996 JUDGE ADVOCATE 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996 ADJUTANT 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996	DOCKET NUMBER: 1:01CV05963

This case was filed by an individual who attempted to change the operation of his Post. Many letters to the effect have been exchanged over the years. Mr. Poles refused to believe that the National Organization had no jurisdiction and could not solve his problem. Eventually, disciplinary charges were brought against Mr. Poles. As far as we know, he failed to appeal to the Department claiming that the National Organization had to solve his problem. Since the National Organization has no jurisdiction, Mr. Poles was advised to appeal to his Department. He refused to do so and has now sued including every member of the Executive Committee of the Post, Department and National Organization and a number of officers. The case has been filed but to date no summons has been issued. We will be keeping an eye on the case. Clearly, there is no jurisdiction or venue in New York City or in the Federal Courts in New York.

The District Court dismissed the case. Despite the fact there was no service, Mr. Poles

appealed. His appeal was dismissed. He has now filed for reconsideration.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

BEVERLY EDWARDS, :	:	
Plaintiff,	:	
v.	:	Case No. AO201106
HARTFORD LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, et al.,	:	Judge Cartolano
Defendants.	:	

Despite the fact that the premiums of a lapsed policy weren't paid, the plaintiff contends that she was the beneficiary of a life insurance policy issued by Hartford Life Insurance Company as part of The American Legion Insurance program. The insurance company is defending The American Legion.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE
DISTRICT OF VERMONT

LEANN HASKELL	)	
Plaintiff	)	
	)	
	)	Civil Action Docket No.
	)	2:01-CV-324
	)	
AMERICAN LEGION, BALLARD-HOBART POST 36; AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF VERMONT, INC.; AND THE AMERICAN LEGION (NATIONAL ORGANIZATION),	)	
Defendants	)	

Plaintiff claims The American Legion, the Department of Vermont and Ballard-Hobart Post 36 failed to give her her COBRA rights under the Post's health plan and also claims a failure to pay health benefits and a violation of ERISA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, several Vermont laws and intentional infliction of emotion distress because the Post terminated her employment.

Plaintiff's attorney sent a letter asking The American Legion to waive service of process and voluntary enter the case to defend. Since the Post is independent and plaintiff did not work for The American Legion, this request was refused. Plaintiff's attorney was advised of the law, the Post's independence and that The American Legion would seek fees from the attorney for a frivolous and harassing case if The American Legion were served. This occurred in October, 2001. To date, we have not received service of process.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COLE COUNTY, MISSOURI

SEAN WEBER,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff	)	
	)	
v.	)	Case No. 02CV324813
	)	
AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL	)	
DEPARTMENT OF MISSOURI, INC.	)	
And	)	
AMERICAN LEGION AMERICANISM	)	
COMMISSION,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

This case started at the end of July when an American Legion baseball player desired to change teams in contravention of the Rules. The player filed suit for an injunction to require The American Legion to allow him to play for the team he desired even though it was totally against the rules. He is also eligible to play for his former team in 2003.

The initial Trial Judge is up for reelection and allowed the case to proceed. After much discussion between the plaintiff, the receiving or "illegal" team on these facts and the Department of Missouri, it was agreed the case would be dismissed. However, another judge, who is due to retire, reinstated it. We are waiting for a trial date.

C.A. No. 00-16423

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

	:	
MICHAEL A. NEWDOW,		
	:	
Plaintiff-Appellant,		
	:	D.C. No. CIV. 00-0495
	:	(E.D. Calif., Sacramento)
U. S. CONGRESS,		
et al.,	:	
Defendants-Appellees.	:	

On July 30, 2002, The American Legion filed a request to intervene and be heard in the en banc argument that has not yet been scheduled. Our brief was filed August 19,2002. Copies were distributed at the National Convention.

The original panel ruled the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance violated the establishment clause of the United States Constitution. Our brief demolishes the flawed rational of the panel. Other amici include 48 state attorneys general and two territorial attorneys general. The rehearing has not been scheduled yet. The Ninth Circuit denied our motion to intervene after having us brief the merits, which is a total insult and attempt to cost us more. The Ninth Circuit then upheld its panel. The case has been appealed to the

United States Supreme Court and we have joined forty-nine (49) state attorneys' general and petitioned to become an amicus curiae (the Attorney General of California represents a party to the appeal making it all fifty (50) state attorneys' general on our side). We will be filing a brief on the merits at the appropriate time thus minimizing the expense caused by the Ninth Circuit because we can use most of the material in the Supreme Court.

Note: Now the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has ruled that a Pennsylvania Statute providing for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance violates the United States Constitution because it unreasonably interferes with the "values and philosophies" certain schools wish to instill in their students. (Apparently, patriotism is not well thought of by this judge or the schools.) The case is being appealed. We will watch it closely to see if we need to become an amici here too.

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF GOODHUE

DISTRICT COURT
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Marcus Robert Urban, a minor
Michael Thomas Urban, a minor,
And Brett Ryan, a minor,
By and through their parent and
Natural guardian, Todd Michael Urban,
And Todd Michael Urban, Individually,
Plaintiffs,

v.

Court File NO.

The American Legion and its subdivisions; and
The American Legion, Department of Minnesota

This is a dram shop case, which arises out of an automobile accident that occurred in Goodhue County, Minnesota. According to the complaint, the plaintiffs claim they were riding in an automobile that was struck by another vehicle driven by Orvin Joel Rolland who allegedly was illegally operating his vehicle while under the influence of alcohol that allegedly had been sold to him by Pine Island Liquor and American Legion Post No. 184.

Counsel has been obtained and the defense is proceeding for the account of the insurance company. The plaintiffs' attorney has been misusing discovery as a club to harass and the Court is allowing it. The case is continuing.

SURROGATE'S COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NASSAU

Proceeding for Letters of Administration,
Estate of
FRANK J. CARELLA,
Deceased

FILE NO. 328210

The American Legion was named as a Remainderman in a Trust created by Frank J. Carella, deceased. The decedent's will made no provisions for his widow, Pasqualina Carella. She filed a Notice of Election as a widow to take a life estate despite the trust with an Order to Show Cause with a Temporary Restraining Order and a Petition to be appointed Administratrix of the Estate.

The American Legion entered its appearance and has petitioned the Court for an order determining the effect of the purported election and determination of the full value of the property. The case is pending.

02-271

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY, MONSANTO COMPANY, et al,
Petitioners

v.

DANIEL RAYMOND STEPHENSON, et al,
Respondents

The American Legion was an amicus in this case which was appealed to the Supreme Court. The plaintiffs show symptoms of "agent orange contamination" from service in Vietnam. The old class action fund had been depleted. Even though their symptoms were not apparent at the time of the class action settlement, they and many others were included in the settlement at the last minute without representation or notice.

The chemical companies were arguing this was a proper settlement. The Second Circuit ruled in favor of the veterans. The chemical companies appealed. After argument, the Supreme Court split evenly (Justice Stevens had recused himself because of his son's exposure and death from agent orange related causes). This means the Second Circuit opinion stands. Other claimants were remanded to state court. This matter is now closed successfully.

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. The National Judge Advocate has rendered 778 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 five (5) 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 257 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 American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2002 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.

EMPLOYEES' SALARY SAVINGS (401(K)) PLAN

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2002 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 is overseeing preparation of the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

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 Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. and attended all but one of the board meetings of said corporation and caused the minutes of each meeting to be prepared and distributed. The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel 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 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 25 registrations and reports have been filed. Some counties even attempt to require registrations and reports. The National Emergency Fund has been converted to a Trust and an application filed with the Internal Revenue Service for charitable status.

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 the 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: Human Resources, Maintenance, Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.
- He serves on the Personnel Committee, Publications Board, HPC Board of Directors, and the IT Committee.

The Administrative Services Division also provides all secretarial assistance to the executive officers of The American Legion. All Division Directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the Executive Director.

MAIL

June 1, 2002 through May 31, 2003

Incoming Letters (distributed to Divisions for processing)	966.360
Incoming Parcels	6,998
Outgoing Letters/Parcels(Exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	9,775,719

FREIGHT AND EXPRESS
June 1, 2000 through May 31, 2001

Out (cartons)	2,244
Out (pounds)	156,463
UPS (in)	2,307
UPS (out)	7,913

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.

Indexing of documents continues. Resolutions have been indexed back to 1950. Staff vacancies have been the major reason that *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch* indexes are not more current.

Requests for information from researchers have continued to increase. The Web site of the Legion displays our background and this, too, generates visitors and researchers to the Library. Our collection of military unit histories is excellent and draws many historians.

Some projects that the staff have worked on have been:

- Compiling of various subject lists.
- The resolution process with The National Legion College.

Without our donations, our collection could not be as valuable as it is. We have two donors in particular who have stood out with their very generous contributions. Robert H. Barnes from Battle Creek, Michigan has contributed many of the books in our collection and his name is often mentioned in the list of contributors. He has sent his donations both financially and in the form of books.

We also recognize Mrs. Marilyn C. Gotzen who has carried out the wishes of the late John G. Gotzen, a long-time member of The American Legion and a collector of military history books. Well over one thousand volumes have been added to our collection from the Gotzen's generosity.

Among other new books added to The American Legion Library, along with the names of the donors, are the following:

Videos: *Benedict Arnold; Rommel: The Last Knight, Uprising; Operation Daybreak, Enemy At The Gates, Patton: A genius For War, Stalin, The Lost Battalion, The Bunker* , and *The Plot to Kill Hitler; Stalin.* Books: *The Rumsfeld Way: Leadership Wisdom of a Battle-Hardened Maverick* by Jeffrey A. Krames; *Fort Douaumont: Verdun* by Christina Holstein; *The Case Against Lawyers* by Catherine Crier; *Blitzkrieg: The Unpublished Photographs 1939-1942* by Ian Baxter; *Gettysburg: A novel of the Civil War* by Newt Gingrich and William Forstchen; *To America; Personal Reflections of a Historian* by Stephen Ambrose; *Treason: Liberal Treachery From The Cold War to the War On Terrorism* by Ann Coulter; *Who's Buried in Grant's Tomb?: A Tour of Presidential Gravesites* by Brian Lamb and C-SPAN *Perilous Missions* by William M. Leary donated by Robert Barnes.

Collection of books (approximately 1,100) from the estate of John G. Gotzen donated by Marilyn C. Gotzen.

The Hunter and the Hunted donated by the author, Bennett J. Palmer, Sr..

Keeping Faith by Brian Harding donated by the Royal British Legion.

A Line in the Sand by State of Indiana Military Dept. donated by Johnson County Public Library.

Heroes From the Heartland Union County, Ohio by Claudia Robinson and the Fairbanks 2002 8th Grade Class donated by Lois Gruenbaum.

The Disabled Emergency Officers of the World War: History, Scope, Purpose pamphlet donated by Coralina Daly.

Check in the amount of $100.00 donated by NADHAL for the purchase of books.

The 88th Division in the World War of 1914-1918 by Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. donated by Max T. Hansen.

Election of Officers for Seneca County and the *History of Seventh District, Department of New York* donated by Raphael J. Blevin, historian, 7th District, Dept of New York.

Only 317 Survived!: Navy's Worst Tragedy at Sea...880 Men Died donated by Connie Lamm.

Song: *American Legion Song* donated by the songwriter, Emmett Burtchaell.

Road to Life donated by the author, Stacy W. Payne, Jr.

Correspondence Received and Filed	1,262
Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Filed	256
Periodicals Received	4,444
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* Catalogued	348
Correspondence Written by National Historian	429
Correspondence Written by Librarian	453
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	692
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Returned	286
Prominent Legionnaire Entries to Membership File	30,198
Photos Indexed	3,016
Requests Answered via Telephone	8,012
Requests Answered via Visits to Library	492
Follow-ups of Correspondence	395
Items Microfilmed	20,012
Requests of Membership Listing	501
Rolls of Microfilm Added to Stock	24
E-mail	15,741

Museum
Joseph J. Hovish, Curator

The Emil A. Blackmore Museum continues to be visited by individuals and groups. Our Visitors' Book also show most states represented. Represented countries of visitors included the Czech Republic, Canada, England, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Columbia, France, and the Philippines .

Once again, we thank our donors for their contributions to the collection. Significant objects added in the past year, with the donors' name, include the following:

Purple Heart first-day cover; Purple Heart matted keepsake; Purple Heart stamps; Scotland-themed stamps; United Kingdom Coronation Postal Stamps; Purple Heart Postal Stamps; RAF Second World War Aircraft identification towel; Commemorative Covers from Belgium, Tunisia and Great Britain donated by Robert Barnes.

Mitrailleuse Automatique Hotchkiss 8 millimeter air-cooled machine gun, Serial No. M18926; Affut Hotchkiss (tripod mount) Model 1918, Serial No. 7988; Maxim Gun MG08/15 water-cooled, manufacturer J. P. Sauer & Sohn, Suhl, Germany, Serial No. 7282; Case for Lewis gun, Model 1917, Savage Arms Company, Case No. 2769 donated by Vincent E. Blank.

Photographs donated by Carl Levi.

Woman's Legionnaire Uniform donated by Shirley S. Melvin-Barrett.

American Legion Los Angeles Railway Pass dated 1936 donated by John Evans.

Chaplain's Field Organ (Estey Portable Folder Reed Organ) donated by Bob Crook.

Mess kit from WWI donated by Pearl A. Seale.

INTERNET OPERATIONS

Ronald E. Brooks, Tennessee, Executive Director

The American Legion's Internet Operations group resides in the Member Benefits Division, located at Legion Building #2 on Fort Benjamin Harrison. The American Legion web site www.legion.org provides the organization with an efficient and effective means in which to communicate with Legionnaires, the veteran community and the general public.

The American Legion's web site provides over 5,000 web pages of information relating to the organization and is divided into easy to navigate areas. Over 1 million unique individuals visited the Legion's site since August 2002 and over 8 million pages were viewed. Some of the more popular areas include: The Legion's response to the September 11 attack on America (on-going), Flag Education, Legion Baseball, Legion Magazine, and Veterans Affairs, to name a few. The Internet Operations staff is also responsible for the management and maintenance of the Citizens Flag Alliance web site, the Child Welfare Foundation site, the Legion Kids site, the National American Legion Press Association, and the latest "Support Our Troops" site, which provided useful guidance to people to help troops at the needed time, and now, welcomes them home.

The Internet Operations staff is responsible for reading all incoming e-mail to the organization via the web site and forwarding them to the appropriate divisions for response. Tens of thousands of e-mails were read and distributed this year, and that number continues to grow.

As the role of the Internet and e-mail communications continues to grow in our society, The American Legion web site will continue to play a vital role in membership acquisition. Prospective members have a variety of options available to them depending on what they are most comfortable with. 1) Veterans can ask to sign up by sending a message to the Membership Division of National Headquarters to be billed to their home address. 2) Veterans can print out the membership form found on the web site and mail the completed form back to National Headquarters. 3) Veterans can complete an online application (a secured form) and send it directly to National Headquarters with their credit card information. In 2003 legion.org brought 3000 new members to The American Legion at NO additional cost. By comparison, to acquire that many members through direct mail would cost approximately $80,000 on average. The cost effectiveness is indisputable.

The Internet services area continues to improve the Web Site, adding features such as an archive of press releases, a coloring contest for kids, and several new sites to support specific programs, such as the upcoming Dedication Day for World War II veterans. Thousands of e-cards were sent via The American Legion web site to active military and veterans worldwide during the very successful Veterans Day program.

Staff assigned to this area includes an Internet Manager, a Web Content Manager and a Web Developer.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) DIVISION
Ronald E. Brooks, Tennessee, Executive Director

The Information Technology (IT) Division Staff play a key role in the selection of all software to be used by National Headquarters staff. IT also determines and procures the hardware to be used by employees of National Headquarters and is responsible for troubleshooting and maintaining the equipment. The IT Division maintains the telecommunications that inter-connect the two Indianapolis, Indiana offices with our facility in Washington, D.C.

IT 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 IT Division administers. This software ensures that all mailings are done at the lowest cost by complying with U.S. Postal Service guidelines.

The IT Division also has the capability to perform high-speed personalized laser printing. Annual membership cards, membership solicitation letters, renewal notices, return address labels for the Departments' fundraising programs and mailing labels for a variety of communications pieces are all printed by the IT Division.

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 and youth development, 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 immigrants 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 current major legislative initiative of The American Legion is the continuing efforts to effect 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 in The American Legion's series of National Leadership and Information Conferences. These conferences are held annually at different locations within eight regions of the country during the spring and fall. The Commission uses these conferences as an opportunity to train and provide information to Americanism program volunteers.

Following is a summary of the several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2002-2003 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that 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 68 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, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, The American Legion celebrated its 57th 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 25,000 young Americans take part in Boys State, and through 68 years, the program has graduated well over 1,750,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2003, the program was again held in Washington, DC, during July, 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. Robert C. "Charlie" Walker, Jr. (AL) was elected President of the 57th anniversary session of Boys Nation. He joined the youth champion delegation as a guest of the National Commander at the National Convention of The American Legion in St. Louis, Missouri, August 22-26, 2003.

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 66th 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 2003-2004.

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 scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 66th annual National Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2003. The three finalists were: First place—Henry J. Shea, Wayzata, Minnesota; second place—William Glaser, Scio, Oregon; third place—Thomas Joraanstad, Glendale, Arizona.

Boys Scouts of America

The American Legion charters approximately 2,500 Scout Units in communities across the country involving more than 71,000 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion selected Aaron Allen of Irvine, California, as its 2003 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community

and scouting achievements. He will receive a $10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

Three Eagle Scouts were named runners-up for the award and each will receive a $2,500 scholarship. They are Jamil Coury, Glendale, Arizona; Randall Porch, Stuart, Florida; and Jason Lansdell, Nashville, Tennessee.

In addition, an estimated 4,800 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 and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has 793 active clubs with almost 10,000 young people participating.

The thirteenth annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 5-10, 2003, 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 1,400 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the three positions of prone, kneeling and standing.

The 2003 winners were Tarl Kempley of Reno, Nevada (Precision) and Cody Cleland of Bogalusa, Louisiana (Sporter). Both received $1,000 scholarships provided by the Sons of The American Legion.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund

The American Legion administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship. This scholarship, established in 1957, was created to assist Registered Nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in 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 2003-2004, awarded twenty $3,000 scholarships to recipients in ten states for one year's study to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 47 years to 803 scholarships, totaling $1,599,500 to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2004-05 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands 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 the 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 no cost to all who request it.

In 1988, The American Legion published *Our Country's Flag*, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one 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. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact 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 and honesty.

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 78th season in 2003. Over 95,000 players on 5,200 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2002-2003 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year was Ty Henkaline of Minster, Ohio.

More than 9 million dollars in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by the Legion's National Organization to conduct eight Regional Tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Forty-five 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 55 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 and 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. A program of the Americanism Commission, reports of activities are made 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 the publication *Firing Line*, to disseminate information on groups and organizations participating in activities of a subversive nature.

During the past year, *Firing Line* has reported on matters concerning illegal immigration, espionage and terrorism, both domestic and international.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Dr. Charles L. Vawter, Jr., Arizona, Chairman

The National Committee on Education, established in 1976, is comprised of members from both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the Committee are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary; and (3) to maintain contact with the education community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, 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 that 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 republic. 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 without 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 individuals to pursue their 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 their potential which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers that 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 of The American Legion 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 *Need A Lift?;* (3) participation 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 the program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the Nation's schools. This year's theme is "Great Public Schools for Every Child—America's Promise." The observance will be November 16-22, 2003.

The publication *Need A Lift?* is revised annually and contains 160 pages of scholarship, grant 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. Each fall, complimentary copies of *Need A Lift?* are sent to more than 27,000 high schools across the nation. In all, last year over 100,000 copies of *Need A Lift?* were distributed from the Legion's National Headquarters.

A companion to *Need A Lift?* 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 done 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 $3.95 plus shipping and handling, prepaid. *A Guide for Parents and Students* is available at a cost of $13.95 per 500 or $23.00 per 1,000 copies, plus shipping and handling, prepaid.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide educational opportunities for the children of American service men and women killed while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund will provide "American Legacy Scholarships" to the children to attend college and will be in addition to their governmental entitlements. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include the National High School Oratorical Contest, Eagle Scout of the Year, American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship, Gatorade Sportsmanship Award Scholarship, and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion issues, on average, $450,000 annually to eligible students are able to further their education.

The *PACT Handbook* is the guide for American Legion Education Chairmen. It contains information on the goals and objectives of the education 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 a student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and a 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
Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota—Vice-Chairman
Roger L. Wild, Lincoln, Nebraska—Commander's Representative
Kermit Holtgrewe, Belleville, Illinois—Consultant
Charles E. Gannon, Landover Hills, Maryland—Consultant

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH

Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

Since its beginning, The American Legion has voiced concern for the care, welfare, and education of our Nation's children and youth. As early as November 1919, Posts were asked to aid the widows and children of our deceased comrades.

Through 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. The early years were devoted to progressive child care and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations—the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Eight & Forty—many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded 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 area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, 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:

- 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.

- 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.
- 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 eighty-four 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 maintain a 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 are 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.

2002-2003 Program

In May of each year, The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth meets to consider what programs it wants to emphasize. When a decision is made, the National staff researches these areas of concern and publishes materials to support our volunteers.

For the program year 2002-03, the Commission voted to focus their efforts on the following quality of life issues, which directly impact our young people on the National level:

1. Child Health—Children's Hospitals
2. Child Safety—Youth Violence in the Schools
3. Child Safety—Teenage Suicide Prevention
4. Family Preservation—Family Life Education & Parental Responsibilities

Children's Hospitals: Since our beginning, the Legion has worked to increase the quality of life for all young people. Our partnership with Children's Miracle Network underscores this mission. Children's Miracle Network (CMN) raises critically needed funds for 170 children's hospitals, which treat 17 million children annually in the United States and Canada. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions and injuries,

rendering service based on need, not the ability to pay. They annually provide $2.5 billion in uncompensated charity care and are committed to turning no child away.

Children's Miracle Network is dedicated to ensuring that 100 percent of local donations made through CMN Champions (the continuing theme of CMN's fund-raising campaign) stay in the community in which they were raised to benefit children treated at participating hospitals.

In July 2002, The American Legion teamed with International Dairy Queen to say thank you to those who have made and continue to make tremendous sacrifices for our country. Dairy Queen created a special Red, White & Blue Blizzard sundae as a fun way to show pride and support for our nation's military while contributing to a worthwhile cause—hospitalized children.

During July, these patriotic Blizzards were available in Dairy Queen stores throughout the United States. A portion of their sales benefitted Children's Miracle Network's affiliated children's hospitals.

Proclaiming July 6 "American Legion/Military Day," Dairy Queen stores served free 5-ounce sundaes to American Legion Family members, as well as our men and women in uniform. To coincide with the Legion's annual fund-raising efforts, paper Miracle Flags were sold in Dairy Queen stores to benefit local children's hospitals. Grassroots events were held at DQ stores in a number of communities throughout the country, with participation from the Legion Family, the National Guard and Reserve units.

This joint "Red, White & Blue" promotion raised $600,000 for Children's Miracle Network during the month of July and proved to be the single highest fundraising month in Dairy Queen's 19-year history. Dairy Queen store operators who participated in grassroots events with local Legion Posts saw an increase in product sold. Both the Dairy Queen system and The American Legion Family recognized a good deal of media and promotional value. Overall, the promotion was a success, and in the words of Children's Miracle Network, the efforts of The American Legion were "remarkable." Dairy Queen and Children's Miracle Network extended their appreciation to The American Legion Family for the intensive labor involved in the project and the coordination of such an extensive event.

The Commission encourages its Departments and Posts to work with and support their local CMN-affiliated children's hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children. During the 2002-2003 program year, the combined American Legion family provided more than $4.2 million dollars in total donations to local children's hospitals nationwide. This is due directly to the dedicated efforts of Legion family members throughout this nation who have embraced this program.

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention: 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 result in imprisonment. 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. By action of The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth, Youth Violence in the Schools was unanimously approved as one of its major areas of concern. We have developed support materials to be disseminated to communities through our volunteer network of Legion members.

Teenage Suicide Prevention: According to national 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 commits suicide and as many as 40 others make the attempt.

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 Admininstrative 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
REGION 1											
Connecticut	28%	26%	$2,500	$3,713	$19,206	$69,536	$23,327	$800	$95	4,612	$119,177
Maine	98%	43%	3,381	1,461	55,164	149,388	76,252	0	135	14,535	$285,781
Massachusetts	21%	73%	934	1,739	94,657	50,558	49,021	202	183	17,132	$197,294
New Hampshire	68%	56%	4,425	2,046	107,975	119,688	112,438	0	65	24,894	$346,637
Rhode Island	2%	85%	545	50	5,069	1,214	2,150	0	60	630	$9,088
Vermont	1%	76%	0	660	10,411	13,769	21,160	0	90	9,987	$46,090
TOTAL:	**39%**	**57%**	**11,785**	**9,669**	**292,482**	**404,153**	**284,348**	**1,002**	**628**	**71,790**	**$1,004,067**
REGION 2											
Delaware	100%	100%	4,758	1,076	40,536	37,520	40,696	560	(2)	10,318	$125,146
D.C.	0%	0%	0	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	$75
Maryland	74%	81%	550	1,582	244,290	712,714	190,333	50	156	63,840	$1,149,675
New Jersey	30%	79%	4,937	4,155	42,915	154,658	41,982	0	125	7,525	$248,772
New York	68%	100%	4,500	19,556	629,677	1,385,695	596,558	1,160	176	91,077	$2,637,721
Pennsylvania	59%	0%	1,415	1,918	219,094	448,674	283,727	0	657	13,518	$955,485
Virginia	93%	81%	10,368	1,408	238,869	404,890	198,999	73,781	185	72,193	$928,500
West Virginia	72%	54%	2,994	225	110,229	133,362	87,009	656	225	23,896	$334,700
TOTAL:	**63%**	**87%**	**29,522**	**30,395**	**1,525,610**	**3,277,513**	**1,439,304**	**76,207**	**1,524**	**282,367**	**$6,380,074**
REGION 3											
Alabama	16%	45%	10,144	1,445	43,177	40,850	24,027	150	141	8,372	$119,934
Florida	87%	100%	5,289	16,430	355,155	810,814	206,632	575	588	48,918	$1,395,483
Georgia	65%	15%	1,551	3,475	280,195	403,559	190,817	325	(2)	54,934	$879,922
Kentucky	59%	33%	22,150	3,165	146,462	303,490	97,197	0	303	31,303	$572,767
North Carolina	20%	29%	4,136	5,521	70,473	51,240	44,283	0	(2)	4,242	$185,633
South Carolina	23%	12%	3,528	137	29,937	91,788	43,207	874	(2)	5,642	$169,471
Tennessee	26%	9%	3,800	651	37,264	51,228	20,377	0	0	6,127	$113,320
TOTAL:	**44%**	**41%**	**50,599**	**30,823**	**962,663**	**1,762,969**	**626,520**	**1,924**	**1,032**	**160,538**	**$3,436,530**
REGION 4											
Arkansas	21%	23%	2,265	49	17,633	23,657	9,653	0	61	10,665	$53,317
Louisiana	19%	53%	0	2,158	38,769	68,075	24,804	8,700	78	6,601	$142,584
Mississippi	22%	24%	4,100	2,800	31,165	109,352	31,762	35	46	1,919	$179,260
Oklahoma	40%	60%	13,247	0	74,413	70,737	36,492	517	302	3,499	$195,708
Texas	40%	68%	0	7,432	112,864	319,768	130,908	0	114	69,326	$571,086
TOTAL:	**31%**	**53%**	**19,612**	**12,439**	**274,844**	**591,589**	**233,619**	**9,252**	**601**	**92,010**	**$1,141,955**
REGION 5											
Illinois	24%	64%	10,534	8,390	104,697	203,262	109,877	500	0	15,357	$437,260
Indiana	45%	65%	20,915	6,619	202,178	535,014	161,970	326	1,024	12,025	$928,046
Michigan	53%	0%	13,937	2,245	162,408	266,754	212,043	250	1,431	20,580	$659,068
Missouri	38%	30%	6,238	1,610	75,656	206,671	141,257	85	85	22,388	$431,602
Ohio	79%	58%	3,951	12,742	385,626	712,742	400,729	1,677	1,671	1,101,912	$1,519,137
Wisconsin	82%	71%	1,770	3,367	58,079	135,189	166,497	4,296	(2)	8,864	$369,198
TOTAL:	**52%**	**52%**	**57,346**	**34,973**	**988,644**	**2,059,632**	**1,192,373**	**7,134**	**4,365**	**1,181,126**	**$4,344,312**
REGION 6											
Iowa	40%	84%	2,985	807	35,843	86,465	89,134	1,000	(2)	16,076	$216,234
Kansas	59%	29%	4,600	4,025	82,002	33,485	94,421	5,990	335	25,496	$224,858
Minnesota	48%	87%	40,522	3,080	274,207	540,639	296,848	0	305	43,817	$1,157,601
Nebraska	71%	79%	759	2,147	45,328	169,210	110,655	5,250	524	44,961	$333,873
North Dakota	52%	60%	7,380	1,091	94,821	110,153	72,945	300	(2)	16,316	$286,691
South Dakota	35%	58%	0	344	11,193	42,341	14,269	874	250	19,105	$59,271
TOTAL:	**50%**	**71%**	**56,247**	**11,493**	**543,394**	**982,293**	**680,272**	**13,414**	**1,414**	**165,771**	**$2,288,527**
REGION 7											
Arizona	79%	46%	36,965	1,538	163,384	85,164	212,371	350	852	56,064	$500,624
California	35%	100%	500	7,322	270,845	254,544	336,701	300	2,159	57,496	$872,371
Colorado	42%	55%	2,695	1,359	69,991	103,117	48,376	48	29	13,020	$225,615
Hawaii	54%	80%	2,500	104	2,435	10,810	1,330	0	89	563	$17,268
Nevada	35%	16%	1,164	75	3,766	4,958	2,872	0	70	2,491	$12,905
New Mexico	39%	62%	5,043	1,525	53,034	78,361	29,955	8,572	545	3,360	$177,036
Utah	25%	41%	2,512	690	15,279	4,335	5,385	200	209	906	$28,610
TOTAL:	**41%**	**73%**	**51,379**	**12,614**	**578,734**	**541,289**	**636,990**	**9,470**	**3,953**	**133,900**	**$1,834,428**
REGION 8											
Alaska	53%	59%	0	196	122,744	132,017	66,140	2,294	902	6,231	$324,292
Idaho	73%	41%	17,305	1,365	39,429	21,732	12,524	200	35	13,969	$92,590
Montana	100%	0%	2,865	25	12,128	13,536	115,008	300	0	3,358	$143,862
Oregon	43%	51%	0	1,133	91,902	184,737	35,132	150	155	37,313	$313,209
Washington	94%	100%	102,458	4,210	44,250	46,750	31,369	1,200	704	13,160	$230,941
Wyoming	98%	18%	604	617	12,776	7,774	17,272	0	361	11,406	$39,404
TOTAL:	**80%**	**62%**	**123,232**	**7,546**	**323,229**	**406,546**	**277,445**	**4,144**	**2,157**	**85,437**	**$1,144,298**
REGION TOTALS	**50%**	**62%**	**399,720**	**149,952**	**5,489,599**	**10,025,984**	**5,370,872**	**122,547**	**15,673**	**2,172,939**	**$21,574,191**
FOREIGN											
France	38%	0%	0	100	5,118	1,065	14,688	0	0	366	$20,971
Mexico	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
Philippines	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
Puerto Rico	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
TOTAL:	**38%**	**0%**	**0**	**100**	**5,118**	**1,065**	**14,688**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**$20,971**
SUBTOTAL:	**50%**	**62%**	**399,720**	**150,052**	**5,494,717**	**10,027,049**	**5,385,560**	**122,547**	**15,673**	**2,172,939**	**$21,595,317**

(2) - Not organized in the Department

TABLE #1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2002 - MAY 31, 2003

Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$10,030
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	$20,000
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$1,442
Children & Youth Division by National 8/40	$1,250
Other children programs by Jr. Auxiliary	$0
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	$15,016
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$641
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$274,077
Child Wefare Foundation by National Legion	$260
GRAND TOTAL	$21,918,034

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2002	Jun-Dec 02	Jan-May 03	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	165,155.82	118,770.41	8,218.99	1925.43	451,209.49
Alaska	—	1,627.56	1,550.00	—	—	—	—	3,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,752.00	21,380.31	228,396.73	205,507.96	21,023.67	15941.67	527,064.04
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,962.22	2,881.07	58,723.29	12,534.77	600.00	1665.33	136,239.88
California	30,106.15	16,026.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	6,950.00	500.00	—	62,691.60
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	13,205.83	2,129.19	1,195.00	1500.00	83,664.24
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	5,971.56	1,500.00	1,000.00	12,407.56
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	6,757.64	4,757.64	—	17,660.28
D. of C.	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,636.75	2,319.00	—	—	33,329.25
Florida	33,341.28	25,520.50	2,530.00	33,542.76	31,602.12	1,980.00	3309.00	131,825.66
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	3,950.00	—	1550.99	174,842.99
Hawaii	870.00	—	900.00	—	2,500.00	2,500.00	—	6,770.00
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	24,202.62	92,586.29	7,408.12	9897.29	154,826.06
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	129,729.07	219,272.20	5,733.76	4800.46	404,625.54
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	152,703.98	101,305.71	8,164.65	12750.68	318,761.50
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	16,982.47	181,548.80	2,493.03	492.00	223,534.83
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,691.54	5,800.00	3,800.00	800.00	91,845.69
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	48,497.66	91,107.64	15,308.06	6841.73	295,981.45
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,640.45	1,800.00	—	—	74,690.25
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	20,812.00	15,695.50	1,381.00	2000.00	48,094.25
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	26,020.94	—	550.00	44,001.51
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	7,050.00	11,271.13	—	933.88	22,614.51
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	17,575.76	27,012.96	10,123.02	3814.30	131,049.43
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	172,036.26	21,512.04	32,476.40	8045.45	277,844.04
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	54,314.88	34,282.95	2,425.00	1675.00	314,138.16
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.84	11,056.00	19,362.51	23,558.77	2,846.10	3,391.51	161,087.61
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	45,267.56	18,704.48	2,865.00	—	75,495.44
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	4,520.25	759.49	759.49	—	59,836.07
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	1,495.00	2,516.35	—	1163.62	13,797.97
New Hampshir	4,250.50	4,941.50	—	55,557.79	10,450.00	4,425.00	—	79,624.79
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	65,437.20	44,609.10	4,136.60	800.00	130,402.43
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	117,760.24	39,645.33	3,288.50	1754.53	294,345.53
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	42,484.24	56,185.91	3,035.08	1465.25	117,011.02
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	23,502.67	18,138.19	2,155.14	1,980.91	183,134.01
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	7,054.40	9,316.74	1,855.86	5524.34	67,338.32
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	12,357.65	5,926.00	3,151.00	800.00	62,895.22
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	171,688.84	142,567.84	7,468.11	5778.47	522,323.81
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	46,815.83	13,176.00	—	—	99,588.43
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	—	—	—	—	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,683.37	12,163.13	1,414.99	—	94,964.75
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	49,720.00	10,900.00	—	—	190,930.50
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	19,527.38	11,200.14	545.00	—	35,535.52
South Carolina	68,453.05	26,693.34	5,339.00	900.00	6,127.34	3,528.26	—	111,040.99
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	46,361.43	3,895.30	—	—	109,774.05
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	61,868.79	16,184.91	1,300.00	2500.00	188,215.97
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	8,534.74	4,366.78	—	—	122,381.95
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	13,414.42	12,034.34	1,111.84	1400.00	45,730.08
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.50	—	5,425.00	1,088.00	—	—	17,589.00
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,836.00	37,295.82	19,143.41	6,999.13	—	154,622.45
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	100,545.28	271,280.34	71,296.57	31161.42	478,714.11
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	24,514.68	23,213.23	885.01	2108.87	93,207.71
Wisconsin	15,881.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	19,309.78	20,022.34	1,770.18	—	74,929.53
Wyoming	8,180.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	2,279.00	5,728.17	603.68	—	20,133.85
Other Depts	560.00	173.50	—	—	—	—	—	733.50
Miscellaneous	19,499.21	—	—	—	—	—	—	19,499.21
	(1)				(2)			
TOTAL	**$1,121,572.95**	**$1,089,976.73**	**$777,325.21**	**$2,253,246.25**	**$2,031,110.44**	**$257,028.88**	**$139,322.13**	**$7,669,582.59**

1) Includes $19,499.21 for the year 1926--Department totals not available

2) Includes first 5 months of 2003

Table 3

Comparison of Number of Children of WW II, Korean, Vietnam, Grenada/Lebanon and Panama Veterans Receiving Aid from National Children and Youth Division

	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Grenada/ Lebanon	Panama	Desert Storm	Totals
June	0	0	20	9	6	16	51
July	0	0	18	18	3	29	68
August	0	0	14	33	19	32	98
September	2	0	22	29	10	29	92
October	0	0	29	14	2	29	74
November	0	0	43	21	4	13	81
December	0	0	29	25	3	34	91
January	0	1	34	12	8	37	92
February	0	0	24	3	6	24	57
March	0	0	35	14	12	22	83
April	0	0	8	5	5	20	38
May	0	0	26	12	5	42	85
Totals	2	1	302	195	83	327	910
Percentage	0.22%	0.11%	33.19%	21.43%	9.12%	35.93%	100.00%

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2002 through May 31, 2003

American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	3,494
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Poster	0
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	5,130
American Legion CWF Precious Moments Brochure	8,541
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	13,750
April is Children & Youth Month	24,659
Children's Miracle Network Champion Booklet	13,592
Family Support Network	30,155
Gateway Drugs	25,994
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	59,014
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Project Guide	670
Nathan's Visit Comic Books	815
National Family Week	15,276
National Resource Directory	442
Play It Safe Safety Booklet	1,831
TFA Applications	500
TFA Brochures	16,025
Walkathon Project Guide	2,042
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	30,155
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	3,096
Certificate of Meritorious Service	88
National Achievement Award	32
Special Children & Youth Citation	501
Reporting:	
Unit Report Form	4,547
We Want a Report from Your Unit or Salon	1,821
TOTAL	262,170

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 be lost.

Family Preservation: The family is the cornerstone of American society. But today, 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, stepfamilies, and single-parent families have reached all-time highs. More teenagers than ever hold 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 resolution, 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 mean time, to conduct our own observance of this important event.

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 to veteran's children, the Temporary Financial Assistance program is still unique in the social work field today and remains a very active program. In 2002, the program aided 901 children with more than $421,477 in grants. From its 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 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 that 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 a parent 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 31st 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 who were being maimed and drugged by "treats" they had gathered 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 at 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 department headquarters and all are encouraged to use them to help protect our children.

To supplement the brochure, the Commission produces a project guidebook. This guidebook provides suggestions to 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."

Child safety: The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920's. In 1992, the Commission on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of our annual or continuing programs.

Child safety is defined as any external event that 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, drownings, 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 25,000 children under the age of 19 will die in automobile crashes, drownings, fires, and through the improper use of firearms. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present.

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 that they 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. It is estimated that 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. The 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. 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.

National Leadership & Information Conferences (NLIC)

The 2002 NLICs saw an increase in the number of new attendees for both Legion and Auxiliary members. At these workshops, information on programs and methods of implementation is shared with the Posts and Units. In 2002, the NLIC's were:

Region 1—Nashua, New Hampshire—March 22-24
Region 2—Cherry Hill, New Jersey—April 19-21
Region 3—Macon, Georgia—April 5-7
Region 4—Dallas, Texas—September 20-222
Region 5—Indianapolis, Indiana—April 5-7
Region 6—Sioux City, Iowa—March 22-24
Region 7—Las Vegas, Nevada—April 5-7
Region 8 – Boise, Idaho – September 20-22

To stabilize expenses and encourage participation, the National Information Conferences remain at one site within each Region for three years. This provides Posts in every department 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 the annual program.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2002-2003 program year. At National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27-29, 2002, the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 99-2002. 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 progeny 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 born of 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.

Children in Pornographic Literature: Res. 239-2002. 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, "kiddy 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. 240-2002. 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. 241-2002. 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 immunized. 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. 242-2002. 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 local school boards, law enforcement agencies and their state organizations to 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. 243-2002. One of the basic principles of the children and youth 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. 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. 244-2002. 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. This is necessary 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.

Support for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Res. 247-2002. 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. They 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. OJJDP develops effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization. They coordinate all Federal juvenile delinquency programs and all Federal programs related to missing and exploited children. The Juvenile Justice and 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.

Catastrophic Illness among Children: Res. 245-2002. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being. In the Temporary Financial Assistance program, we have seen an increase in the caseload 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 financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Drug Trafficking: Res. 246 -2002. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the 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.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 248-2002. The producers of movies, television shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence. Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union defend such actions as the author's constitutional right of free speech without regard for the potential consequences to minor children. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity, and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and on the Internet. In addition, we encourage Departments and Posts to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public, about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth: Res. 249-2002. Many of our children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.

These are the highlights of our 2002-03 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth has constantly urged Departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our National objectives. Local Posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children -- everywhere.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 79 years, the Commission on Children & Youth records activities from the nearly 15,000 Posts of The American Legion, 11,000 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, Units and Departments of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary reported expenditures of $21,195,598. To this amount, we proudly add $2,106,882 by the Sons of The American Legion. Our Temporary Financial Assistance program provided $421,477 in grants to 431 families in need. Including $488,954 in contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, this amounts to a grand total of expenditures and contributions to the total Children & Youth program in 2002-03 of $24,212,911.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2002-03 program year, hundreds of thousands of pieces of Children & Youth literature were distributed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division in order to further the objectives of the 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 and Teenage Suicide Prevention. It is of further interest to note that some 3,717 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 take this opportunity to thank the volunteers of The American Legion family. Many hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice cannot be repaid. Special mention must also go to National Commander Ronald F. Conley not because of his rank, but because of his sincere dedication and enduring support for our programs this past year. In addition, the Commission sincerely thanks National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle for his support and cooperation. The members of The American Legion do 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
Robert D. Scott, Lebanon, Oregon—Vice-Chairman
W. Darrell Hansel, Vevay, Indiana -- National Commander's Representative
Walter F. Baker, Seneca Falls, New York—Consultant
Margaret M. Malone, Hamilton, New Jersey—Consultant
Talmage C. Carawan, Rockville, Maryland
James P. Holley, Center, Texas
Peggy Moon, St. Joseph, Minnesota
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Kenner, Louisiana
Miles Smith, Chicago, Illinois

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
U.S. "Udie" Grant, Kansas, President
William A. Pease, Indiana, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the Foundation has granted over six million dollars to other non-profit youth oriented organizations.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's foremost philanthropic priority is to provide other nonprofit organizations with a means to educate the public about the needs of children across this nation. The Foundation accepts proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that:

- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs to benefit youth; and/or
- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children 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 2002, the Board of Directors approved grants to 11 non-profit organizations in the amount of $283,900 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2003. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America	Philadelphia, PA	$40,000
Cancervive, Inc	Los Angeles, CA	$40,000
Children's Organ Transplant Association	Bloomington, IN	$40,000
Cornelia de Lange Syndrome Foundation	Avon, CT	$26,500
Foundation Fighting Blindness	Owings Mills, MD	$15,000
National CASA Association	Seattle, WA	$29,000
National Foundation for Ectodermal Dysplasias	Mascoutah, IL	$6,000
National Rife Association Foundation	Fairfax, VA	$20,100
Osteogenesis Imperfecta Foundation	Gaithersburg, MD	$34,200
Shwachman-Diamond Syndrome International	New Albany, OH	$8,100
Songs of Love Foundation	Forest Hills, NY	$25,000

During the 2002-2003 contribution year, donations exceeded $488,953 with over $274,000 of that amount coming to the Foundation from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the 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 their Foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will assist children by giving them a better chance at life. It is important to remember that every dollar given to the Foundation is put directly into the trust fund to be used for grants that assist our young people.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation held in Indianapolis on May 4, 2003, the following officers were elected: U.S. "Udie" Grant of Kansas, (President); James P. Holley of Texas, (Vice President); Kenneth D. Danilson of Iowa, (Secretary); and Robert Turner of Georgia, (Treasurer). Administrative personnel that were re-appointed by the Board of Directors were George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Assistant Treasurer) and William A. Pease (Executive Secretary).

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.

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMISSION
Jeffrey L. Olson, Minnesota, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 84th annual National Convention of the American Legion was conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 23-29, 2002. National Commander Richard J. "Ric" Santos (Maryland) called the national convention to order at 9:00AM on Tuesday, August 27, 2002. Commander Santos welcomed the Legionnaires to Charlotte, North Carolina and thanked them for their continuing service to our Country and to our Veterans. The Honorable Michael F. Easley, Governor of the State of North Carolina, the Honorable Patrick L. McCrory, and Mayor of the City of Charlotte, Milton Woodle, Department Commander, the American Legion Department of North Carolina, and Jerry L. Hedrick, President of the North Carolina National Convention Corporation welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. Congressmen Mel Watt, Walter Jones, Jr. Robin Hayes and Christopher Smith addressed convention attendees.

The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Thomas E. White, Secretary of the Army, Lieutenant General Bryan D. Brown, Commanding General, Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, the Honorable Thomas Ridge, Director of the Office of Homeland Security, Ms. Marie Osmond and Ms. Connie Stevens also addressed the attendees of the national convention.

The Honorable Robert Dole and the Honorable Robert Stump received presentations from National Commander Richard J. Santos during the national convention.

One of the many highlights for the 2002 National Convention was The National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests that took place in the Charlotte Convention Center. The Osmond Brothers, brought to The American Legion by the Children's Miracle Network, provided entertainment to a record crowd of Legionnaires and guests.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission held three regular meetings during the year. Discussions continue regarding the revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) that is sent to cities interested in hosting a National Convention. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process. It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities desirous of hosting our National Convention. This provides our "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with a varied and enjoyable convention that can be shared by all on an annual basis.

New color guard rules approved by the National Convention Commission for the 2001 convention were refined and improved for the 2002 national convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. One additional color guard class and one additional band contest class will be implemented at the 2003 national convention.

The National Convention Commission also rewrote and submitted for approval the Articles of Agreement between the host Convention Corporation and the National Organization of the American Legion for the conduct of the national convention. Included in this revision were update Convention Corporation Policy and Procedures, which are provided to each corporation hosting the national convention. This revision

will allow both organizations to more efficiently and effectively conduct the business of the national convention and those responsibilities for each contained therein. These new procedures become effective with the 2004 national convention in Nashville, Tennessee.

Beginning with the 1999 national convention and continued at the 2002 convention, each attendee had to have the proper identification badge/credentials to enter all of the venues of The American Legion national convention. On-site registration tables were available for those who needed to register at the site of the convention. This process continues to prove successful and will be in effect for all future national conventions. Additionally, the convention office was directed to procure a new paper within plastic badge for the national convention. This badge proposal was made available for the first time at the 2001 national convention and continued successfully at the 2002 national convention. There have been no changes to the traditional Distinguished Guests badges and the traditional badges continue to be available for purchase through the Emblem Sales Division during and after the national convention.

The National Convention Commission reviewed bids, provided to The American Legion, for the 2008 National Convention from the cities of Cincinnati, Ohio, Detroit, Michigan, Louisville, Kentucky and Phoenix, Arizona. Subsequent to conducting site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the National Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that the city of Phoenix, Arizona be tentatively awarded the National Convention for 2008, the dates being August 22-28, 2008. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Dates and future conventions are:

Nashville, Tennessee	August 27-September 2, 2004
Honolulu, Hawaii	August 19-25, 2005
Salt Lake City, Utah	August 18-24, 2006
Reno, Nevada	August 24-30, 2007

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Raymond J. Brodzinski, Missouri, Chairman

The Distinguished Guest Committee exists under the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities of all persons invited to attend the national convention as our distinguished guests.

The committee arranges each guest's arrival and departure at the national convention. Each distinguished guest is also assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the national convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
Kenneth A. Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director
Melvin E. Oehlert, Maryland, Acting Deputy 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, 2002, through June 30, 2003. 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.

2002-2003 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

- Members and guests of the National Economic Commission met on Saturday, August 24, 2002, in the Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina, in conjunction with the Eighty-fourth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 26, 2002. The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.
- An executive session of the National Economic Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 7-8, 2002. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 9-10, 2002.
- The National Economic Commission met in conjunction with the Forty-third Annual Washington Conference on Monday and Wednesday, March 3 and 5, 2003. 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.
- Members of the commission met on May 5-6, 2003, 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, 2003.

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 25, 2002; House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits; Transition Assistance Program and Disabled Transition Assistance Program.

April 30, 2003; House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits; the Veterans' Entrepreneurship Act of 2003, the Veterans' Federal Procurement Opportunity Act of 2003 and the Veterans' Learn and Earn Act.

April 30, 2003; House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health; Status of homeless programs conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

June 11, 2003; House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits; veterans' benefits legislation.

The economics staff prepared the commission's portion of the testimony that was presented in September 2002 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.

Administrative Activities

The commission's staff of two manages 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 a number of federal agencies, including the Department of Labor, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business

Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The deputy 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 National Association of State Workforce Agencies; the veterans' advisory committee of the Small Business Administration, its Service Corps of Retired Executives, and the Office of Personnel Management; and the Secretary of Commerce's Decennial Census Advisory Committee. They also act as advisors to the Legion's Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee.

In addition to those activities, the deputy director works closely with community based groups such as the National Organization on Disability, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, and the Veterans Organizations Homeless Council.

Another staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic 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 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, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Publications

As mentioned 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*.

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 awards 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 January 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, Kenneth A. Sercerchi (ME), appointed a six-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2002 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program. The purpose of this subcommittee was to select a national winner and a runner-up in each of the employer categories.

The members of the Employer of the Year Subcommittee met on March 3, 2003, to consider employer nominations from Departments.

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: Johns Manville, Defiance, Ohio

Medium Size Employer: TRW, Killeen, Texas

Small Employer: ACS State and Local Solutions, Lake City, Florida

Officials of the three winning companies have agreed to send representatives to the 85th Annual National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, 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.

Employment Service 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, 2003. Winners are to receive their plaques at their respective Department Conventions. National winners are the following:

LVER of the Year: Alonzo Philmore, Lake City, Florida

DVOP of the Year: Richard Perez, Yuma, Arizona

ES Office of the Year: Central Texas Workforce Center, Killeen, Texas

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director
Melvin E. Oehlert, Maryland, Acting Deputy 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.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE COMMITTEE
Richard T. Lee Jr., California, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director
Melvin E. Oehlert, Maryland, Acting Deputy 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 Commission's interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

Department of Labor: The Acting Deputy Director for Economics met many times with top officials in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, and made site visits to several Job Service offices in the greater Washington, DC, area in order to familiarize himself thoroughly with this agency's operations.

The Economic Division referred some dozen veterans' inquiries to VETS for investigation and reply.

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.

The American Legion has testified in favor of continuing to sell paper Savings Bonds along with the new availability of electronic bonds.

Department of Veterans Affairs: The Economic Division referred several veterans' inquiries to the VA Home Loan Guaranty Service or the office of health care for homeless veterans for investigation and reply.

Office of Personnel Management: The Economic Division referred nearly two dozen veterans' inquiries to OPM for investigation and reply.

The Veterans' Preference Committee continues 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 Economic Division referred several veterans' inquiries to USPS for investigation and reply.

The Veterans' Preference Committee continues to promote employment opportunities for veterans within the Postal Service.

Small Business Administration: The Acting Deputy Director of Economics met several times with the SBA's Assistant Administrator for Veterans' Business Development in order to familiarize himself with that office's functions, and in addition, invited the Assistant Administrator to speak to the Commission at Washington Conference in March 2003 and at National Convention in August 2003.

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 Sercerchi 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
Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Illinois, National Treasurer
Paul M. Allen, Minnesota, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for 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 appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the National Adjutant as ex-officio secretary, and the National Commander and National Treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the Executive Directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the Finance Director, as well as liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The National Organization had an operating surplus of $1,826,710 for 2002. In that year, we received $9 dues per member, allocating $6 to the general fund and $3 to The American Legion Magazine.

Income of the national organization derives 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. Your attention is directed also to the Reports of Committees and Trusts, which can be found in this publication.

These entities 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 tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2002 and for the first three months of 2003.

January 1 to December 31, 2002
(12 months)

Gross Sales	$11,259,570
Cost of Goods Sold	6,503,513
Overhead	3,265,126
Operating Profit	1,490,931

Total number of 2002 orders processed was 102,173.

January 1 to March 31, 2003 (3 months)	
Gross Sales	$2,746,539
Cost of Goods Sold	1,444,623
Overhead	840,755
Operating Profit	461,161

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2003 was 34,150.

The American Legion Insurance Committee·
Leroy S. Lakey (North Carolina), Chairman
G. Paul Dunn (Oklahoma), Member Benefits Administrator

The American Legion Insurance Committee provides oversight for the several insurance plans currently offered by The American Legion and is assigned to the National Finance Commission.

The American Legion 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 2003.

American Legion Baseball $592,116; National Oratorical Contest $293,249; Junior Uniformed Musical Groups $35,000 for participation at the National Convention; Boy's ation $162,135; Boy Scout of The Year Scholarship Award $17,500. An award of 2,500 per year up to four years, not to exceed $10,000, for pursuit of a course of study beyond high school. Three second-place awards in the amount of $2,500 each are also ranted.

These requests for grants are approved by The American Legion Insurance Committee, the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee.

The American Legion offers a variety of insurance plans, which are described as follows:

Health Care Plans

The following healthcare plans are offered in most states:
A variety of major medical plans, called "Market Basket", that allows members (Legion and SAL) to call and request quotes on major medical insurance.

- **Small Business Group Insurance**—provides quotes on major medical coverage for small employer groups of 2-50 employees. Additional options offered for employees are term life, accidental death, long and short term disability and dental. Remember, these plans are for employees of the small business group—not the general membership. Posts and Departments with 2 or more employees could also use this plan.
- **Dental Insurance**— this is an indemnified insurance plan with a full schedule of benefits, for members and their dependents, including SAL.
- **For information on the above plans, call 1-877-886-0110.**

Legion Plus TRICARE Supplement

The American Legion has a National TRICARE Supplement Program for active duty and retired military members and dependents. This program is designed to meet the

needs of active duty and retired military members who may be referred to civilian facilities for care. It includes an active duty and retired version.

Requests for information on TRICARE Supplement Plan, should be directed to the Administrator, **Marsh Affinity Group Services, Inc., 1776 West Lakes Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50398; 1-800-542-5547.**

Birthday Life

Another plan available to members and spouses is Birthday Life, underwritten and administered by Union Fidelity Life Insurance (now owned by GE Capital) located in Trevose, Pennsylvania. This plan is a guaranteed-issue, whole life plan combined with accidental death insurance, with premiums at entry age, which do not increase as the insured grows older. No medical exam is required.

The plan provides a limited death benefit, for the first two years, for death from natural causes and provides full benefits during that period for accidental deaths. Full benefits in any event are payable after two years.

Simplified Issue Term Insurance

The American Legion also offers a Simplified Issue Term plan (that is ideal for younger members too)! This program is available to American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members and dependents in most states. For a free information kit, call toll-free **1-800-523-5758**.

Requests for information on the Birthday Life and Simplified Issue Term plans should be directed to the Administrator, **Union Fidelity Life Insurance Co., 500 Virginia Dr., Fort Washington, PA 19034; 1-800-523-5758.**

NEW—Juvenile Life—NEW

Union Fidelity Life Insurance Company is now offering a Juvenile Life plan for the children and grandchildren of members. Juvenile Life allows parents or grandparents to purchase a life policy and lock-in coverage for children or grandchildren. This is very important when considering that a child could develop a health condition that may make them "uninsurable" as an adult. For more information, contact **Union Fidelity at 1-800-523-5758.**

Claims

The primary feature of The American Legion Insurance Plan is the benefits paid to beneficiaries of deceased insured Legionnaires. In 45 years, claims have been paid amounting to more than $239 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 2003, the total benefits paid will be nearly $258 million.

Healthcare

The National Organization has several healthcare products, which are 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. Departments may or may not approve all plans offered. Upon approval by a Department, appropriate announcements will be made to the membership. The National Health Insurance Program now has six Departments who have approved

participation: Illinois, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina and South Carolina. The Department of Pennsylvania participates in the dental plan only.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION
Thomas L. Bock, Colorado, Chairman
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Director

The following annual report covers the activities of the American Legion's Foreign Relations Commission and Foreign Relations Council for the 2002-2003 program year ending June 30, 2003.

Overview

There are two principal goals of the Commission's continuing work. First, the Commission is dedicated to keeping the membership and leadership of The American Legion informed on relevant foreign policy issues and to carrying the Legion's important voice as contained in adopted resolutions 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 meetings and programs throughout the year, which highlight current 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.

The Commission works to influence the Administration and Congress toward development of bipartisan foreign policies, which are consistent with the principles of Democratic Activism as well as our entire portfolio of active resolutions. 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 through liaison offices at these agencies.

Mr. Thomas L. Bock, of Colorado, was appointed in the Fall of 2001 and serves as the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission.

Foreign Relations Commission Resolutions

Foreign Relations resolutions that are legislative in nature which were adopted at the 84th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina compromise The American Legion's positions that are valid for the 108th Congress. These resolutions, in addition to those previously adopted which are not legislative in nature, seek to address the range of issues associated with American foreign policy. Two overarching general foreign policy resolutions outline the major principles that have characterized The American Legion's approach to foreign affairs for many years:

Resolution Number 100 (83rd NC), *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 94 (84th NC), *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. This resolution also suggests that U.S. foreign policy embody key principles that 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 a global war on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
- Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests
- Participation in collective security alliances
- Equitable and verifiable arms control agreements
- Opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery
- Determined 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

The additional resolutions adopted at the 84th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina 2002 are:

General Foreign Policy

Resolution Number 8: *Terrorism*
Resolution Number 10: *Support for a Robust American Diplomacy*
Resolution Number 93: *Priority POW/MIA Actions*
Resolution Number 95: *United Nations*
Resolution Number 96: *Foreign Lobbying*
Resolution Number 98: *Flying the POW/MIA Flag*
Resolution Number 125: *Case of Lt.Cmdr. Michael Scott Speicher*

Regional Affairs

Resolution Number 1: *Support to the Republic of Korea*
Resolution Number 2: *Support to the Republic of China*
Resolution Number 12: *Japanese Compensation and Equity to America's POWs*
Resolution Number 33: *Policy on Africa*
Resolution Number 120: *Policy on Cuba*
Resolution Number 122: *Policy on Ending Drug Trafficking in Latin America*
Resolution Number 123: *Policy on Aid to Central American Nations*
Resolution Number 180: *Policy on Vietnam POW/MIAs*

National Executive Committee Meeting, Fall 2002

On October 7th and 8th, the Foreign Relations Commission met in executive session in the Radisson Hotel-Circle West to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business. In the initial meeting on October 7th, two resolutions were considered. Of these, one was referred from the 84th National Convention and one was recommended to be held for further study.

The Commission conducted a vigorous debate on the current situation in regard to a potential war with Iraq. Commission members realize that going to war is the most important decision a country can make; accordingly the members weighed all the issues. A second resolution "War with Iraq" was recommended for adoption.

The Foreign Relations Commission also discussed other relevant matters as well as our ideas for guest speakers for the Washington Conference in March 2003, including potential speakers for a possible POW/MIA Update program during the conference.

The final meeting of the Foreign Relations Commission was held jointly with the National Security Commission to view a videotape entitled "Gunning For Saddam". Res. 16: 'War in Iraq' was adopted by the National Executive Committee.

2003 Washington Conference

The Foreign Relations Commission met in general session on March 3 and 5, 2003 during the 43rd Annual Washington Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. The following is a summary of their three sessions:

Morning Session, March 3

The Commission met jointly with the National Security Commission to hear several speakers of mutual interest. Mr. Nicholas P. Grant (BG, USA, Ret), Manager, Federal Air Marshall Intelligence Support Division, Transportation Security Administration, spoke on the role of the Transportation Security Agency and its incorporation into the newly established Department of Homeland Security. He underscored the advances in intelligence industries and warning center as well as the intelligence analytical capabilities in the rapidly expanding Air Marshall Service. General Grant has brought considerably military experience and insight in intelligence operations and security to the commercial air travel industry.

The second speaker was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Donald W. Keyser. He gave a highly informative and detailed account of the U.S. government's recent involvement with North Korea, especially in light of North Korea's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons. Secretary Keyser assured the audience that the U.S. would do all it could to maintain peace and stability in northeast Asia. However, we would not bow to North Korean threats or scare tactics and the U.S. will use all its implements of power, including military force, if North Korea continues to violate its agreements concerning nuclear weapons. Keyser also discussed the recent presidential election in South Korea and the apparent rise of anti-Americanism there. Mr. Keyser also answered a number of questions about America's foreign policies in Asia from Commission members.

Afternoon Session, March 3

Both Commissions joined with the Special POW/MIA Committee for an update. Past National Commander and Special POW/MIA Committee Chairman Bob Turner chaired the update session. Major James R. Becker and Staff Sergeant Sebastian Harris of the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI) led off the afternoon session with a mission brief and update of current operations at CILHI. The topics discussed included the upcoming merger of CILHI and Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, the increasing difficulty in more recent Southeast Asia recovery missions and the increase World War II recoveries which take place worldwide.

Ms. Donna Downes Knox, Executive Director of the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War MIAs gave the Commission the view from Korean War MIA families on the government's progress in accounting for their loved ones. Ms. Knox expressed her support for the increased activity in recent years between the U.S. and North Korean governments on Korean War accounting issues. For almost 50 years, Korean War MIA families received very little support from the U.S. government in investigating the fate of the over 8,000 men still missing from the Korean War. However, Ms. Knox was

disappointed in the relative obscurity the Korean War MIA issue has with the current Administration. She would urge that the President at least mention the MIAs when discussing our relationship with North Korea, let alone giving it a higher profile. Ms. Know answered a number of questions after her presentation.

Wednesday Session, March 5

The Foreign Relations Commission met in a business session on Wednesday morning. Chairman Tom Bock gave an overview of the Commission's role within The American Legion and emphasized the heightened importance of the Commission now that the nation was on the brink of war. Assistant Director John C. Petersen gave a comprehensive briefing on the status of U.S. military forces deployed overseas and of current major diplomatic initiatives of the U.S. government. He also gave an update on the POW/MIA issue and current international relations legislation of interest to the Commission. Following the presentations, Commission members engaged in a vigorous question and answer session that mainly centered on the probability of a war with Iraq.

National Executive Committee Meeting, Spring 2003

An executive session of the Foreign Relations Commission met on May 5, 2003 in the Circle West room of the Radisson City Center Hotel to discuss a variety of issues. The Commission discussed recent world events and corresponding American Legion resolutions. Staff reviewed the upcoming trip of the National Commander to Europe. The Commission also discussed the upcoming 85th National Convention in St. Louis, MO in detail, including recommendations for speakers and resolution requirements.

On Tuesday, May 6, 2003, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions participated in a trip to Camp Atterbury, IN to receive briefings and demonstrations from the Indiana National Guard about their capabilities and operations.

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; Dennis M. Duggan, Deputy Director; John C. Petersen, Assistant Director; Angela L. Rose, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Tina T. Hines, 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 division also coordinates the National Commander's foreign travel as well as managing a variety of special assignments. The duties included answering correspondence, E-mail and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Homeland Security (Coast Guard); the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. The foreign relation's responsibilities also entail continuing with foreign liaison embassies "think tanks" and a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

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 as well as Congress, the Department of State and the general public. Coordinating foreign travel, writing and delivering speeches,

preparing reports and testimony, are also duties of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field. Numerous press interviews, background briefings and public releases are coordinated with our Media Relations Office.

Particularly vigorous activities were conducted during this reporting period to monitor the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, North Korea, and our relationship with The People's Republic of China. Also, there were many activities in support of full POW/MIA accounting including frequent email information to the Special Committees, Department Chairman and interested members.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch and The American Legion Magazine which are a primary 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 National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: "to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes."

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The commission also is required from time to time to provide guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations of the National Headquarters.

Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline, and commemorative activities. The commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities, which potentially affect posts and departments, and recommends appropriate courses of action.

The commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination. They are Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials, Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the activities of the Sons of The American Legion, which is not a separate organization, but rather, a major program of the organization.

The commission also oversees long-term programs and activities as the National Paid-Up-For-Life program and the National Emergency Fund.

TROPHIES, AWARDS AND CEREMONIALS
Randall W. Busch, Nebraska, 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 those awarded The American Legion's highest honor were: General John

J. Pershing, Ignace Jan Paderewski of Poland, Henry Ford, Ernie Pyle, Bob Hope, Babe Ruth, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the dead & missing of the Vietnam War, 10 men who have served as President of The United States in the 20th Century, plus many other citizens of renown who have made lasting and significant contributions.

Other awards this committee makes recommendations on include the International Amity Award, and the Canadian Friendship Award. A report is also prepared for the National Executive Committee on miscellaneous awards that have been presented during each year.

The committee also supervises the contents of the Manual of Ceremonies of The American Legion.

RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT
Gerald Diercks, Minnesota, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the annual National Convention. This 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, 200-300 resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
Vincent 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 relating 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.

MEMBERSHIP AND POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
Marty Conatser, Illinois, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand-in-hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide the people and resources to serve the need of the veteran and his/her family. Your Membership and Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of nearly 2.7 million members worldwide.

MEMBERSHIP

Final 2002 membership	2,761,836
2003 membership as of Aug. 1, 2003:	2,705,649

Since 1982, the Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS) Program has been responsible for acquiring over 2.5 million new members into the 52 participating Departments. In 2003, the DMS Program acquired over 107,000 new members. The DMS Program has proven to be very successful in the acquisition of new members, but

again this year, the emphasis was on the transfer, renewal, and retention of those members.

The DMS Program will continue to support The American Legion's on-going membership efforts with special emphasis on the retention of all members.

40th ANNUAL NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP WORKSHOP

The 40th annual membership meeting was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on Friday, July 25-26, 2003, with over 400 department and district officers in attendance from nearly all of the 55 departments.

Many of those attending arrive in Indianapolis with a very good understanding of the membership program, especially as it pertains to their areas. But, by the time the 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 provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge and desire to grow the membership in The American Legion. Whether it is membership recruitment or program implementation—it is all about veterans helping veterans and providing communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

NEW POST DEVELOPMENT/REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

The Membership and Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist Posts, Districts and Departments in developing and revitalizing posts.

The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers along with practical field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization/development of more than 400 American Legion Posts. This adds up to a total of 19,500 new, renewed and transferred members, efforts have now expanded into Metropolis areas. Many Departments have been successful in this program without any actual assistance from National Staff. Whether a Department requests field assistance or just the training workshop, if the guidelines are followed, there will be successful results. The program, however, requires a commitment from every level of leadership, if it is to be successful.

RECONNECT PROGRAM

The Reconnect Program is an initiative by the Department of Defense to "Reconnect" America with today's military.

"Reconnect" is an open invitation from the military for groups like The American Legion to establish ties between military installations and the civilian community. This is not a free ticket to recruit on military installations, but it is an opportunity for The American Legion to showcase the programs and services we have in place. Legionnaires should go into an event with attitude of providing a service to the service members on the installation and promoting the military in the local community.

We have found that success depends largely on the participation of Departments and the cooperation of local American Legion Posts in the community near the military installations.

An important consideration is that while "Reconnect" visits to larger installations is important from a public relations point of view, the measure of success for The American Legion is the amount and quality of visits to the thousands of local National Guard and Reserve Component units in the United States, as well as smaller active duty training installations. These men and women, and their families, are the "citizen-soldiers" who

live far away from the larger established military support networks. They most need our support.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS

National Leadership & Information Conferences

Sponsored through a cooperative effort of the National Headquarters of The American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Departments, this important series of conferences is held in eight regional locations throughout the United States to provide updated information and to train current and future leaders.

The American Legion is about Americans taking care of America, assisting others to prepare for the changing world in the 21st Century. This conference explores the rapid and dramatic economic, technological, social and political trends that affect the way we conduct business today, and in the years to come.

Conference instructors are the professional staff of the organization, and some are leaders from the volunteer sector. These knowledgeable, dedicated instructors cover many programs and activities, providing a blend of experience, educational expertise, sharing of ideas, helping to solve problems, exchanging information, and sharpening individual skills.

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL COLLEGE

Each November, The American Legion National College hosts as many as fifty talented young Legionnaires at National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their Departments armed with newly acquired or sharpened skills in leadership, marketing, communication and fundraising. Student candidates are nominated by the Departments and selected by a National Selection Committee of Past National Commanders.

Candidates for the National College must be Lebanon/Grenada (August 1982) or later veteran with demonstrated potential for further service.

The American Legion National College is a worthwhile investment for every Department. Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Several have already been appointed to Department and National level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles in Department Legion Colleges and National Leadership and Information Conferences and membership drives.

Sons of The American Legion

The Sons of The American Legion will conduct its 32nd National Convention at the Convention Center in St Louis, Missouri.

For the 29th 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 2002 with a record 266,126 members. This number represents a 7.6% percent increase over the previous year.

Membership figures for the 2003 year have already exceeded the figures for the 2002 membership year. By the National Convention in St Louis, Missouri, the S.A.L. will have surpassed the 2002 final figures by several thousand giving them another "All Time High" for membership year 2003.

The S.A.L. continues its support of American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 2002, the S.A.L. provided over 177,500, volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash and goods to these veterans exceeded $1,805,000.00, nationwide. This was remarkable

considering only than 10% of the Squadrons submitted reports. The S.A.L. also raised over $268,000.00 in the year 2002 for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. The Sons also provided several grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion has contributed over two million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continues support to Legion programs with major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund, World War II Memorial and, the Children's Miracle Network as well as other vital programs. As an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continues to serve and provide assistance to Posts and their communities.

National Emergency Fund

The National Emergency Fund continues each year in the spirit of veterans helping veterans and their families in need as it has since 1989. We topped the "1 million mark" in 2002 for funds available to the Legion family. Last year, grants totaling over $218,000 went to 121 individuals and 12 posts. Most of those grants came from those areas in Minnesota and West Virginia that were overrun by flooding waters, as well as Spring, Summer and Fall storms in the Midwest. Thus far, in 2003 we have sent out six grants, two being to Legion posts, but we can expect to receive grants from the Southern and Midwest states due to recent storm activity occurring as we go to print with this report. Total of grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 is over $3.8 million.

It is important that our members realize that each and every dollar contributed to this fund is used for the express purpose of rendering financial assistance to our members who have incurred devastation from a declared natural disaster (i.e., wind, rain, fire and earthquakes.) Moneys to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and conducting fundraising are absorbed through existing budget areas.

What makes this program so unique is that our members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without the red tape or repayment requirements normally associated with other federal and state agencies. With the help of all Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the most immediate needs of our Legion family after a local, state or national disaster.

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 51 percent of American Legion Posts submitted reports to National Headquarters for the 2001-2002 year.

The total figures show the cost to outfit Color Guards, Firing Squads and other uniformed groups was $3,195,265; Legion baseball team support cost $7,901,279; other athletic teams were provided $2,210,952; cash contributions to VA Voluntary Service was $1,856,924, and over 1,592,121 hours of volunteer service were provided; 55,342 Boy Scouts were sponsored at a cost of $1,670,898; scholarships valued at $4,094,708 were awarded to 9,733 students.

In addition, 2,626,778, hours were spent performing community service work, valued at $5,241,608; nearly 100,251 pints of blood were donated, and additional millions of dollars in goods and cash were contributed to programs helping veterans and their families. It is essential to point out, these facts and figures represent only half of our 14,700 American Legion Posts. If all Posts reported their activities, you can see the powerful impact The American Legion carries at the Community level.

Paid-Up-For-Life Program

They are Legionnaires who have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the National plan. The number of Legionnaires who have applied for a lifetime membership since the beginning of the program in 1975 is over 250,000. 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.

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.

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, Discover or American Express. Also, they 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.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Edwin J. Dentz, Massachusetts, Chairman
Steve Robertson, Louisiana, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 11, 2002 through August 8, 2003. During this period, the Commission met four (4) 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 National Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission 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 Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman, who is assisted by a Vice Chairman in 50 State Departments, heads the Council. The 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, two assistant directors, a grassroots coordinator, one secretary, a librarian and a research analyst. The director, assistant directors and grassroots coordinator are registered lobbyists and submit biannual lobbying reports to Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

107th Congress, Second Session

The budget process remained the focus of congressional attention during the Second Session of the 107th Congress. When October 1 arrived—the official start of Fiscal Year (FY) 2003—none of the 13 funding measures that are needed to operate the federal government had become law. Two were enacted on October 23, 2003: the Defense and Military Construction spending bills.

Between late September and mid-December, eight continuing resolutions were passed and enacted which extended funding through late February, 2003 at FY 2002 amounts. The remaining 11 appropriations bills were rolled into an omnibus spending bill (Public Law 108-7), which was signed by the President on February20, 2003 after the start of the Second Session. The Second Session of the 107th Congress officially adjourned on November 22, 2002.

The November 2002 elections are history. There are 53 new members of the House, and 11 new senators. The composition of the House—which was 223 Republicans, 208 Democrats, 1 Independent and 3 vacancies on November 5—is now 229 Republicans, 205 Democrats, and 1 Independent. In the Senate, the breakdown is now 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and 1 Independent, compared to the 107th Congress 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans and 2 Independents. The overall result is a change in Senate leadership, as well as new committee chairmen.

Americanism

On November 13, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-293, legislation to reaffirm the reference to "one Nation under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. The House passed the measure on October 8 by a vote of 401-5, with 4 House members voting Present. The Senate unanimously agreed to final passage of the bill on October 17. This law is a direct result of the June 26, 2002 ruling by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court that the words "under God" did not belong in the Pledge of Allegiance, and that the Pledge as currently recited by millions of Americans every day is unconstitutional. The American Legion will continue to pursue all legal avenues to support the current wording of the Pledge.

Economics

On November 7, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-288, the Jobs for Veterans Act. This new law aims to improve employment assistance to veterans. It updates legislation passed after World War II that established hiring priorities for veterans in federal employment and gave them early notice of jobs in the private sector. Highlights of the law include:

- Revising DoL's employment, training and placement services available to veterans through their state employment offices.
- Providing priority of service to veterans and spouses of certain veterans in job training programs funded by DoL.
- Giving states greater flexibility in how they provide employment, training and placement services to veterans by revising current funding formulas and removing restrictions on how they use the funding.
- Removing restrictions that allowed only Vietnam veterans to participate in employment and job advancement opportunities within the federal government. This will allow disabled veterans, veterans who served in a military operation and received a service medal, and newly retired veterans to participate in these opportunities.
- Establishing both financial and non-financial incentives for state employees who provide quality employment, training and placement services to veterans.

The original version of this legislation contained a provision that was opposed by The American Legion, as well as the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. That provision would have transferred ASVET functions from DoL to the VA. This provision was dropped from the final law.

One of the provisions of PL 107-314, the 2003 DoD authorization measure, would affect Reservists using the MGIB program. Previously, members of the Select Reserves may us MGIB benefits for as many as ten years after becoming eligible. This new provision would extend this period to fourteen years.

Internal Affairs

On December 2, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-309, a bill to make an important change in The American Legion's charter. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, there was some confusion about whether eligible, active-duty servicemembers could join The American Legion prior to their official discharge. PL 107-309 clarified the charter's language.

National Security

On October 23, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-248, the 2003 DoD appropriations measure. This bill would provide $355.1 billion for DoD programs. This total funding is $37.5 billion more than FY 2002, and $11.6 billion less than requested by President Bush. The bill passed the House on October 10 by an overwhelming 409-14 vote, then passed the Senate on October 16 by a 93-1 tally.

One of the major cuts made in the bill was the decision to withhold funding for the Crusader cannon program. On May 8, DoD Secretary Donald Rumsfeld made the decision to cancel the program. The reasoning was that the 40-ton self-propelled weapon was too heavy for the projected agile, lightweight Army being developed during the next decade.

Cancellation of the Crusader program will save DoD $476 million in FY 2003, and a total of $11 billion overall. The money saved would go to various programs developing new rockets and munitions, as well as accelerate development of a new long-range, mobile artillery piece. Some of the other highlights of this law are presented below.

Military Personnel: This account will receive $93.6 billion, an increase of $11.5 billion over the funding level enacted for FY 2002. Highlights of this category include:

- Support for active duty personnel level of 1.4 million.
- Funding for 864,558 Selected Reserve and National Guard personnel.
- Full funding for the 4.1 percent military personnel pay raise requested in the President's budget and selected targeted pay raises to mid-grade non-commissioned officers.
- Support for housing allowances for the buydown of servicemembers' out-of-pocket housing expenses from 11.3 percent this year down to 7.5 percent in FY 2003.

Operations and Maintenance: The bill funds this account at $114.8 billion, a net increase of $9.7 billion over FY 2002 amounts. Highlights include:

- Full funding for budget increases for spare parts, real property maintenance, and depot maintenance.
- Support for budget increase of over $1.7 billion for land force training, flying hours, and ship operations.
- Fully funding for increase of $1.8 billion for base support operations.

Procurement: PL-107-248 would fund this account at $71.6 billion, $10.7 billion over FY 2002 funding. Major highlights include:

- $4 billion for 23 F-22 fighter planes in both bills.
- $3.3 billion for 12 C-17 transport aircraft.
- $3.2 billion for 46 F/A-18E/F fighters.
- $2.3 billion for 2 Arleigh Burke-class AEGIS destroyers.
- $1.5 billion for 1 New Attack Submarine (Virginia class).
- $1 billion for 11 V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft.
- $270 million for 19 UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.

Research and Development (R&D): A total of $58.6 billion would fund this account. This amount is $9.9 billion over the FY 2002 enacted level. Some of the major highlights of this area include:

- $3.5 billion for the F-35 (Joint Strike Fighter).
- $915 million for continued development of the Army's Comanche scout helicopter.
- $627 million for further R&D on development of the F-22.

Other Programs: Various other DoD programs of interest would be funded as follows:

- $14.8 billion for defense health programs.
- $7.4 billion for ballistic missile defense R&D and procurement.
- $1.5 billion for the destruction of certain chemical munitions in the U.S. military's arsenal in both versions.
- $943 million for the National Defense Sealift Fund.
- $882 million for DoD drug interdiction and counter-drug efforts.

President Bush, on December 2, signed PL 107-314, the FY 2003 DoD authorization measure. The bill authorizes $393 billion in budget authority for DoD programs in the coming fiscal year, which began October 1, 2002. This represents the largest real increase in defense spending since the early 1980s. Presented below are the some of the highlights of the law.

$78.4 billion in Readiness Accounts—Specifics in this area include: a) $31.5 billion for aircraft operations and flying hours; b) $34.4 billion for facility and depot maintenance and base support; c) $8.1 billion for training accounts, including training and readiness for National Guard and Reserve units; and, d) $4.4 billion for ground forces operations.

$73.7 billion to Procure Weapons, Ammunition and Equipment; and $56.5 billion in Research and Development (R&D)—Specific weapons or weapons systems include:

- $4 billion for procurement of 48 F/A-18E/F fighters, in addition to further R&D and improvements to the remainder of the entire F/A-18 fleet.
- $3.7 billion for acquisition of 12 C-17 Globemaster cargo planes.
- $3.4 billion for R&D of the Joint Strike Fighter.
- $369 million for modifications and R&D for the B-2 Spirit bomber.
- $284 million for modifications for the F-16 Falcon multi-role fighter plane.
- $788 million for procurement of 332 medium armored vehicles and R&D of medium armored vehicles. This item is tied to DoD's vision of transforming the US Army into a medium-weight force capable of deploying anywhere in the world within days, instead of weeks.
- $910 million for development of the Comanche stealth, armed reconnaissance helicopter.
- $866 million for procurement of 74 Apache Longbow helicopter upgrades.
- $2.7 billion for procurement and further R&D for 2 Arleigh Burke-class AEGIS destroyers.

- $2.5 billion for procurement of a fifth Virginia-class new attack submarine, advance procurement of a sixth submarine in 2004, and for further R&D into advanced technologies for the vessels.

$1.5 billion for procurement of 11 V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and for R&D.

$7.3 billion for DoD Efforts to Combat Terrorism—This area includes:

- $993 million for R&D of advanced individual protection programs and equipment to detect and decontaminate chemical-biological agents.
- $71 million to procure chemical-biological protection and decontamination equipment.
- $417 million to dismantle and secure former Soviet weapons of mass destruction.
- $457 million for Defense Threat Reduction Agency programs to deter, reduce and counter weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that may be in the arsenals of various rogue nations or foreign terrorist organizations.

$7.8 billion for the Continuing Development of Ballistic Missile Defenses—The United States still faces the possibility that a missile with a weapon of mass destruction will be used against US forces or the US mainland. At least one rogue nation currently has ballistic missiles that could strike the US, with two others likely developing similar weapons within the next decade. Despite warnings and reports from the intelligence community and outside experts, this country remains open to ballistic missile attacks.

In addition, PL 107-314 also contains a $10 billion contingency fund—which the President requested—specifically for fighting the war on terrorism. The funds are divided into five areas, to allow Congress to oversee the use of the funds, and are authorized thusly:

- $4.3 billion for the operating cost of military operations.
- $2.5 billion for military personnel and mobilization costs.
- $2 billion for classified programs.
- $1 billion for equipment replacement and enhancement of military capabilities.
- $200 million for additional munitions.

Some of the other provisions of PL 107-314 that address various areas of concern of The American Legion include:

- A $1.1 billion authorization for counter-drug programs.
- A 4.1 percent military pay raise across the board, with targeted pay increases of up to 6.5 percent for mid-grade and senior noncommissioned officers and mid-grade officers. These pay raises become effective on January 1, 2003.
- Granting of commissary privileges to National Guard members who are participating in a federally declared national emergency.
- Authorizing $677 million for construction and improvement of military family housing.
- Increasing US armed forces manpower levels by about 2300 personnel, to a total of 1.39 million. The measure also gives the DoD Secretary the discretion to increase active-duty manpower by up to 41,700 personnel to fight terrorism.
- Authorizing the DoD Secretary to establish a Korea Defense Service Medal, to be issued to military personnel who served in the Korean peninsula after July 28, 1954.
- Authorizing the DoD Secretary to establish a daily stipend for military retirees, non-service members, and non-governmental employees who participate in funeral honor detail duties.
- Creation of a National Service Plan which would encourage Americans to serve their country. It would include a 15 month-active duty assignment in the armed forces followed by a further term of service on active duty or two years of Reserve

service. Individuals participating in this program would receive one of four incentives: a) $5000 after completing 15 months of active duty; b) repayment of student loans up to $18,000; c) an educational allowance at the MGIB program monthly rate for one year; or d) a similar MGIB educational allowance at one-half the rate for three years.

The American Legion has been working for over two decades on a legislative answer to the inequitable treatment of service-connected disabled military retirees who are forced to offset a portion of their military retired pay with VA disability compensation. Disabled military retirees are the only federal workers required to fund their own retirement in this way.

One of the provisions of the original Senate version of the FY 2003 DoD authorization bill had the full support of The American Legion. On June 19, the Senate approved an amendment—authored by Senator Harry Reid (NV) and supported by the Senate Armed Services Committee—that would allow all disabled veterans to receive both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation without deductions. This amendment would affect about 550,000 disabled veterans in this country. Senator Reid had already succeeded in having language included in the Senate measure that would restore full concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees with ratings from 10 percent to 100 percent.

Under the original House bill, the amount of retirement pay would be phased in over a 5-year period beginning with 30 percent of the otherwise authorized retirement pay in 2003 and increasing to 45 percent in 2004, 60 percent in 2005, 80 percent in 2006 and 100 percent in 2007. The Senate version would be effective October 1, 2002.

On the same day as the Senate action, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a policy statement expressing strong opposition to any legislation granting disabled military retirees concurrent receipt of VA disability compensation and military retirement pay. In addition to generally opposing concurrent receipt legislation, the statement recommended that the President veto the final version of the FY 2003 DoD authorization bill should it contain any provisions granting concurrent receipt to disabled military retirees.

House-Senate conferees finally agreed to a conference report that contained an extremely watered-down version of concurrent receipt in mid-November. The House passed the conference report on November 12 by a voice vote, while the Senate passed it the next day, also by a voice vote. The compromise, authored by Sen. Warner, would permit military retirees with any disability incurred because of wounds sustained in combat to collect their full pensions in addition to any disability payments provided by VA. It is being described as "Combat-Related Special Compensation" (CRSC).

Retirees with a minimum of 20 years of military service could receive this new "special compensation" if they have:

- A VA disability rating of 10 percent or more and a Purple Heart has been awarded, or:
- A service-connected disability rated 60 percent or higher incurred as a direct result of combat, while engaged in hazardous service, in the performance of duty under conditions simulating war, or through an instrumentality (exposure to radiation, Agent Orange, etc.) of war.

The amount of CRSC will be equal to the amount of VA disability compensation to which the retiree would be entitled, based solely upon the combat-related disability. The plan's cost is estimated at between $4 billion and $9 billion over the next 10 years. Initial estimates indicated about 30,000 retirees would qualify for the dual payments. This is only 5 percent of the more than 550,000 disabled military retirees in this country. The Pentagon

has six months from final enactment to promulgate regulations governing eligibility for this new "special compensation."

Some service-connected military retirees are receiving "special compensation" which was enacted three years ago in PL 106-65. They will be allowed to choose whether to continue receiving the "old" special compensation or the newer version.

The American Legion is greatly disappointed at the "compromise" passed by Congress. For too many years, service-connected disabled retirees have been the victims of a government that does not wish to give them all that they have earned. Simple fairness should motivate the federal government to allow these former servicemembers to receive both their retired pay and their VA disability compensation without reduction from either. The American Legion will begin again in the 108th Congress to pass full concurrent receipt for all of this nation's disabled military retirees.

On November 25, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-296, a measure to establish the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Former Pennsylvania governor, U.S. representative and Vietnam veteran Tom Ridge was appointed to be the first Secretary of DHS. The primary mission of DHS includes:

- preventing terrorist attacks within the US,
- reducing the vulnerability of the US to terrorism,
- minimizing the damage and assisting in the recovery from such attacks which occur,
- carrying out all functions of agencies transferred to DHS, including responses to natural and manmade crises, and
- monitoring connection between illegal drug trafficking and terrorism, coordinate efforts to sever such connections, and otherwise contribute to interdict illegal drug trafficking.

Among the agencies transferred to DHS are the Customs Service, Secret Service, Immigration and Naturalization Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the newly-created Transportation Security Administration. President Bush has proposed a FY 2004 budget for DHS of $36.2 billion. However, many members of Congress feel that amount is low, and will seek to add funds to allow DHS to achieve its primary mission. The American Legion supports providing DHS with all the funding necessary to protect the nation and its citizens.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

The President on November 11 enacted PL 107-287, the Department of Veterans Affairs Emergency Preparedness Research, Education and Bio-Terrorism Prevention Act of 2002. The House passed the measure by unanimous consent on October 16, one day after the Senate had approved the bill, also by unanimous consent.

PL 107-287 will:

- Define VA's role to furnish medical care to any individual during a declared disaster or major medical crisis within the homeland security effort. This would allow VA to cut through bureaucratic red tape that could delay their response.
- Create a VA Assistant Secretary of Operations, Preparedness, and Security position to oversee and lead emergency operations. This new position is vital to VA's readiness efforts and its coordination with the future Department of Homeland Security.
- Establish four VA medical emergency preparedness centers to develop strategies to prevent the medical crises that might follow a chemical, biological, or radiological disaster. The centers will conduct basic and clinical research and will educate medical professionals both inside and outside of VA on preparing for disasters.

The law did not authorize any additional funding for VA to fulfill this increased role. Congressional leaders pledged to seek additional funding for VA to help the department effectively carry out its new job, without sacrificing its ability to care for this nation's veterans.

On October 23 President Bush signed PL 107-247, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2002. The new law increases compensation payments to service-connected disabled veterans and their dependents through the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), projected to be 1.4 percent, effective December 1, 2002.

Veterans who receive their medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continue to face problems. The most extreme problem is the shortage of trained physicians and nurses, which is directly traceable to an annual VA budget that does not meet the needs of the expanding patient population. Various solutions have been proposed by The American Legion in the past. However, a proposal was introduced late last year in the waning days of the 107th Congress.

Currently, slightly more than half of all VA spending is mandatory spending (or entitlements), programs that are automatically funded. This includes pensions, VA compensation, insurance, and home loan programs. The remaining programs—health care, medical and prosthetic research and medical facility construction, among others—are discretionary funding.

On August 9, 2002 Rep. Chris Smith, (NJ), introduced HR 5250, the Veterans Health Care Funding Guarantee Act of 2002. Senator Tim Johnson (SD) introduced a companion measure, S 2903, in the Senate. These measures sought to make changes in the way in which VA health care funding is currently determined. The bills would establish a base funding year, calculate the average cost for a veteran using VA health care, and then index the cost for inflation. Multiplying this average cost by the number of veterans who are enrolled each year on July 1st, would determine the funding allotment for the Veterans Health Administration for the next fiscal year.

Despite the support of The American Legion, Congress never voted upon either measure.

108th Congress, First Session

The First Session of the 108th Congress convened on January 7, 2003. Major issues for both chambers included the war on terrorism, the conflict with Iraq, the final passage of the remaining 11 appropriation bills for the FY 2003 federal budget, and the proposed FY 2004 budget. An omnibus funding measure for FY 2003—Public Law 108-7—was signed by President Bush on February 20, 2003. As of today, The American Legion has participated in eleven congressional hearings during the First Session.

President Bush's budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2004—released February 3, 2003—proposes a 4 percent overall increase, with some areas of the federal budget receiving intense scrutiny in the upcoming months. Under the President's proposal, there would be at least five years of budget deficits. There has been some speculation that Congress may repeal portions of the $1.6 trillion tax relief bill—PL 107-16, enacted in 2001—to bring down the projected deficits. The White House and many congressional leaders have so far resisted this suggestion.

The President's recommendations for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reflected a $6.2 billion increase over FY 2003 funding. The administration proposed $63.6 billion for VA, with $2.2 billion of the increase going to VA medical care. However, the bulk of that increase includes fiscal assumptions by Bush administration officials that The American Legion finds unacceptable. These proposals include:

- Charging a $250 enrollment fee to cover the cost of enrolling veterans in Priority Groups 7 and 8 regardless of other health insurance coverage.

- Increasing pharmacy co-payments for certain veterans from $7 to $15 per prescription.
- Increasing outpatient co-payments for certain veterans from $15 to $20 per visit.
- Prohibiting the enrollment of any new Priority Group 8 veterans.
- Limiting long-term care to certain veterans, as well as reducing the number of nursing home beds.
- Reducing the number of inpatient beds and staffing.

In addition, the administration has set a goal of $2.1 billion for VA to collect first- and third-party deductibles directly from veterans through the Medical Care Collection Fund (MCCF). The American Legion believes this estimate continues to be overly optimistic, as actual funds collected by MCCF to date have not met expected projections. The American Legion believes VA must either improve its technology and training for its personnel, or consider contracting out the entire process.

Rather than consider ways to allow the VA health care system to accommodate the veterans currently using it, the White House budget for VA seeks to drive veterans away from the health care system. The American Legion opposes this particular administration strategy.

On March 10, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved a VA budget for FY 2004 calling for a $2.3 billion increase in VA health care funding, for a total of $27.5 billion. Total FY 2004 funding for VA would be $64.2 billion, an increase of $6.3 billion from current year spending. The committee rejected all of the proposed VA health care legislative initiatives outlined above. In addition, the committee raised serious doubts about the ability of VA to collect all of the $2.1 billion MCCF funds. However, the committee replaced only 10 percent of that amount with real dollars, and allowed the remainder to stand.

On March 13, the House Budget Committee reported House Concurrent Resolution (H Con Res) 95, the FY 2004 budget resolution. The resolution proposes a $15.1 billion cut in VA funding over the ten fiscal years 2004-2013. This spending reduction would be in both discretionary and mandatory spending. It also included a one percent cut in VA mandatory spending for FY 2004, a total of $463 million. The House Budget Committee also rejected a House Veterans' Affairs Committee recommendation to increase VA discretionary spending by $1 billion. The American Legion opposes each of these proposals, and communicated its opposition to the House congressional leadership in a letter dated March 15, signed by National Commander Conley, as well as the leaders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

During debate on the House budget resolution, a deal was struck between the leadership and concerned House members to diminish the size of the cutback in VA mandatory and health care spending. Specifically, House Budget Chairman Jim Nussle (IA) agreed to support the VA funding totals contained in the Senate budget resolution. The full House of Representatives passed H Con Res 95 on March 21 by a vote of 215-212. As passed, H Con Res 95 would grant $61.6 billion in new budget authority for VA in FY 2004, with actual outlays set at $61.1 billion.

On March 13, the Senate Budget Committee released its own version of FY 2004 budget resolution, S Con Res 23. The Senate panel called for $63.8 billion in new budget authority and $63.2 billion in outlays for FY 2004, which includes a 12.9 percent increase in VA health care funding. On March 26, the Senate passed H Con Res 95 by unanimous consent, after first substituting the language of S Con Res 23 for the House language.

During consideration of the Senate measure, an amendment sponsored by Senator Harry Reid (NV) was added. This amendment would add language to allow limited concurrent receipt for disabled military retirees with a rating of at least 60 percent, phased

in over the next five fiscal years. The next step is for a House-Senate conference committee to develop a final budget resolution acceptable to each chamber. That final document is the blueprint for the development of spending bills for FY 2004.

The chart below shows VA discretionary funding for the current year (FY 2003), funding proposals contained in the President's 2004 budget resolution, the budget proposal set forth by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HCVA), and The American Legion's FY 2004 proposal.

Programs	FY '03 Actual	White House Request, FY '04	HCVA Proposal FY '04	Legion Request FY '04
Medical Care	$23.9 billion	$25.2 billion	$27.5 billion	$24.5 billion
Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund	[$1.6 billion]	[$2.1 billion]	[$1.8 billion]	———
Medical & Prosthetic Research	$397 million	$408 million	$460 million	$445 million
Major Construction	$99 million	$273 million	$773 million	$320 million
Minor Construction	$224 million	$252 million	$252 million	$240 million
State Veterans Homes Grants	$99 million	$102 million	$132 million	$115 million
State Cemetery Grants	$32 million	$32 million	$32 million	$37 million
National Cemetery Administration	$132 million	$144 million	$209 million	$150 million
General Operating Expenses, VBA	$1.25 billion	$1.28 billion	$1.31 billion	$1.3 billion
Total	**$26.2 billion**	**$27.8 billion**	**$30.8 billion**	———

Note: Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund monies is not included in the final total.

The American Legion's VA funding proposal asks that third-party reimbursements—to include Medicare reimbursements—be used to supplement, not offset discretionary spending.

During the recent spring congressional recess, The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) joined forces to lobby key congressional members concerning mandatory funding for VA medical care. Veterans' Town Hall Meetings were held in:

- Brookline Station, MO (congressional district of House Majority Whip Blunt);
- Batavia, IL (congressional district of House Speaker Hastert);
- Rosenberg, TX (congressional district of House Majority Leader DeLay);
- St. Petersburg Beach, FL (congressional district of House Appropriations Committee Chairman Young); and
- Syracuse, NY (congressional district of House Appropriations VA—HUD Subcommittee Chairman Walsh).

The purpose of these town hall meetings was to focus on on-going VA medical care appropriations shortfall; switching VA medical care from discretionary to mandatory appropriations; and activating grassroots lobbying pressure to encourage House leadership to consider changing appropriations for VA medical care. Each meeting included a question and answer session.

All of the meetings were well attended by veterans from throughout the congressional district. Although an invitation was extended to the congressional representative for each congressional district, the only Member to attend the Veterans' Town Hall Meeting was Representative Walsh. Two congressional members were represented by a staff member (Blunt and Young). Speaker Hastert and Representative DeLay did not attend the meeting and neither sent a staff member on their behalf.

Americanism

The American Legion and the Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA) continue the push for a flag protection constitutional amendment. In the House, Representatives "Duke" Cunningham (CA) and John Murtha (PA) introduced House Joint Resolution (HJ Res) 4. On May 7, 2003 the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution held a hearing on HJ Res 4. Major General Patrick Brady testified on behalf of the Citizens Flag Alliance. On June 4, the House passed HJ Res 4 by a recorded vote of 300-125, with 8 members not voting.

In the Senate, Senators Orrin Hatch (UT) and Dianne Feinstein (CA) introduced Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res) 4. This measure currently has 56 cosponsors. With the shift of power in the Senate the flag protection amendment faces some hope for action on this measure in the 108th Congress. The Senate Judiciary Committee chairman is once again Senator Hatch, who is an ardent supporter of the amendment.

Children & Youth

FY 2003 funding for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, and the Judiciary were contained in PL 108-7, the omnibus spending measure. The Department of Justice (DoJ) received $24 billion under this bill. This amount is an increase of $291 million over the FY 2002 funding level, and $1.2 billion above the President's budget request.

Funding for other DoJ areas in this bill that concern The American Legion include: $4.2 billion for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), equal to the FY 2003 budget request; $6.16 billion for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), an amount $179 million below the White House's request; and $275 million for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), which is $24 million above the President's request for FY 2003.

On July 23, the House Appropriations Committee approved HR 2799, the FY 2004 Departments of Commerce, Justice and State, and the Judiciary spending measure. The bill provides $20.3 billion for the Department of Justice (DoJ), which is $1.5 billion more than the President's request. Under the bill the FBI would receive $4.6 billion, the Drug Enforcement Administration would receive $2.2 billion, and OJJDP and related programs would receive $462 million. The large increase in OJJDP programs—an increase of $187 million—is because new programs were added to OJJDP. These include gang prevention, alcohol prevention, the new "Secure Our Schools" program, and new juvenile accountability block grants programs.

Economics

The FY 2003 omnibus spending measure—PL 108-7—also contained funding for the Departments of Labor (DoL), Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education. Funding for DoL's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) is contained in this bill. The chart below shows ASVET funding for FY 2002, the President's budget request, and the final funding for ASVET.

	ASVET Funding FY 2002	Budget Request FY 2003	PL 108-7 FY 2003
Disabled Veterans' Outreach program	$81.6 million	$81.6 million	$82.2 million
Local Veterans' Employment Representative	$77.2 million	$77.2 million	$77.8 million
Federal Administration	$27.8 million	$26.7 million	$27.5 million
Veterans Homeless Reintegration Projects	$18.2 million	$17.5 million	$18.1 million
Veterans Workforce Investment Program	$7.5 million	$7.3 million	$7.4 million
Total	***$212.5 million***	***$210.3 million***	***$213.0 million***

There was some controversy regarding the VETS programs this year. In his FY 2003 budget recommendation, President Bush proposed shifting the administration and funding for VETS from DoL to VA, and then transforming the VETS programs into a competitive grants program. The American Legion opposed this recommendation, saying that DoL is better equipped to handle job-related programs than VA. As a result, both the House and Senate rejected the administration's recommendation, and included VETS funding in PL 108-7.

On June 19, a House Appropriations subcommittee approved HR 2660, the FY 2004 spending bill for the Departments of Labor (DoL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education. The annual funding for ASVET—contained in the DoL section of the measure—would receive $220 million, a $7 million overall increase. Federal administration funding would increase by $1.5 million, to $29 million, with homeless veterans programs to receive a modest increase of $869,000 to $19 million. The veterans workforce investment programs account would receive an increase of $173,000 to $7.55 million.

One of the biggest changes in the ASVET funding proposal concerns DVOP and LVER funding. In past years, congressional appropriators have assigned specific amounts to each program. This year, Congress intends to make the funding for these programs into a $162 million lump-sum grant program for individual states. The American Legion has testified against this action, saying that DVOP and LVER personnel will be more closely tied to state employment services, with little or no federal guidance.

The American Legion continues to be concerned with the administration's proposals for ASVET. The Legion has requested that additional funds be given to veterans' programs currently under the jurisdiction of the Department of Labor (DoL). The annual budget of ASVET has been flat-lined since FY 1992. Proposed funding for the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) program were set at $162 million for FY 2004. Funding for the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) in Denver, CO has been kept at $2 million for the past eight years. The NVTI is responsible for training DVOPs and LVERs

This 12-year flat budget has caused the elimination of over 400 fulltime DVOP employees, as well as nearly 300 LVERs. These personnel reductions mean that DVOP and LVER are not serving the veteran community in the most effective manner. Therefore, The American Legion has recommended the following funding amounts: a) $137 million for DVOP, b) $120 million for LVER, and c) $3 million for NVTI.

Last year, the White House proposed the transfer of ASVET's functions to VA. The American Legion opposed this proposal, saying that DoL more appropriately handles the functions of ASVET. Both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees opposed the White House's recommendation, and it was dropped.

Included in HR 1588, the FY 2004 DoD authorization bill, are provisions that would radically change the personnel structure of the civilian workforce within DoD. A separate bill—HR 1836, the Civil Service and National Security Personnel Improvement Act—was referred to the Armed Services Committee. Much of the language of HR 1836 was included in the final House version of HR 1588.

Specifically, The American Legion opposes any actions that would remove or jeopardize veterans' preference safeguards within the federal personnel system. The American Legion does not support dismantling veterans' earned rights and protections under the current personnel system addressed in title V, United States Code.

The American Legion supports a thorough evaluation of proposed changes contained in HR 1836 relative to any adverse impact such changes would have on veterans—past, present, or future—employed by DoD or any other federal agency.

Foreign Relations

PL 108-7, the FY 2003 omnibus spending bill, also contains money for Foreign Operations programs. They include various international programs, including military and economic aid, the fight against HIV/AIDS, refugee assistance and disaster relief, and aid to the Balkans and Eastern Europe. The measure appropriates $16.3 billion for these various programs, which is $148 million less than requested by the Bush Administration and $242 million below the FY 2002 enacted level. Some of the major program areas and their proposed funding levels are:

- $2.7 billion in economic and military assistance for Israel.
- $1.9 billion in economic and military assistance for Egypt.
- $760 million in assistance for states of the former Soviet Union.
- $592 million for HIV/AIDS programs.$525 million in assistance for Eastern Europe and Baltic states.
- $525 million in assistance for Eastern Europe and Baltic states.
- $295 million for humanitarian, peacekeeping, military, counterterrorism and reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan.
- $115 million for peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan and Africa.

On July 24, the House Appropriations Committee approved HR 2800, the FY 2004 Foreign Operations funding measure. The bill would allocate a total of $17.2 billion for various forms of foreign aid, including economic aid, military aid, disaster relief, and funding for various international programs. That amount is $1.7 billion below the President's request, and $1 billion more than appropriated for FY 2003.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 1426, that chamber's version of foreign operations funding. The bill would allocate a total of $18.1 billion. Some of the major program areas and their proposed funding levels are:

- $2.7 billion in economic and military assistance for Israel in both measures.
- $1.9 billion in economic and military assistance for Egypt in both bills.
- $1.4 billion for global assistance to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, which will complement $644 million in similar aid contained in the Labor-HHS-Education spending bill. The Senate bill would provide $1.5 billion.
- $731 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative in the House bill, $660 million from the Senate measure.

- $576 million in assistance for states of the former Soviet Union in the House measure, $596 million in the Senate bill.
- $456 million in assistance for Jordan in both measures.
- $315 million for international disaster and famine assistance in the House bill, $335 million in the Senate measure.

The Senate will begin consideration of this measure when it returns from its August recess.

Internal Affairs

On April 9, the House by a voice vote passed HR 1664, the Armed Forces Tax Fairness Act. This bill contains language sought by The American Legion to amend the Internal Revenue Code regarding use of American Legion Post facilities by members and their families.

For several years The American Legion and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have been at odds over the concept of unrelated business income, as well as the possibility of individual Post's losing their tax exemption under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Act of 1986. According to the Legion's congressional charter, only veterans who served during specific, designated wars or periods of wartime may become members of The American Legion. Section 501(c)(19) requires only 75 percent of the members to be current or former members of the Armed Forces. The Legion requires that 100 percent of its members be qualifying veterans.

However, The American Legion has many programs—including the Sons of the American Legion (SAL), American Legion Baseball, oratorical contests, and sponsorship of Scouting units—designed to further the purposes for which the Legion's tax exemption status was granted. Also, many Posts are family gathering places for social and patriotic events. However, questions have been raised whether SALs count toward the 100 percent.

HR 1664 would provide that the definition of "member" for purposes of the tax exempt status and unrelated business income would be expanded to include ancestors and lineal descendants of the member ("member" meaning past and present members of the Armed Services who meet the congressional charter definition). The measure now awaits action by the Senate.

National Security

Funding for the U.S. Coast Guard is included in PL 108-7, the omnibus FY 2003 funding measure. The measure appropriates $6.1 billion for the Coast Guard, an increase of $600 million over current year spending. Individual account totals include: $4.3 billion for operating expenses; $759 million for acquisition, construction, environmental compliance, and bridge alterations; and $997 million for reserve training, retired pay, and research and development.

With the advent of the war on terrorism, the Coast Guard will play a greater role in preventing illicit delivery of weapons of mass destruction into the United States. The force is undertaking specialized training, acquiring detection equipment and introducing tighter screening procedures for vessels headed for U.S. ports. With new focus on homeland defense—half of its resources will be dedicated to the mission—the Coast Guard now places the threat of weapons of mass destruction at the top of its list of threat priorities. The Coast Guard will be moved from the Transportation Department into the Department of Homeland Security.

America's maritime domain is highly vulnerable to terrorist activities, including the illicit delivery of chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological materials. It is also a

means of entry for terrorists themselves, while ports make attractive targets because of their economic value. The U.S. is placing heavy emphasis on improving its monitoring of its 95,000 miles of shoreline, with a primary objective of identifying what is entering the country.

The American Legion continues its support for the U.S. Coast Guard and its various missions including air-sea rescues, pollution control, and interception of illegal aliens and drug interdiction.

Funding for the Selective Service System—included in the omnibus funding measure, PL 108-7—totals $26.5 million, an increase of $1.5 million over FY 2002 funding. The basic mission of Selective Service is to be prepared to supply manpower to the U.S. military to ensure the security of the United States during a time of national emergency. Since 1973, the Armed Forces have relied on volunteers to fill manpower requirements. However, Selective Service remains the primary vehicle by which prospective recruits will be brought into the military if Congress and the President should authorize a return to the draft. The American Legion continues to support this program.

During the 107th Congress, Rep. James Saxton (NJ) introduced legislation to lower the age for eligible members of the Reserves to receive military retired pay from 60 to 55. With America's armed forces dwindling in number—despite increased operations around the world, including the recent war in Iraq—Reservists are now shouldering a larger burden of national security than ever before. Therefore, it is only fair that Reservists with at least 20 years of service should be able to receive military retired pay at an earlier date.

Unfortunately, that measure was not acted upon before the 107th Congress adjourned. Rep. Saxton reintroduced the measure on February 12, 2003 as HR 742. It currently has 115 cosponsors. A companion measure, S 1035, was introduced on May 5 by Sen. John Corzine (NJ).

Since the onset of the war with Iraq, Congress has taken several actions to support U.S. armed forces in the region. Some of these actions are providing moral support, but more recent proposed action will help fund Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On March 20, the Senate passed Senate Resolution (S Res) 95 by a vote of 99-0. The resolution commends and supports the efforts and leadership of the President, as Commander in Chief, in the conflict against Iraq. It also expresses the gratitude of the country to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and civilians serving in operations against Iraq who have borne the burden of sacrifice. The next day, the House of Representatives voted 392-11 on H Con Res 104, a resolution expressing the support and appreciation of the nation for the President and the members of the armed forces who are participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On April 16 President Bush enacted PL 108-11, his formal request for supplemental funding to help prosecute the war with Iraq. The measure passed the House on April 3 by a 414-12 recorded vote. However, the Senate substituted the language of a companion measure for the House language and passed the bill by unanimous consent. After a House-Senate conference committee met and reconciled their differences, the final measure totaled $79 billion in total spending. Funding is included in the bill for the following areas:

- $62.4 billion to support America's military, both in Iraq and in other operations related to the war on terrorism. This amount would pay for troop transportation, replacement of high-tech munitions, and improved combat pay for active-duty soldiers and Reservists.
- $4.5 billion in foreign military and economic assistance. This includes a) $1.1 billion for Jordan, b) $1 billion for Israel, c) $1 billion for Turkey, d) $337

million for Afghanistan, e) $300 million for Egypt, f) $175 million for Pakistan, and g) $30 million for the Philippines.

- $3.9 billion to strengthen this country's defenses against terrorism. It will enhance the security of our nation and improve the preparedness of state and local first responders. In addition, resources for border and transportation security, additional screening of visitors crossing the border, increased inspection of high-risk goods and cargoes at ports-of-entry, and additional flight hours for airspace security would be funded.
- $2.5 billion in humanitarian relief for the people of Iraq. It would provide food, water, medicine and clothing to the Iraqi people. These funds would also be used to replace damaged infrastructure, restore important government services, and keep schools open.

Also included in the final version is $100 million for VA health care. The original Senate version set this figure at $155 million, but the conference report reduced the amount. The law also included $2.9 billion in federal assistance to the domestic airline industry.

Administration officials have called this supplemental a "down payment" on the war on Iraq. However, some congressional members have expressed an unwillingness to write a "blank check" for this war, and will be seeking more concrete figures for paying for the war.

The House on May 22 passed HR 1588, the Fiscal Year 2004 Department of Defense (DoD) authorization measure, by a 361-68 recorded vote. The Senate approved its version of the bill by a voice vote. The legislation is now in a conference committee to reconcile differences before President Bush can sign it into law.

Both measures would budget DoD at $400.5 billion in the upcoming fiscal year (that figure also includes national security programs of the Department of Energy). This total continues President Bush's commitment to building a strong U.S. military to meet the new and emerging challenges of the 21st century. Senator John Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said, "This bill sends a strong signal of support to our men and women in uniform—from the Balkans to the Middle East to Korea and those standing watch here at home—that we appreciate their sacrifice and honor their service." Highlights of major areas in each measure are outlined below.

Combating Terrorism—Both measures would authorize $4.02 billion for various accounts to directly fight terrorism. This includes 1) destruction of chemical agents and munitions in this country, 2) procurement of chemical-biological defense equipment and materiel, 3) chemical biological defense research and development (R&D), 4) development of technology to combat terrorism, 5) procurement of special weapons to fight terrorism, and 6) drug interdiction and counter-drug activities.

Cooperative Threat Reduction—Both chambers would authorize similar amounts to dismantle, secure and eliminate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) facilities in the former Soviet Union. The House approved $451 million, while the Senate agreed to $450 million.

Ballistic Missile Defense—This account continues to be an important part of this country's defense against ballistic missile threats from countries that have that capability, including rogue nations. The House and Senate recommended $9.1 billion for the continued development of ballistic missile defense.

Supporting Servicemembers—Among the areas addressed by this measure are: 1) a 4.1 percent average increase in base pay, 2) reduction in out-of-pocket housing expenses from 7.5 percent to 3.5 percent, and 3) extension of several special pays and bonuses for active-duty personnel, including enlistment and reenlistment bonuses.

Active-Duty Personnel Increases—The House version of HR 1588 recommends modest increases for active-duty personnel. Under the House bill, active forces would be set at 1.394 million personnel. The war on terrorism and the aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom will continue to require American armed forces to keep the peace. The Senate bill would set personnel levels at 1.388 million.

Reserve Component —HR 1588 would set reserve component personnel at 873,300. The measure also increases funding for National Guard and Reserve training. It also extends certain special pays and bonuses – including enlistment and reenlistment bonuses – and would allow the use of military commissaries by reservists.

Military Construction—The House bill would increase military construction funding by $537 million, to $9.8 billion. Much of the increases will go to troop housing, military family housing, medical facilities, schools for DoD dependents, and child development centers. The Senate version would authorize $9 billion.

Combat Readiness—One of the major problems facing our country's armed forces is the inability to get our forces the necessary training to insure their combat readiness. Both bills would provide $114 billion for readiness accounts critical to the day-to-day operations of the U.S. military. It includes budget authority for: 1) aircraft operations and flying hours, 2) depot maintenance, 3) training accounts, and 4) ground forces operations.

Aircraft Acquisitions and Modifications—One of the main objectives of the authorization measure is to budget money for acquiring equipment for the armed forces. In addition, many aircraft are kept functioning by receiving state-of-the-art updates. Among the major aircraft and aircraft modifications targeted by HR 1588 are:

- $4.2 billion for development of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) for the Air Force and Navy in the House version, $4.4 billion in the Senate version,
- $3.5 billion for 22 F-22 Raptor fighter planes from the House, and the same amount from the Senate but for 2 less planes,
- $3 billion for 42 F/A-18 Hornet fighter planes from the House, $2.9 billion from the Senate,
- $2.2 billion for 12 C-17 Globemaster cargo planes in the House version, $2.1 billion for 11 planes in the Senate bill,
- $1.6 billion for a total of 9 V-22 Ospreys for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps from the House, $1.1 billion from the Senate,
- $1.1 billion for continued engineering and manufacturing development of the RAH-66 Comanche, the Army's next-generation, stealthy armed reconnaissance helicopter,
- $762 million for upgrades to the Army's AH-64 Apache Longbow heavy attack helicopters,
- $315 million for F-16 Falcon fighter plane modifications in the House bill, while the Senate would provide $301 million,
- $238 million for F-15 Eagle fighter plane modifications from the House, $198 million from the Senate, and
- $131 million for C-5 Galaxy cargo plane modifications in the House measure, $92 million in the Senate version.

Ground Weapons and Vehicles—After the rapid success of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the need to keep the Army's heavy armored weapons up to date is apparent. However, the President's budget failed to include any upgrades for Abrams tank or Bradley vehicle. The House version provides $727 million for heavy forces upgrades, while both versions recommend $955 million for the procurement of 301 Stryker medium armored vehicles. Both of these recommendations seek to continue the projected transformation of this country's armed forces for the 21st century.

Naval Programs—Another lesson learned from Operation Iraqi Freedom is the need to project U.S. military power around the world on short notice. A strong navy is essential to this policy. The authorization measure would continue to expand the U.S. Navy. Specifically, HR 1588 would authorize: a) $3.2 billion for procurement of three Arleigh Burke-class AEGIS destroyers, b) $1.54 billion for procurement, research and development of the CVN-21, the next generation aircraft carrier, c) $2.5 billion for procurement of the sixth and seventh boats in the Virginia-class of new attack submarines (NSSN), and d) $1 billion for continued development of the DD(X), the next generation of destroyer. The Senate version would increase the DD(X) authorization to $1.1 billion.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the progress on this bill. Issues of national security continue to be priority concerns of our membership. The American Legion continues to believe in the tenet of "Peace Through Strength."

On July 17, the Senate by a 95-0 vote passed HR 2658, the FY, 2004 Department of Defense (DoD) spending measure. The House passed the bill on July 8 by a vote of 399-19. A conference committee must now reconcile differences in the two versions of the bill.

The House version would fund DoD at $369.2 billion, while the Senate bill sets $369.1 billion for defense programs. A brief outline of the major programs is presented below.

Procurement—This account would be funded at $73.7 billion by the House, and $74 billion from the Senate. The White House had requested $72.7 billion for this area. The House bill would appropriate funds to upgrade tanks and Bradley armored troop carriers requested by the Pentagon, while the Senate added funds for those same programs in National Guard units. Some of the major accounts include:

- $3.6 billion for 22 F-22 fighters for the Air Force.
- $2.9 billion for 42 F/A-18E/F fighter aircraft for the Navy.
- $2.1 billion for 11 C-17 airlift planes for the Air Force.
- $1.5 billion for 11 V-22 Ospreys for the Marine Corps and Air Force.
- $485 million for 450 Tactical Tomahawk cruise missiles for the Navy.

Research and Development—The House funded this program at $64.6 billion while the Senate requested $63.6 billion, compared to the FY 2004 White House budget proposal of $61.8 billion. Major programs funded include:

- $4.2 billion for the Joint Strike Fighter.
- $1.1 billion for the Army's Comanche helicopter.
- $791 million for Space-Based Radar and Space-Based Infra-Red System.

Military Personnel—This account received $98.3 billion from the House, and $98.9 billion from the Senate. The administration requested $98.9 billion for FY 2004. Both bills would support the President's request for 1.381 million active duty military personnel and 863,300 Selected Reserves and National Guard personnel. Also fully funded would be:

a) the military personnel pay raises (average level of 4.1 percent); and b) the increase in Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), which will lower service personnel's out-of-pocket expenses from 7.5 percent in FY 2003 to 3.5 percent in FY 2004.

Operations and Maintenance—The House funding for this account was set at $115.3 billion, while the Senate allocated $115.6 billion. Both of these figures are below the White House request, which was $116.9 billion. This account provides for land forces training, tank-training miles, helicopter flying hours, ship steaming days and Air Force and Navy flying hour programs. It also supports DoD goal to fund facilities sustainment at not less than 93 percent in all branches of the armed forces.

Defense Health Programs would receive $15.6 billion from both the House and Senate. Drug interdiction programs would be funded at $817 million by the House bill, and at $832 million from the Senate.

The American Legion continues to support legislation allowing concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation by military retirees. The concept of concurrent receipt dates back to 1891, when Congress passed a law prohibiting active-duty or retired personnel from also receiving disability pensions.

The current law dealing with concurrent receipt was established in 1944, when Public Law 78-314 allowed retired military personnel to elect to waive an amount of their retirement pay equal to their veterans' disability compensation payments. The advantage to this provision is that while military retirement pay is considered taxable income, veterans' disability compensation is not subject to federal income taxes. As a result, the retiree who receives veterans' compensation and the balance of the retired pay is financially better off than the retiree who receives only taxable retired pay.

Opponents say that granting concurrent receipt to all disabled military retirees would be fiscally irresponsible. In addition, opponents argue that paying retirement benefits after as few as 20 years of service to individuals still in their early forties, plus veterans' compensation, would amount to dual compensation for the same thing: the rigors of military service. Military retired pay is compensation for longevity of honorable military service. VA service-connected disability compensation is for medical conditions incurred or aggravated while on active duty. Payment is for two distinct, different reasons.

A veteran may receive other federal and non-federal benefits in addition to veteran's service-connected disability compensation, either partly or in full. A veteran can receive disability compensation without any offsets, reductions or limits with: unemployment compensation; Social Security; federal civil service pay; pay from a private sector job; federal civil service retirement (including disability retirement); retirement pension from non-federal jobs; and, federal workers compensation (benefits for work-caused disability or illness provided under FECA). Since these income sources are not offset, why should military retirement pay be offset?

Proponents have argued that simple, equitable justice is one reason to allow concurrent receipt. Military retirees are the only federal employees who must offset their retired pay with VA disability compensation. Also, proponents claim that the unique nature of military service, given their sacrifices and hardships, should merit these retirees receiving both military retired pay and VA disability compensation. In addition, for the past decade, many veterans programs have been pared to the bone in the name of balancing the budget. Many veterans' advocates feel it is time that retirees receive compensation for these fiscal sacrifices.

Often a veteran's service-connected disability compensation is awarded for disabilities that cannot be equated with disabilities incurred in civilian life. Military service rendered in defense, and on behalf, of the Nation deserves special consideration when determining policy toward such matters as benefit offsets. It is a moral and ethical responsibility to award preferential treatment to the needs of any veteran, given their sacrifices and hardships incurred during honorable military service.

Language in the PL 107-107, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2002 authorizes concurrent receipt, but **does not** provide the funding needed to actually enact legislation allowing disabled military retirees to receive their earned retirement pay and VA disability compensation concurrently. Although this law authorizes concurrent receipt, it would be effective **only after** the President proposes legislation in the annual budget request, and Congress enacts legislation, to expressly

offset the costs of this initiative. This language does not fix the problem, but rather discriminates against disabled military retirees. PL 107-107 merely shifts the responsibility of enactment of legislation granting full concurrent receipt from Congress to the White House.

On December 2, 2002 President Bush signed PL 107-314. Although no provisions for concurrent receipt were included, a new Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) program for certain military retirees was adopted. Eligible retirees are those who have 20 years of service and who have disabilities from combat injuries for which they have been awarded the Purple Heart and are rated by VA at least 10% disabled. In addition, veterans who are rated at least 60% disabled because of armed conflict, hazardous duty, training exercises, or mishaps involving military equipment are also eligible. Also, diseases resulting from Agent Orange, Gulf War Syndrome, radiation exposure, mustard gas and Lewisite qualify. Also, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) for combat will qualify. CRSC payments are effective June 1, 2003 and are considered to be tax exempt pending a review by the Armed Forces Tax Council.

Representative Mike Bilirakis (FL) reintroduced HR 303—the Military Retired Pay Restoration Act—in the 108th Congress and has **354** co-sponsors. Senator Reid (NV) reintroduced the Senate companion bill on February 13 as S 392, which now has **65** co-sponsors. Also, Senator Daschle (SD), Democratic Leader, has introduced a comprehensive bill, S 19, that includes full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation.

The Senate version of the FY 2004 budget resolution included an amendment by Senator Reid for the phase-in for those with a 60 percent or greater disability. However, this provision was dropped in the conference with the House and was not included in the final version of the FY 2004 budget resolution. In addition, the Senate version of the FY 2004 NDAA, HR 1588, includes a provision for full concurrent receipt (introduced by Sen. Reid). The House version has no language on concurrent receipt. The bill is now in a conference with the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.

On May 22, Rep. Jim Marshall (GA)—a Vietnam combat veteran with two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart—introduced House Resolution (H Res.) 251 to force a vote on HR 303. The resolution is known as a "discharge petition" and would force the committee with jurisdiction over the bill to send it directly to the House floor for consideration. H Res. 251 now has 202 signatures. 218 House members must sign the petition to force a vote on HR 303.

In President Bush's State of the Union Speech to the nation on Jan 28, he spoke of an economic stimulus plan. The American Legion strongly encourages the President and Congress to support concurrent receipt as part of an economic stimulus plan. Upon receipt of full concurrent receipt, disabled military retirees would be required to pay federal income tax on their gross retired pay, which would provide increased revenue to the Federal treasury. Only those who were retired totally due to combat injuries would be exempt. Further, this increase in pay would put many in higher tax brackets, which would also increase revenue to the Federal treasury. Finally, disabled military retirees would be spending their retired pay, which stimulates the economy.

While The American Legion supports current initiatives seeking to improve VA disability compensation rates for disabled military retirees, we will continue to urge Congress and the administration to enact legislation allowing full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for all disabled military retirees.

On June 24, the House by a vote of 425-2 approved HR 2555, the FY 2004 Homeland Security appropriations measure. One month later, on July 24, the Senate passed their version of the measure by a 93-1 vote. This bill—the first stand-alone

measure to fund the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—would allocate $30.4 billion, an increase of $667 million over current year spending, while the Senate bill would fund DHS at $29.3 billion. Among the categories funded are:

- $6.7 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard in the House bill, $6.8 billion in the Senate version,
- $5.6 billion over the coming decade—including $890 million for FY 2004—for Project Bioshield, under which the federal government would acquire antidotes and take other steps to counter bioterrorism from the House, but no funding from the Senate,
- $5.2 billion for the Transportation Security Administration from the House, $5.4 billion from the Senate,
- $5.1 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection in the House measure, $4.9 billion in the Senate version,
- $4.4 billion in grants for state and local "first responders"—firefighters, police and emergency response personnel—to prepare for future terrorist events from the House, $3.6 billion from the Senate,
- $3 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the House version, $2.9 billion in the Senate bill,
- $1.1 billion for the U.S. Secret Service from both chambers, and
- $776 million for the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate from the House, $824 million from the Senate. This agency identifies and assesses threats, maps threat information against current vulnerabilities, issues warnings, and takes preventive action.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

FY 2003 Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies spending was contained in the omnibus funding bill signed by President Bush on February 20, 2003. The chart below compares FY 2002 funding levels, the President's FY 2003 budget proposal, and the final totals contained in PL 108-7, the FY 2003 omnibus funding bill.

VA Programs	***PL 107-73 FY 2002***	***Budget Proposal FY 2003***	***PL 108-7, FY 2003***
Compensation and Pensions	$26 billion	$28.9 billion	$31.2 billion
Medical Care	$21.5 billion	$22.7 billion	$23.9 billion
Medical/prosthetic research	$371 million	$394 million	$397 million
General Operating Expenses	$1.2 billion	$1.3 billion	$1.2 billion
Natl. Cemetery Administration	$121 million	$133 million	$132 million
Major Construction	$183 million	$194 million	$99 million
Minor Construction	$211 million	$211 million	$224 million
State Veterans Homes Grants	$100 million	$100 million	$99 million
State Veterans Cemeteries Grants	$25 million	$32 million	$32 million
Total	***$52.4 billion***	***$56.9 billion***	***$57.5 billion***

Other Programs:			
American Battle Monuments Commission	$35 million	$30 million	$35 million
AmeriCorps	$407 million	$636 million	$387 million
Court of Appeals, Veterans Claims	$13 million	$15 million	$14 million
NASA	$14.9 billion	$15 billion	$15.4 billion

In addition to the funding outlined above, several administrative provisions proposed by the White House were removed from the final version of VA funding legislation. The American Legion opposed the three provisions. These provisions would have:

- Denied funding to allow VA to implement an eighth Priority Group for VA health care. As enacted by PL 107-135, veterans who are below a certain income level can pay reduced co-payments for their VA health care. Without funding, this plan cannot be accomplished.
- Denied VA funding for new disability claims related to concurrent receipt if it is enacted. This means that a service-connected disabled retiree—who is not currently receiving VA compensation—will be unable to apply for VA disability compensation when the new "combat related special compensation" provisions—contained in PL 107-249—become law. This was a deceitful act by the House Appropriations Committee. House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member Lane Evans (IL) denounced this action as "shameful," saying further, "This is a disgraceful attempt, prior to passage of any new concurrent receipt legislation, to ignore the legitimate claims of military retirees who are statutorily entitled to service-connected VA compensation benefits if they have a disability which was incurred or aggravated by military service,"
- Denied funding for VA programs contained in PL 107-287, the "Department of Veterans Affairs Emergency Preparedness Act of 2002." This measure would allow VA to establish special research centers for emergency medical preparedness. This includes combating the effects of possible chemical, biological or nuclear attacks or other national emergencies. However, despite removal of this language, congressional conferees still did not appropriate any funds for these special research centers.

Despite substantial increases in VA's budget over the past decade, the department still faces significant problems in providing health care to this country's veterans. Last year, legislation was introduced to move VA health care funding from the discretionary area of the federal budget to mandatory. VA's compensation, pension, home loan programs, and other benefits programs are already mandatory spending categories.

On January 7, 2003 Sen. Johnson reintroduced his VA mandatory funding bill, S 50. The measure currently has 19 cosponsors. Three weeks later, on January 29, Legion representatives testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. The hearing examined the capacity of the VA health care system to meet the current demands of its veteran population.

In the statement, The American Legion made several recommendations to strengthen VA health care. One suggestion tendered was making VA health care funding mandatory spending. "Under mandatory spending...VA health care will be provided funding by law for all enrollees who meet the eligibility criteria...it is disingenuous for the government promise timely access to quality health care to veterans and then make it unattainable because of inadequate funding. Rationed health care is no way to honor

America's obligation to the brave men and women who have, and continue, to unselfishly put the nation's priorities above their own needs."

On June 4 Rep. Lane Evans—Ranking Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee—introduced HR 2318, "the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003." This legislation would require the Secretary of the Treasury to provide funding for VA health care based on the number of enrollees in the system and the consumer price index for hospital and related services starting in FY 2005. The bill currently has 85 cosponsors.

During May, the House passed several bills relating to veterans' issues. Each of the measures is presented below with a brief description of its provisions.

On May 7, the House by a vote of 425-0 passed HR 100, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Under the provisions of this bill:

- Servicemembers will be protected from double taxation, when they are stationed in one state but live in another.
- Servicemembers whose military service affects his or her ability to repay a debt incurred prior to entering service can have the interest rate of this debt completely forgiven.
- Eviction proceedings against a servicemember can be delayed for at least 3 months under this legislation. The bill also updates the eviction protection by raising the maximum rent for a servicemember's housing from $1200 to $1700 to qualify under this bill.
- Guarantees payment of premiums for a servicemember's life insurance policy for policies up to $250,000.
- Protects a servicemember who has fallen behind in care lease payments by requiring the lessor to obtain a court order before repossessing the car.

There is a similar bill in the Senate, S 792, introduced by Senator Zell Miller (GA).

On May 21, the House passed HR 1911 by a vote of 426-0. This measure would expand and grant new powers to a task force that is investigating ways to help DoD and VA share medical resources.

The next day—May 22—the House passed two veterans' bills by similar overwhelming margins. HR 1257, the Selected Reserve Home Loan Equity Act, was approved by a 428-0 vote. This bill would make permanent a program that offers home loans to reservists who have served for six years or more and lower the fee charged to applicants. Reservists currently pay a higher fee than do active-duty veterans. The program is due to expire at the end of FY 2009. It would also increase the fees paid by veterans who purchase homes with no down payment after their first purchase within the program.

Also approved the same day was HR 1683, the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2003, by a vote of 426-0. It would provide a two percent COLA for veterans receiving disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled adult children, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children.

On May 29 President Bush signed Public Law 108-29, the Veterans' Memorial Preservation and Recognition Act of 2003. The House passed the measure on May 20 by a recorded vote of 419-0, after passing the Senate on March 27 by unanimous consent. This measure would establish criminal penalties for willfully injuring or destroying or attempting to injure or destroy any structure, plaque, statue, or other monument on public property commemorating the service of anyone in the U.S. armed forces. It would also require that veterans' cemeteries be treated as sites permitting supplemental guide signs on federal interstate highways or roads of the National Highway System.

On May 15, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved several measures for further House action. Some of these bills have already been approved by that chamber. Each of the remaining bills is outlined below.

The first measure—HR 1460, the Veterans Entrepreneurship Act of 2003—allows veterans to use VA educational assistance to enroll in entrepreneurial programs offered by small business development centers. It also allows federal agency contracting officers to create sole-source contracts for disabled veteran-owned businesses of up to $5 million for manufacturing contracts and $3 million for non-manufacturing contracts. HR 1460 also includes provisions that will:

- Allow surviving spouses and dependents of veterans who died while awaiting VA claims decisions to receive back benefits for the entire period the claim was being processed,
- Allow VA to make handicapped-accessible housing available to disabled servicemembers who remain on active duty pending medical separation, and
- Reinstate a program allowing veterans to buy home that have been foreclosed, a program that VA stopped earlier this year.

The second bill—HR 1562, the Veterans Health Care Cost Recovery Act of 2003—allows VA facilities to be designated as "preferred providers," making it easier for them to collect fees from private insurers. It also mandates that whenever VA furnishes care or services to a person other than a veteran, the federal government shall have the right to recover the costs of such care or services in the same manner as care and services provided to a veteran.

Finally, the committee approved HR 1715, a bill to enhance the authority of VA to recover from third parties the costs of medical care furnished to veterans and other persons by the department. The measure includes third-party insurance providers participating in the Medicare program among the entities from which VA shall recover payments for the costs of providing certain non-service-connected medical care to veterans.

All of these bills now await action by the Senate. The American Legion will closely monitor the progress of these measures in the weeks ahead.

On May 28, 2003 the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans (PTF) handed President Bush a final report its members believe will address a challenge the federal government has faced for more than 20 years. Building on an interim report submitted in July 2002, the final report identifies leadership commitment, the transition from military to veteran status, barriers to collaboration, and timely access to health care as areas that both VA and DoD need to address.

Task force members and staff conducted 19 public meetings, 24 site visits, regular briefings of top VA and DoD officials, hundreds of data requests, roundtables with veteran and military organizations, and an exhaustive review of existing literature before writing its final report. Among highlights of the report are recommendations that:

- VA and DoD should develop and deploy—by FY 2005—electronic medical records that are interoperable, bi-directional, and based on existing health care standards;
- VA and DoD should collaborate more effectively in recording, recognizing, treating and preventing illnesses resulting from exposures and hazards experienced during military service;
- The Secretaries of the two agencies must revise their health care organizational structures, not only to provide more effective management of the two systems individually, but to remove any barriers to greater collaboration;

- Both Secretaries should provide their local and regional health care managers more authority, accountability, and incentives to increase those collaborative activities that improve health care delivery and control costs;
- VA and DoD should develop a joint core formulary in pharmaceuticals and the clinical tools needed to give both systems access to profiles of dual VA/DoD beneficiaries;
- Both agencies must utilize, whenever possible, joint procurement of medical services and equipment;
- Both agencies should pursue every opportunity for joint ventures, including facility construction, and share the results of joint venture success stories;
- Federal budget and appropriations processes must be modified to ensure full funding for enrolled veterans in Priority Groups 1 through 7, based on the current comprehensive benefit and the VA's established access standards;
- VA should pay for care with non-VA providers whenever it cannot meet its access standards;
- The President and Congress should work together to resolve what the task force calls the "unacceptable" access status and funding for Priority Group 8 veterans; and,
- An interagency leadership commission should reports annually to the VA and DoD Secretaries on the status of implementing the task force's recommendations.

One of the provisions of the final report has spurred Representative Lane Evans (IL), ranking member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, to re-introduce legislation that has the full support of The American Legion. Last year, Reps. Chris Smith, (NJ), and Evans introduced similar legislation to make VA medical care mandatory funding. That legislation was never acted upon prior to the adjournment of the 107th Congress. On June 4 of this year, Evans introduced HR 2318, the "Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003." The measure currently has 76 cosponsors. This legislation would require the Secretary of the Treasury to provide funding for VA health care based on the number of enrollees in the system and the consumer price index for hospital and related services starting in FY 2005.

A second measure—HR 2475, the "Veterans Health Care Full Funding Act"—was introduced by Rep. Chris Smith (NJ), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on June 16. The bill would provide an enhanced funding process to ensure an adequate level of funding for veterans' health care programs of VA, and to establish standards of access to care for veterans seeking health care from VA. The legislation reflects some central recommendations of presidential task force on veterans' health care, bringing to light an alarming mismatch between demand for services and available resources.

HR 2475 would change the way current funding of veterans' health care by creating an independent panel of experts to establish annual funding levels. Spending amounts would be based on a funding mechanism similar to one DoD uses for military retirees under TRICARE for Life. The VA Secretary would appoint a three-member board for staggered 15-year terms and would have independent staff and funding

This panel would produce an annual budget request and a two-year budget forecast for veterans health care to provide full health care benefits in a timely and cost-efficient fashion to all enrolled veterans in Priority Groups 1-7. These seven categories are composed primarily of veterans injured or disabled while serving their nation, or with low income levels.

The board will have full access to all of VA's data relevant to determining health care funding, as well as the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) economic and

forecasting figures, but would not be under the control of either VA or OMB. Using this information, the board would calculate an annual funding level. The amount calculated for the next fiscal year would become the President's budget request submitted to Congress. Otherwise, the congressional budget and appropriations process would remain unchanged.

Under HR 2475, VA would be required to meet its own access standards. If VA cannot furnish care to veterans who need it within a reasonable timeframe, it would be obligated to contract for care with non-VA providers. The board would also be required to recommend program efficiencies and savings, and also consider guidance from OMB. HR 2475 has 44 cosponsors.

One of the shortcomings of HR 2475 is there is no legislative language in the bill that forces Congress to abide by the recommended spending levels formulated by the board. In addition, it mandates the President to accept budget numbers not generated by his office. While the recommended numbers would likely be an improvement to budget submission levels, there are no guarantees that appropriations will be automatic by any mechanism in the bill, since the normal budget and appropriations processes remain intact.

The number of veterans treated by VA health care has risen 70 percent from 2.7 million to about 4.6 million this year, while funding increased only 49 percent. Funding increases have not been met to cover medical inflation. The American Legion feels that HR 2318 and HR 2475 as a good first step toward solving the nagging problem of underfunded VA health care.

On June 26, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved a number of veterans-related bills. All eight bills approved by the Committee will be reported to the full House of Representatives for further consideration and possible floor action in July.

The first measure, H.R. 2297, has a number of provisions. The bill would:

- Allow surviving spouses of veterans to remarry after age 55 without being penalized with the loss of widow benefits;
- Expand the Montgomery GI Bill program for self-employment training programs;
- Make permanent the State Cemetery Grants Program;
- Reinstate a VA pilot program to provide vocational training to newly eligible VA nonservice-connected pension recipients;
- Increase the specially adapted automobile grant from $9,000 to $11,000;
- Increase the specially adapted housing grant from $48,000 to $50,000 for the most severely disabled veterans and from $9,350 to $10,000 for other severely disabled veterans;
- Add cirrhosis of the liver as a presumed service-connected disability for former POWs;
- Eliminate the requirement that a POW be held for 30 days or more to qualify for presumptions of service-connection for several specific disabilities;
- Expand benefits eligibility to those children with spina bifida born to Vietnam-era veterans who served in Korea near the demilitarized zone between October 1, 1967 and May 7, 1975;
- Make the VA home loan program for members of the Selected Reserve permanent;
- Adjust the funding fee charged to Selected Reserve home loan applications to the same amount as that paid by active duty servicemembers;
- Reinstate the Department of Veterans Affairs' vendee loan program;
- Mandate that the Department of Labor place staff in veterans' assistance offices at overseas military installations 90 days after date of enactment; and

- Extend certain compensation and burial benefits to certain Philippine WWII-era veterans residing in the U.S.

A second measure approved by the committee, H.R. 1720, was the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act, would authorize $1.1 billion over two years for major medical facility construction projects to improve, renovate, replace, update or establish VA patient care facilities. They include: a inpatient tower at West Side Division in Chicago, IL; seismic corrections in San Diego, CA; renovations to inpatient wards and research facilities in West Haven, CT; a new medical facility in Columbus, OH; a joint VA-DOD clinic in Pensacola, FL; the lease of an outpatient clinic in Charlotte, NC; and a lease of an outpatient clinic and benefits office in Clark County, NV.

In addition, H.R. 1720 would require the VA Secretary to develop a specific plan for meeting the future inpatient hospitalization needs of veterans who live in southern New Jersey and certain counties in Texas, as well as consider a joint VA-Navy medical facility proposal in Charleston, SC.

The committee also approved H.R. 116, a measure that would authorize a new major medical facility—possibly a joint venture with the Air Force—at the site of the former Fitzsimons Army Medical Center on the University of Colorado campus at Aurora. The bill, sponsored by Rep. Joel Hefley (CO), authorizes $300 million for this project.

Another bill, H.R. 1516, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003, would direct VA to establish five new national cemeteries in the following areas: southeastern Pennsylvania; Birmingham, AL; Jacksonville, FL; Bakersfield, CA; and Greenville/Columbia, SC. This legislation would require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit a report to Congress within 120 days of enactment setting forth the five areas where those cemeteries will be established, a schedule for establishment, the estimated cost associated with establishment, and the amount of Advance Planning Funds obligated for this purpose. The bill would also require the Secretary to submit to Congress an annual report that updates the information included in the initial report until the five cemeteries are completed.

During the Committee's markup session, the following bills were also approved:

- H.R. 2357 would expand VA health care services by requiring the appointment of chiropractors. Although VA has previously been directed to develop chiropractic care programs, to date they have failed to appoint a single chiropractor. H.R. 2357 also extends health care services to Filipino WWII veterans residing in the United States.
- H.R. 2433, sponsored by Rep. Ciro Rodriguez (TX), would authorize VA to provide prioritized health care to veterans were who participated in Project 112/Project SHAD tests. These tests, which involved exposure to chemical and biological toxins or simulants, were conducted by the Department of Defense at their Deseret Test Center from 1962 through 1973. In the past year, the Department of Defense has released information about these secret Cold War-era tests and has worked with VA to identify and notify those veterans who participated in the tests, most of them unknowingly. H.R. 2433 will ensure that those veterans who did participate in these tests are able to receive medical evaluation, and if necessary, treatment at VA health care facilities. H.R. 2433 also authorizes premium pay for Saturday duty to health care workers with direct patient-care responsibilities.
- H.R. 2595, sponsored by Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Lane Evans (IL), would restore the operation of the Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program during fiscal year 2003 to the scope of that program as in effect on

September 30, 2002. In June, the Department of Veterans Affairs stopped making loans under the Native American Direct Loan Program because of a $5 million limitation contained in the 2003 Appropriations Act, resulting in a number of new home construction projects being stopped. H.R. 2595 will allow both new home construction, as well as refinancing to resume for Native American veterans at the levels authorized in prior years.

- H. Con. Res. 159, sponsored by Rep. Jerry Moran (KS), declares Emporia, Kansas, to be the founding city of the Veterans Day holiday, and recognizes the contributions of Alvin J. King and the Honorable Ed Rees for their role in the enactment into law of the national observance of Veterans Day on November 11 of each year.

On July 25, 2003 the House—by a 316-109 vote—passed HR 2861, the FY 2004 funding measure for the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and various Independent Agencies. The bill provides a total of $60.7 billion for VA, an increase of $2.6 billion over FY 2003 spending amounts and $3 million over the White House's budget request. The chart below details VA discretionary funding for FY 2003, the President's request for FY 2004, the House-passed funding contained in HR 2861, and The American Legion's request for FY 2004.

Programs	**FY 2003 Actual**	**White House Request FY 2004**	**HR 2861 FY 2004**	**Legion Request FY 2004**
Medical Care	$23.9 billion	$25.2 billion	$26.8 billion	$24.5 billion
Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund	*[$1.6 billion]*	*[$2.1 billion]*	*[$1.5 billion]*	———
Medical & Prosthetic Research	$397 million	$408 million	$408 million	$445 million
Major Construction	$99 million	$273 million	$275 million	$320 million
Minor Construction	$224 million	$252 million	$252 million	$240 million
State Veterans Homes Grants	$99 million	$102 million	$102 million	$115 million
State Cemetery Grants	$32 million	$32 million	$32 million	$37 million
National Cemetery Administration	$132 million	$144 million	$144 million	$150 million
General Operating Expenses, VBA	$1.25 billion	$1.28 billion	$1.28 billion	$1.3 billion
Total	**$26.2 billion**	**$27.8 billion**	**$29.3 billion**	———

Note: Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund money is not included in the final total.

The American Legion continues to request that Congress use third-party reimbursements—to include Medicare reimbursements—to supplement, not offset discretionary spending.

During the course of debate on the bill, many House members attempted to increase VA medical care spending, but were rebuffed by the House leadership. As a result, many House members voted against the entire bill to protest that VA health care funding was $1.8 billion less than the amount projected by the FY 2004 budget resolution, H Con Res 95.

Prior to its approval for House floor action, the House Appropriations Committee removed several administration proposals from HR 2861—proposals that The American Legion vigorously opposed—through an amendment introduced by Rep. Virgil Goode (VA). They include:

- Charging an annual enrollment fee for Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans.

- Increasing prescription co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from $7 to $15 per 30-day supply.
- Increasing outpatient visit co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from $15 to $20 per visit.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has not yet marked up its version of HR 2861, but is expected to develop its version after the August recess.

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, 2002

During the 84th National Convention of The American Legion in Charlotte, North Carolina, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions convened a joint session at the Charlotte Convention Center. Rear Admiral Craig R. Quigley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs gave a progress report on the war on terrorism and said how the military must transform to meet and defeat terrorist threats. He was followed by Dr. Andrew Erdmann, a member of the Policy Planning Staff at the U.S. Department of State who covered the many areas in which the State Department is engaged in combating terrorism and how the proposed Department of Homeland Security seeks to streamline many of the disparate federal agencies dealing with terrorism.

The National Security Commission and its six Standing Committees and two Ad Hoc Subcommittees conducted a comprehensive review of the resolutions assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security.

National Security Resolutions, 84th National Convention

The following selected resolutions, listed in Committee order, were unanimously adopted by the delegates to the 84th annual National Convention:

Resolution No. 61, *Support for Homeland Security and the War on Terrorism*.

Resolution No. 68, *Anthrax Vaccination Immunization Program*. Urges the DoD to reevaluate this program and to develop a second manufacturer of the anthrax vaccine for use by the military and the American people.

Resolution No. 71, *The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.* Urges the Congress to continue its determination to retain and expand the military medical school and to appropriate military construction funding for classrooms and housing for the Graduate School of Nursing.

Resolution No. 78, ***Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation.***

Resolution No. 80, ***Department of Defense Health Care for Military Beneficiaries.*** Urges a number of actions including the annual funding of the Tricare and Tricare for Life health care programs and that dual-eligible military retirees continue to receive care from both military and VA medical centers.

Resolution No. 83, ***Reforming the Military Absentee Voting System.*** Urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at Federal, State and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters will have their votes counted.

Resolution No. 85, ***Military Funeral Honors.*** Reaffirms that the Congress appropriately fund the Department of Defense and the Military Services to include reimbursing veterans participating in for providing military funeral honors for veterans upon request.

Resolution No. 314, ***Support for the Maritime Administration:*** Opposes any plan to eliminate the Maritime Administration.

Resolution No. 316, ***Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense.*** Urges the Congress to stop the erosion of United States maritime capabilities.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2002

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Radisson Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 7, 2002, to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business.

The Fiscal Year 2003 defense budget, the first wartime budget in the War on Terror and Homeland Security, represented 3.3 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. The President's budget request proposed $369 billion, nearly $48 billion more than the FY 2002 defense budget. The FY 2003 defense budget would be the largest defense spending bill since President Ronald Reagan's budgets in the mid-1980's. Appropriations would fund an active duty force of 1.4 million and 864,558 Selected Reserve and National Guard personnel. Additionally, the President's budget contained a 4.1 percent increase in base pay and recommended over $4 billion to eliminate most inadequate housing by 2007. This defense budget would also reduce out-of-pocket housing expenses to about 7.5 percent for military personnel living in private housing.

In order to provide for homeland security, the President authorized a partial mobilization of over 200,000 Reservists. Legislation calling for the creation of the Department of Homeland Security passed the House but was being debated in the Senate over personnel rules that would exclude civil service job protections for personnel assigned to the new Department.

As of this writing, the FY 2003 defense authorization and appropriations bills had not been finalized nor had any of the 13 appropriations bills been passed. Continuing resolutions were being considered to fund the Government at current levels beginning on October 1, the start of the new fiscal year. Congress has been deliberating such major issues as the Department of Homeland Security, the President's resolution and policy on Iraq, and investigating the intelligence failures which lead to the disastrous events of September 11, 2001.

Included in both the House and Senate defense budget authorization bills are provisions for the partial concurrent receipt (House version) of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for disabled retirees rated 60 percent and higher and the full concurrent receipt of both pays (Senate version) for all disabled retirees. The American Legion strongly supports the Senate version.Every administration and its

Department of Defense have opposed concurrent receipt as being too costly and have referred to it as "double-dipping." National Commander Ron Conley dispatched a press release responding to a Department of Defense press article by saying that disabled military retiree veterans have not only sacrificed in service to their Country for 20 years and longer but have also paid billions of dollars in funding their own disability compensation over the years. This practice, this longstanding injustice, must cease and only the Congress can change it.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in general session during the Washington Conference on Monday, March 3 and Wednesday, March 5, 2003. The following is a summary of their three sessions:

Morning Session, March 3, 2003

The Commission met jointly with the Foreign Relations Commission to hear several speakers of mutual interest. Mr. Nicholas P. Grant (BG, USA, Ret), Manager, Federal Air Marshall Intelligence Support Division, Transportation Security Administration, spoke on the role of the Transportation Security Agency and its incorporation into the newly established Department of Homeland Security. He underscored the advances in intelligence indications and warning centers as well as the intelligence analytical capabilities in the rapidly expanding Air Marshall Service. General Grant has brought considerable military experience and insight in intelligence operations and security to the commercial air travel industry, and it was reflected in his excellent presentation.

The second speaker was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Donald Keyser. He gave a highly informative and detailed account of the U.S. government's recent involvement with North Korea, especially in light of North Korea's efforts to obtain nuclear weapons. Secretary Keyser assured the audience that the U.S. would do all it could to maintain peace and stability in northeast Asia. However, we would not bow to North Korean threats or scare tactics and the U.S. will use all its implements of power, including military force, if North Korea continues to violate its agreements concerning nuclear weapons. Keyser also discussed the recent presidential election in South Korea and the apparent rise of anti-Americanism there. Mr. Keyser also answered a number of questions about America's foreign policies in Asia from Commission members.

Afternoon Session, March 3, 2003

Both Commissions joined with the Special POW/MIA Committee for an update. Past National Commander and Special POW/MIA Committee Chairman Bob Turner chaired the update session. Major James R. Becker and Staff Sergeant Sebastian Harris of the U.S. Army's Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii (CILHI) led off the afternoon session with a mission brief and update of current operations at CILHI. The topics discussed included the upcoming merger of CILHI and Joint Task Force-Full Accounting, the increasing difficulty in more recent Southeast Asia recovery missions and the increase World War II recoveries which take place worldwide.

Ms. Donna Downes Knox, Executive Director of the Coalition of Families of Korean and Cold War MIAs gave the Commissions the view from Korean War MIA families on the government's progress in accounting for their loved ones. Ms. Knox expressed her support for the increased activity in recent years between the U.S. and North Korean governments on Korean War accounting issues. For almost 50 years, Korean War MIA families received very little support from the U.S. government in

investigating the fate of the over 8,000 men still missing from the Korean War. However, Ms. Knox was disappointed in the relative obscurity the Korean War MIA issue has with the current Administration. She would urge that the President at least mention the MIAs when discussing our relationship with North Korea, let alone giving it a higher profile. Ms. Knox answered a number of questions after her presentation.

Morning Session, March 5, 2003

The National Security Commission met in business session on Wednesday morning. The Commission heard welcoming remarks from the Auxiliary's Security Chairman Mrs. Carlene Ashworth. She was followed by the National Law and Order Committee Chairman, George Wehrli, who reported on the initial judging for the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. Staff presented updates on the Concurrent Receipt issue and on the newly authorized Combat-Related Special Compensation. Updated information was also presented by the staff on Military Funeral Honors. Mr. Mark Ward, from the Office of the Secretary of Defense gave a live demonstration of the Ceremonial Bugle which is still undergoing testing with the National Guard and The American Legion funeral honors details in Missouri. Next, Ms. Gina DiNicolo presented a short briefing on the Department of Defense Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly known as the School of the Americas, in which American Legion legislative support was requested. Lastly, plans for the 85th National Convention in St. Louis Missouri, including a proposed pre-convention trip to Scott Air Force Base were presented to the Commission.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2003

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room (Lower Level) of the Radisson Hotel on May 5, 2003 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business.

On May 6, 2003, National Security and Foreign Relations Commission members and others visited Camp Atterbury and observed activated Reservists undergoing intensive readiness training.

The daily coverage of war in Iraq dramatically reminds us, once again, that war is truly hell. More importantly, it vividly reminds us as Legionnaires why our Preamble and our priorities as an Organization include support for a strong national defense and to provide for him and her who have borne the battle.

The battles in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the provision for homeland security on the American homefront are all part of the War on Terrorism. Although decisive combat in Iraq lasted for 27 days, the War on Terror will continue indefinitely. While American technology like smart bombs, unmanned aerial vehicles, and global positioning systems facilitated the destruction of Saddam's regime, the war in Iraq was about the American Fighting Man—Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, National Guardsmen and Reservists—who absolutely have no equal in the world. The fighting traditions and courage of American forces in World Wars I and II, the Korean War, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War were every bit as prevalent in the 3rd Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division, Special Operations and the Marine Corps Task Force.

The Administration's budget request for FY 2004 totals $2.2 trillion and authorizes $379.9 billion for defense or about 16.6 percent of the budget. The FY 2004 defense budget represents a $14 billion increase in defense spending over the current funding level. It also represents 3.4 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, more than the 3.3 percent in the FY 2003 budget. Active duty military manpower end strength is 1,388,100,

only slightly changed from the 1.37 million of FY 2002. Selected Reserve strength is 863,300 and is reduced by about 25 percent from its strength levels during the Gulf War of 12 years ago; over 220,000 are currently activated for the current Gulf War.

This budget contains funding to fight the war on terrorism, sustains military quality of life and continues to transform the military. A decade of overuse of the military and its under-funding, however, will necessitate sustained investments, and this budget, in our review, represents a good first step. Still, the budget does not address increasing the military end strengths of the Services, accelerating ship production, or funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for disabled military retirees. If we are to win the war on terror, and prepare for the wars of tomorrow—in this decade and beyond—we must continue to take care of the Department's greatest assets, namely, our men and women in uniform. They have done us proud in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world, and today, thanks to their accomplishments in the war on terrorism, morale appears to be high.

In order to attract and retain the necessary force over the long haul, the military continues to look for talent in an open market place and to compete with the private sector for the best young people our nation has to offer. If we are to attract them to military service in the active and reserve components, we need to count on their patriotism and willingness to sacrifice, to be sure, but we must also provide them the proper incentives. We have always asked the men and women in uniform to voluntarily risk their lives to defend us; we should not ask them to forgo adequate pay and subject their families to repeated unaccompanied deployments and sub-standard housing as well. Our military is spread thin and our Reserve forces are over-utilized. The American Legion urges the Congress and Defense Department to increase active duty end strengths.

Together, these investments in people are critical, because smart weapons are worthless to us unless they are in the hands of smart, well-trained Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen. The war in Iraq demonstrated that our Armed Forces have no equal in the world.

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; Dennis M. Duggan, Deputy Director; John C. Petersen, Assistant Director; Angela L. Rose, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Tina T. Hines, 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, Homeland Security and 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; Military Officers Association of America; 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. The internet is rapidly becoming the primary mode of communicating responses both within and outside The American Legion. National Security and Foreign Relations Web sites are being developed.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen: Daniel M. Dellinger, Aerospace; Erwin Gus Williams, Defense Civil Preparedness; George Wehrli, Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland, Merchant Marine; Clayborn M. Lofton, Military Affairs; Nancy L. Carder, National Security Council; and Gerard W. Cheffer, Naval Affairs.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, 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 84th 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 2003 and 2004 defense appropriations bills. Of particular emphasis was the Air Force aerial refueling program and adequate provision for research and development, the strategic airlift, and aircraft production and development to include the C-17, F-22 fighter, and the Joint Strike Fighter.

DEFENSE CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut, Chairman

The American Legion continues to advocate adequate staffing, adequate budgeting and adequate technical and research support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security. In an era when Russian civil defense efforts are far greater than those of the United States, it becomes imperative that Homeland Security be enhanced at local, state and national levels to protect our country and our citizens from terrorism.

Disaster Relief Assistance: The Defense Civil Preparedness Committee, under direction of the National Security Commission, will continue to review and monitor the

progress. 1,309 Posts were involved in manmade and national disaster relief and other emergency assistance programs.

Energy: War in the Middle East with Israel and Palestine focuses the attention of The American Legion on America's continued reliance on foreign sources of energy. Unquestionably, the Middle Eastern ability to shut off aid to America could again endanger our national security interests and economic well-being. The American Legion lobbied in support of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration in 2003.

The energy crisis in 1973 prompted a series of energy-oriented resolutions in the 1980s and 1990s which addressed, primarily, nuclear energy and nuclear waste, 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 648 American Legion posts hâve 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. Energy resolutions were also adopted in 2002 at The American Legion's National Convention.

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 2001-2002, a total of 100,251 pints of blood were donated by 48,950 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, 2001 through June 15, 2002, many Departments of The American Legion actively participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Florida, Georgia Hawaii, Minnesota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Each winning Department received a Certificate of Recognition signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
George Wehrli, Florida, 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 1,161 Posts had crime resistance programs in 2001-2002.

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 1,116 Posts had Fire Prevention programs in 2001-2002.

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 annually select Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Deputy Sheriff Casey Nelms from Nebraska was selected and presented with the sixth awarding of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year at the 84th National Convention at Charlotte, North Carolina.

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 "fifth 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 82nd 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.

For the eighth 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 presents awards at all the Service Academies.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Clayborn M. Lofton, Illinois, 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 83rd and 84th 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.

Through the Legislative Division, correspondence with Members of Congress and Congressional staff was initiated and followed through in other areas as follows: War on Terrorism; Homeland Security; Military funeral honors; military absentee balloting; military health care; military commissaries and impact aid for military school children; military pay and allowances; and other military quality of life incentives, to include the concurrent receipt issue. 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 also placed on revising the national military strategy so as to better match military resources with continued overseas deployments which are beginning to impact on the morale and well-being of the Armed Forces.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
Nancy L. Carder, Illinois, 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 ceremonies this year. The winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are the Departments of Alaska, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine and Minnesota. The American Legion presented over 13,838 ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2001-2002.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 83rd and 84th 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, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
Robert L. Morrill, New York, Chairman
Joseph H. March, Maryland, Director

The Public Relations Commission communicates the organizational image, goals, programs and legislative positions of The American Legion to national, regional and

specialized media, corporate America, and the public. Proactive marketing of news releases, editorials and electronic media products are distributed using modern public relations strategies and technologies.

The Commission focused on providing media materials for Post use as Legionnaires provided direct support for troops deployed in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Radio and television spots, ad slicks and releases/advisories were produced and distributed promoting The American Legion Family Support Network, Blue Star Service Banners and the Blue Star Service Flag. Special emphasis was given to marketing National Commander Ronald F. Conley's 212 page report: "A System Worth Saving" on the condition of VA health care in America. Commission staff booked the National Commander on network and cable news programs as well as arranging interviews with major daily newspapers and radio stations. Staff provided hundreds of media interviews on Legion efforts in these respective programs.

PR Tools

The Public Relations Commission wrote and distributed a new American Legion Public Relations Handbook for Legionnaires engaged in public, media and community relations for their Post, District and Dept. The comprehensive guide provides detailed information on the latest media strategies and new technologies. It is packed with fill-in-the-blank news releases, media advisories, proclamations and radio copy as well as information on event planning and interviewing tips. Copies are available free on request from the PR Commission office at National Headquarters.

A vast array of free public service media materials including ad slicks, news releases, editorials, fact sheets, radio and television spots were provided to Departments, Districts and Posts. Many PR tools were made available for downloading from The American Legion website at www.legion.org. Event planning guides featuring all-inclusive information for conducting Day to Remember, I am Not a Number and WWII Memorial Dedication Day activities were developed and distributed for use by Posts. Booklets included everything from news releases, milestones, radio and TV PSA copy to the actual ceremony to be conducted. They included a proclamation for the mayor, Post Commander remarks, letters to the editor and instant feedback cards, enabling American Legion Posts to energize and activate veterans' related-community-wide activities. Using these products, media provided extensive coverage of Posts presenting banners to neighborhood families by newspapers and stations across the nation. Across the board, coverage was highly positive for men and women in uniform serving in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the sacrifice of their families and the work of Legionnaires.

News releases, editorials and suggested speeches for holidays are available for downloading from the Internet website. Newspapers and American Legion editors increasingly use this service. The Veterans Media Data Bank continues to be a resource for news media. Legionnaires interested in taking part in this program can call the public relations division or register on The American Legion Internet website.

Media Relations

From its presence in the nation's capital, the National Public Relations Commission continued to facilitate major-media coverage of The American Legion's advocacy. National stories with American Legion input included: the suspension of Priority Group 8 enrollments in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system in 2003 (Associated Press, NBC, Cox, Gannett, Sinclair Broadcasting); VA health care funding (Associated Press, MSNBC, NPR, "Paul Harvey News and Comment," USA Today,

National Journal, Washington Post, U.S. Medicine); the war in Iraq (Voice of America, World Net Daily); the Blue Star Service Banner campaign (Associated Press, CNN); POW/MIA accounting (Associated Press); legislation to reinstate the military draft (Associated Press, Washington Times); the Family Support Network (Army Times); and the reckless administering of the soman pre-treatment pyridostigmine bromide to U.S. troops (New York Times, Army Times, Science Magazine).

In addition, hundreds of local and regional media queries were answered on a wide range of national security, veterans affairs and Legion program issues.

Awards

The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to entertainer Wayne Newton for his unswerving support of our nation's veterans and armed forces. Additionally, he has been a staunch supporter and proud spokesman for the Flag Protection Amendment.

Photographer Tom Franklin of the Bergen County (New Jersey) Record received The American Legion American Spirit Award. His photo captured the determination of the American spirit: Three firefighters raising the U.S. Flag over the wreckage and carnage from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 at the World Trade Center.

The American Legion Fourth Estate Award was presented during the 85th National Convention in St. Louis to the Detroit News for a " powerful, meticulously reported series on the tremendous shortcomings in the criminal justice system in Detroit and surrounding Wayne County. It documents how a little-known program eased jail overcrowding by releasing thousands of dangerous accused felons. Nearly half of them failed to return to court and some committed serious crimes while free. The newspaper's depiction of the thousands of rapes, killings, carjackings and other violent crimes that followed prompted local officials to end the jail releases."

The Future

The National Public Relations Commission continues to explore and engage the communication potential of emerging technologies. In so doing, The American Legion will continue to be the preeminent voice of and for the American veteran in our nation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION
Dennis Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, Editor-in-Chief

The American Legion Magazine continues to interview America's leaders and attract top writers. Noted authors and distinguished Americans who have been published in the magazine during the past year include Dinesh D'Souza, Tom Ridge, Sen. George McGovern, Sen. George Mitchell, Gen. Barry McCaffrey, Gen. William Westmoreland, James Webb, Anthony Principi, Rep. Chris Smith, Dennis Prager, James Arness, Rep. Charles Rangel, and Medal of Honor recipients Patrick Brady and James Stockdale.

General interest articles on issues such as Social Security, tax cuts, immigration, the environment and energy policy appear on a regular basis. At the same time, ample editorial coverage is also provided on topics such as VA health care, national defense, homeland security, the flag-protection amendment and other issues of importance to The American Legion and U.S. veterans.

In fact, the May 2003 issue was devoted entirely to state of the VA health care system and the plight of veterans who have been waiting to access that system.

The American Legion Magazine sold $5.75 million in advertising through the first September issue of 2003.

The commission and staff continue to evaluate "The Magazine for a Strong America" and the means to control postal, production and paper costs. The editorial, production and advertising departments are committed to providing a quality, general-interest magazine to our 2.6 million subscribers.

Ranked No. 1 nationally in core readership (Doublebase/MRI) more than 83 percent of The American Legion Magazine's subscribers read three out of four issues.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Chairman
Carol J. Rutherford, Maryland, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2003.

The Eighty-fourth Annual National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina and the Summer, Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions 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 approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

2002 National Convention

Resolution No. 31: (VT) Seek Legislation to Pay Accrued Benefits in a Pending Claim to Date the Deceased Veteran's Claim was Filed

Resolution No. 32: (VT) All Veterans Receive "War Time" Benefits For Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961 and August 5, 1964

Resolution No. 34: (IN) The Establishment Of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) as a Gulf War Presumptive Disease

Resolution No. 35: (IN) The American Legion Policy on VA Compensation

Resolution No. 36: (IN) The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange

Resolution No. 37: (IN) Special Pension for World War I Veterans

Resolution No. 51: (IL) Urge Improvement in VA Procedures for the Issuance of Veterans Preference Letters

Resolution No. 100: (MD) Extend Presumptive Period for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) to Seven Years

Resolution No. 102: (MD) The American Legion Policy on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses

Resolution No. 103: (MD) Open-ended Presumptive Period for Undiagnosed Illnesses for Gulf War Veterans

Resolution No. 133: (TX) Give Priority Treatment to World War II Veterans

Resolution No. 141: (VA&R) The GI Bill of Health

Resolution No. 142: (OR) The American Legion Policy on VA Medical School Affiliations

Resolution No. 143: (OR) Restore and Increase Burial and Plot Allowance

Resolution No. 144: (OR) The American Legion Policy on The National Cemetery Administration

Resolution No. 145: (OR) Project "Shipboard Hazard and Defense"

Resolution No. 146: (OR) Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Remove The Specific Date for the Award of DIC Benefits for Surviving Spouses of Former POWs

Resolution No. 154: (OH) Support Legislation To Permit States to Place Supplemental Guide Signs Relating to Veterans National Cemeteries on Federal-Aid Highways
Resolution No. 159: (PI) VA Benefits and Services for Eligible WWII Veterans of the Philippine Commonwealth Army, Recognized Guerrillas, and New Philippine Scouts
Resolution No. 181: (NY) Exempt VA Benefits and Services From Pay-Go Provisions
Resolution No. 187: (NY) Amend Legislation Regarding the Geographical Means Test
Resolution No. 191: (NY) Oppose Any Initiative to Establish a Deductible for Priority Group 7 Veterans as a Provision to Receive VA Health Care
Resolution No. 193: (PA) Allow Veterans to Retain $90 of Their Compensation While in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Resolution No. 194: (PA) The American Legion Policy on VA National Service Life Insurance
Resolution No. 195: (PA) Provide Emergency Response Service for Independent-Living Veterans
Resolution No. 196: (PA) The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program
Resolution No. 202: (CA) The American Legion Policy on Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
Resolution No. 203: (CA) Support Medicare Reimbursement for VA
Resolution No. 204: (CA) VA Role in National Emergency Preparedness
Resolution No. 205: (CA) The American Legion Policy on Former POWs
Resolution No. 206: (CA) The American Legion Policy on the Correction of Military Records
Resolution No. 207: (MI) Provide Full Funding for VA Construction Program
Resolution No. 208: (MI) Improve the Disability and Death Pension Program
Resolution No. 209: (MI) Support Presumption of Service Connection for Hepatitis C
Resolution No. 210: (MI) The American Legion Policy on Radiation
Resolution No. 211: (MI) The American Legion Policy on Tobacco-Related Disabilities
Resolution No. 214: (MI) Clarification of "Service in the Republic of Vietnam" for the Purpose of Agent Orange Presumption
Resolution No. 221: (DC) Request Congress Provide VA Adequate Funding for Medical and Prosthetic Research Activities
Resolution No. 222: (DC) Support the Automatic Waiver of VBA Debts of $250 or Less
Resolution No. 223: (DC) Protect Disability Rating after Ten Years
Resolution No. 318: (VA&R) The American Legion Policy on VA's Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Program
Resolution No. 319: (VA&R) The American Legion Policy on VA Medical Care Mandatory Funding

National Executive Committee Meeting
August 26, 2002

The National Executive Committee approved the following resolution:

Resolution No. 1: (VA&R Commission) Authorize Possible Lawsuit Against The Department of Veterans Affairs To Compel Action On Pending Remanded Appeals By The American Legion

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 9-10, 2002

The National Executive Committee adopted the following resolutions:

Resolution 1: (VA&R) The Department of Veterans Affairs Involvement in the Office of Homeland Security

Resolution 2: (VA&R) The American Legion Policy on Prostate Cancer Research and Treatment

Resolution 3: (Res. 186 from NY, 2002 National Convention, As Amended) Urge VA to Notify Veterans of Procedures for Reimbursement Of Payments when a Claim for Service Connection is Awarded

Resolution 4: (VA&R) Amend Title 38, United States Code, to Clarify and Simplify the Requirements for a Notice of Disagreement

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 7-8, 2003

The National Executive Committee adopted the following resolutions:

Resolution No. 1: (VA&R Commission): The American Legion Policy on VA Nurse Recruitment and Retention

Resolution No. 2: (Reg. Res. 2511 from IL Department Executive Committee meeting, April 2003): Jury Income Exempted From Pension Rate Determination

Resolution No. 6: (VA&R Commission) Support Legislation to Remove the Bar on the Payment of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) Benefits to Surviving Spouses who Remarry After Age 55

Resolution No. 7: (VA&R Commission) The American Legion Policy on VA Mental Health Services

Resolution No. 8: (VA&R Commission) The American Legion Policy on VA's Pharmacy Benefits Program

Resolution No. 9: (VA&R Commission) The American Legion Policy Regarding Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 24, 2002, through May 6, 2003. The VA&R Commission met on August 24, 2002, during the National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 7-8, 2002, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other veterans related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 9, 2002.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 80th consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 5, 2003, in conjunction with the 43rd Annual Washington Conference. The actions taken by the Commission were reported to the National Executive Committee on May 7, 2003, in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the Spring NEC Meetings.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on May 5-6, 2003, at National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana. Chairman Paul A. Morin (MA), 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, 2003.

National Leadership and Information Conferences
The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary

Regional National Leadership and Information Conferences were conducted during the months of September 2002, and March and April of 2003. The meetings were held in the following cities:

Region 1—Nashua, NH - March 21-22, 2003
Region 2— Cherry Hill, NJ - April 25-26, 2003
Region 3— Macon, GA - April 4-5, 2003
Region 4—Dallas, TX - September 20-22, 2002
Region 5—Indianapolis, IN - March 28-29, 2003
Region 6—Sioux City, IA - April 25-26, 2003
Region 7—Las Vegas, NV - April 4-5, 2003
Region 8—Boise, ID - September 20-22, 2002

The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary provided specialized training. For the tenth consecutive year, a Post Service Officers School was conducted. Claims, ratings, and benefits were discussed. This school will continue on an annual basis.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the VA&R Commission each attended a Conference, and the Regional Chairpersons were in attendance at all Conferences. Staff members of the VA&R Commission were present at each Conference providing those present with an overview of the VA&R program as well as significant VA&R issues. Representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Small Business Administration also attended the Conferences and provided updates and presentations about various veterans programs.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 80th National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference was held March 2-5, 2003, at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. Participants included members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Department and County Service Officers and Rehabilitation Directors, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, and various National, Department, and Post officials.

Mr. Paul A. Morin (MA), Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and K. Robert Lewis (CT), Vice Chairman, presided at the sessions of the Conference. Addressing the Conferees were National Commander Ronald F. Conley, and the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

This was followed by presentations by the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Appeals, the Under Secretary for Health, the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations, the Director of VA Voluntary Services, and the Deputy Director of Compensation and Pension Services. Remarks were also presented by William F. Tuerk, Staff Director, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, United States Senate and John Bradley, Staff Director, House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health, United States House of Representatives.

National Commander Conley made a presentation to Mr. Paul Fulk of Pennsylvania, National VAVS Worker of the Year.

Prior to the Conference, for the twenty-second year, the Chairman and members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation staff met with Department Service Officers for the Annual Department Service Officers Seminar. Topics discussed included current VA programs and staff operations.

Conference Recommendations

The members of the Recommendations Committee met on March 3, 2002, in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Washington, DC. No recommendations were submitted from the 2002 National Information Conferences. Two recommendations were received during the 2003 Washington Conference.

Recommendation 1

Division staff should examine feedback about the current DSO school curriculum, and determine if the training is adequately tailored to the variable experience levels and diverse needs of those attending. Action should be taken accordingly.

Recommendation 2

For consideration by the Commission, division staff should research and develop a general policy resolution regarding Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and significant construction projects.

Background: The Commission episodically receives resolutions regarding proposals for specific CBOCs and/or major construction projects. It would be useful to develop a general policy resolution regarding these issues.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

During the past year the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission was actively involved with legislative issues affecting the programs and services administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Activities included drafting legislation pursuant to the mandates adopted by the National Convention and National Executive Committee and presentation of such testimony at hearings scheduled before various Congressional Committees. Active liaison is maintained with the staff of The American Legion Legislative Commission, officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congressional Committee staff and with elected Congressional officials.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings held from July 1, 2002 to July 23, 2003 on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

- On July 10, 2002, the Assistant Director of VA&R for Gulf War Task Force testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on "Military Exposures: The Continuing Challenges of Care and Compensation."
- On July 16, 2002, the Director of Legislative testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on H.R. 4939, the Veterans Medicare Payment Act of 2002.
- On July 25, 2002, the Chairman of Economics submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Benefits, House Veterans Affairs Committee on Transition Assistance Program and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program.
- On October 11, 2002, the Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Status of Women's Health Care Programs in the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- On October 16, 2002, the Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the National Cemetery Administration.
- On January 29, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care System's Capacity to Meet Current Demand.
- On February 11, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2004 Budget Request.

- On February 26, 2003, the Deputy Manager for Operations and Training of VA&R testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on the Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2004 Budget Request.
- On February 28, 2003 the Director of Legislative submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations concerning Recommendations To Streamline And Improve Services To The Nation's Veterans.
- On March 19, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on Eligibility and Availability of and for Pharmaceutical Services Provided by Department of Veterans Affairs.
- On March 27, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on Department of Veterans Affairs Emergency Preparedness Act of 2002 and Force Health Protection.
- On April 9, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies on the Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2004 Appropriations.
- On April 9, 2003, the Director of Legislative submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Benefits, House Veterans Affairs Committee and the House Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee on the 21st Century Competitiveness on the Joint Department of Defense—Department of Education "Troops to Teachers" Program.
- On April 10, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Subcommittee on Benefits, House Veterans Affairs Committee on multiple veterans legislative proposals.
- On April 30, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Subcommittee on Benefits, House Veterans Affairs Committee on multiple veterans legislative proposals.
- On April 30, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on The Status of Homeless Programs Conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- On May 6, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies on the Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2004 Appropriation Request.
- On May 7, 2003, the Deputy Director of VA&R for Health Care testified before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations on The Medical Care Collection Fund.
- On May 22, 2003, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Department of Veterans Affairs' Long Term Care Programs.
- On June 11, 2003, Deputy Director of VA&R for Health Care testified before Subcommittee on Health, House Veterans Affairs Committee on Major Medical Construction Legislation.
- On June 11, 2003 the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Benefits, House Veterans Affairs Committee on multiple veterans benefits legislative proposals.

- On June 17, 2003, the National Adjutant of The American Legion testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Report of the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for our Nation's Veterans.
- On June 17, 2003, the Director of Legislative testified before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on the Report of the President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for our Nation's Veterans.
- On July 7, 2003, S. 1282 to establish national cemeteries for geographically underserved populations of veterans, and for other purposes.
- On July 10, 2003, the Deputy Manager of Operations and Training, testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee regarding VA-provided benefits programs.
- On July 15, 2003, the National Commander of The American Legion testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare "A System Worth Saving."

Informational Services

To further strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care delivery system, The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures: The American Legion Guide To: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—What Is It? Who Gets It? What Can Be Done? This brochure is still very much in demand and is widely distributed. The American Legion Guide: Women Veterans—Identifying Risks, Services, and Prevention. This handbook is in demand among our women veterans. The Gulf War Veterans Guide to Benefits is also an extremely helpful publication. Other publications available upon request are: What To Do Before A Veteran Dies and The American Legion Handbook of Veterans Benefits, "Know Your Benefits—Learn What You Have Earned." This Handbook is used as a handout at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained and distributed upon request.

Report on the National Cemetery System

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is charged with meeting the interment needs of the nation's veterans and their dependents. NCA is striving to meet its accessibility goal of 90 percent of all veterans living within 75 miles of open national or state veterans cemeteries.

The NCA's budget proposal totaled $414.1 million and 1,765 FTE for Fiscal Year (FY) 2004. Of the total outlay projected for FY 2004, 157.2 million is for burial benefits, 142 million is for National Cemetery operations and maintenance and $22 million is for administrative expenses. The FY2004 outlay proposal earmarks $52.8 million for major construction, doubling FY 2003 estimates. The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Pub. L. 106-117, ("Mill Bill") required NCA to establish six new national cemeteries. Fort Sill opened in 2001 under the fast-track program, while the remaining five, Atlanta, Detroit, South Florida, Pittsburgh and Sacramento are in various stages of completion. The Mill Bill further required the VA to project burial space requirements through the year 2020. A December 2000 study concludes that 31 new national cemeteries will be needed to meet the burial needs of veterans through 2020 at which time the veteran population will decrease dramatically. The American Legion recently supported legislation pending in the 108th Congress that would authorize ten new national Cemeteries. These are to be located in; Sarasota, FL; Salem, OR; Birmingham, AL; St. Louis, MO; San Antonio, TX; Chesapeake, VA; Sumter, Fl; Jacksonville, FL; Bakersfield, CA: and Philadelphia, PA.

Total burials for NCA in 2001 was 89,300, with 17,170 of those burials taking place in state veterans cemeteries. NCA expects veterans' deaths to peak in 2006 at 687,000 followed by a gradual decrease to 548,000 in 2020. Burial space is constantly being sought. Currently, of the 120 national cemeteries, 62 are open for full service, 27 allow only cremations and the remaining 31 are closed. Of the more than 89,300 interments conducted in FY 2002, 74 percent were in the 20 busiest national cemeteries.

The State Veterans Cemetery Grant Program is very robust. The FY 2004 budget requested $32 million for this program. This is "no-year money" and so any monies not spent in the previous FY can be carried over into the next fiscal year. This program is not intended to replace national cemeteries, but to complement them. Grants for state-owned and operated cemeteries can be used to establish, expand and improve on existing cemeteries. Currently there are 48 operating state cemeteries around the country in 26 states. In FY 2002, NCA supported state cemeteries provided more than 17,170 interments.

Since the NCA concentrates its construction resources on large metropolitan areas, it is unlikely that new national cemeteries will be constructed in all states. Therefore, individual states are encouraged to pursue applications for the State Cemetery Grants Program. Fiscal commitment from the state is essential to keep the operation of the cemetery on track. NCA estimates it takes about $300,000 a year to operate a state cemetery.

The NCA has an estimated 800 monuments and memorials throughout their system of 120 national cemeteries and affiliated soldiers', Government, and confederate lots. Burials at more than two-thirds of these properties date to the Civil War or earlier. To document the largest and most significant category of its monuments and memorials, NCA is partnering with Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!), a program within Heritage Conservation Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation and care of many types of historic resources, with 10 years' experience in volunteers' survey of public outdoor sculpture nationwide. NCA estimates this project will document about 300 monuments and memorials located in more than 100 NCA cemetery properties across the country.

Since the Memorials Inventory Project began in spring 2002, more than 500 people have contacted NCA to participate in the project. To date, 136 registered volunteers have been assigned to 340 memorials. Documentation has been completed on 105 of those monuments or memorials by 56 volunteers. But, as of early February 2003, 79 monuments and memorials have yet to be assigned. As of February 2003, the count of identified memorials and monuments in our national cemeteries has climbed to 421. This number does not include the 169 cenotaphs at Congressional Cemetery where NCA oversees these historic markers. Of NCA's 153 national cemeteries, soldier's lots, and monument sites, 39 report having no monuments or memorials on site.

When this project is complete, the inventory data will reside at NCA as well as be publicly accessible on-line through another SOS! partner, the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The project started in the spring of 2002.

On December 27, 2001, President Bush signed Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001. This law includes a provision that allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to furnish an appropriate headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries, whose deaths occur on or after December 27, 2001, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a non-government marker. This new provision is codified at 38 U.S.C. § 2306(d). FY 2002, NCA provided more than 348,800 headstones and markers and more than 289,900 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased veterans in FY 2002.

On April 19, 2003 Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi administered the oath of office April 16 to John W. "Jack" Nicholson as Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Nicholson, a 30-year Army veteran, is a 1956 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He holds a master's degree in public administration. He taught military tactics at West Point and served on both the Army staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. His overseas military assignments include more than two years with infantry units in Vietnam and tours of duty in Germany, Lebanon, Switzerland and Korea. He retired from the Army in 1986 with the rank of brigadier general.

Gen. Nicholson was a Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution and has served on the board of directors of several associations. In recent years, he has been active in numerous civic and veterans organizations.

As Under Secretary, Gen. Nicholson will direct the operation and maintenance of 120 VA national cemeteries and other memorial-related programs for veterans and eligible family members. VA also provides headstones and markers for eligible veterans, administers a federal grants program to help states set up veterans cemeteries, and issues Presidential Memorial Certificates to the families of honorably discharged deceased veterans.

Annual Report of the Medical Consultant

Dr. Ann Marie Gordon joined the staff as the Senior Medical Consultant on September 18, 2000. She is a practicing physician with experience in Occupational Medicine.

The Medical Consultant acts as a source of medical and technical knowledge to the Appeals Representatives at the Appeals and Special Claims Unit at the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Claims Representatives at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Office, Washington, D.C. These representatives submit inquiries to the Medical Consultant with the VA claims folder for review and evaluation as to the appropriate course of action in presenting the case to the either the Board of Veterans' Appeals, the VA Regional Office, or the Director, Compensation and Pension Service. The Medical Consultant after reviewing and evaluating the case may (1) discuss the case with the representative or (2) prepare a statement explaining the case including providing medical references and a medical opinion relative to the issues.

In some cases American Legion Service Officers in the field will submit difficult cases for review and evaluation to the Medical Consultant. This is accomplished by requesting the case be called-in for an administrative review or by submitting copies of appropriate portions of the VA claims folder. The Medical Consultant responds directly to the Service Officer.

The Medical Consultant is an advisor to the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission on Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical matters. Each consultation is usually on an informal basis and discussed among several key VA&R staff members.

A laptop personal computer has been purchased for the Medical Consultant's use and to enable her to keep in touch with daily operations.

During the past year the Medical Consultant has discussed medical questions with individual Appeals Representatives and Claims Representatives about 60 cases. She has reviewed 55 cases and submitted written reports on 40 of these cases. The research and medical opinions provided by the Medical Consultant have resulted in numerous grants and remands to additional development.

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 some 1.9 million policies in force as of March 31, 2003, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $19.8 billion dollars. Dividend distributions for participating policies in these programs amount to approximately $600-$700 million dollars annually. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 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 diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2900 veterans with over $177 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the VA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (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 insurance 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 the VA's NSLI program. On March 31, 2003 SGLI provided some 5.5 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $ 686 billion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 395,000 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 39.8 billion 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 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. In 1992 the face amount of SGLI coverage was increased to $100,000 with an additional $100,000 permitted as an option, and VGLI became renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may now also be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was

previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty are now automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law. In addition, Public Law 107-14 has authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center initiated and worked with the VA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those veterans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they outprocess from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or VA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. VA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating servicemembers who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 60% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available now to all military outprocessing centers to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in 2002 the VA Insurance Center shipped more than 240,000 VA life insurance brochures to VA's Military Service Coordinators, Transition Assistance Personnel, veterans organizations and other involved groups to provide better information assistance on the options and requirements for transition from SGLI to VGLI coverage. In 2002-2003 both VGLI and SGLI premiums were reduced; VGLI an overall 40% from 1998 levels, and a 19% reduction for SGLI premiums effective July 1, 2003 with a simultaneous reduction in SGLI spousal rates as well. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 7.8 million life insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $745.6 billion dollars.

In the NSLI program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby an additional $20,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. The American Legion VA&R office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled NSLI coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. This is particularly needful as the current VA system may, in certain areas such as during the time period while a disability compensation claim is awaiting adjudication in a VA Regional Office, be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions.

The VA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall VA area networks and through the Internet, and placing ever more records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in Summer 2001, the VA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing paper insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The new insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. In connection with this completely new software package, VA employees have been provided with large screen display monitors and updated capacity high speed computers required by the new programming. All previous paper insurance folders have now been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (an expansion of the VA's Insurance Center telephone unit has been completed to handle an increasing work load), by acceptance of faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests, through responding to inquiries and transaction requests received at the VA insurance Internet address (http://www.insurance.va.gov/), and by providing comprehensive insurance information through links to the VA's Home Page and VA's insurance Home Page. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all or most government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees unless otherwise requested by the payee. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements will contain blocks for beneficiaries to

include bank information should they wish insurance settlement checks transferred to them electronically.

VA continues to seek authorization for several new initiatives in both the NSLI and VMLI programs at this time through pending legislation. In NSLI, authority to pay claims to the next best (contingent) beneficiary is being sought for those rare cases where a primary beneficiary cannot be found by the end of a two year period. This is contained in H.R. 1554 introduced on April 2, 2003 by Rep. Filner, and is in VA's proposals for the 108th Congress, 1st Session. In the Service-Disabled (RH) NSLI program, to effect a significant reduction in RH premium rates generally by switching to a different, more updated mortality table (the 1980 Commissioners Standard Ordinary Basic Table of Mortality) on which to base these rates, rather than the current 1941 table. VA desires this change be made available to those already in the program, and not just to new entrants, under the principle that veterans should not have to subsidize their own service-connected disabilities. The initiative ensures that service-connected veterans have the ability to obtain life insurance at standard premium rates without regard to their physical service-connected disabilities. This change, if enacted, produces a significant drop in RH premium rates, because of the increased life expectancy values inherent in the 1980 table versus the previous 1941 table. However, increases of approximately $15-20 million per year in the government subsidy here will be needed to cover the cost of the reduced premiums. This proposal is also included in H.R. 1554. For the VMLI program, VA is seeking approval to increase the present maximum face value of coverage from $90,000 to $200,000 at the discretion of the insured under the same Bill. The Bill is presently referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Benefits (April 24, 2003) for consideration. An enhancement to the VMLI program was authorized in 2002 under the Veterans Benefits Act of 2002 (PL 107-330) whereby VMLI coverage is now allowed to be continued beyond age 70 for those qualifying veterans who still have mortgage balances outstanding past age 70. A further VA initiative to have government life insurance proceeds exempted from being counted as income for federal income asset limitation programs, for purposes of determining eligibility for, or the amount of, benefits under any federal or federally-assisted program, has not yet been addressed in legislation, but continues as a VA legislative objective. VA is additionally seeking much needed improvements to the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act of 1940 (SSCRA) through H.R. 100 (passed by the House on May 7, 2003) and S. 792, introduced on April 7, 2003, to amend that section of SSCRA by which a servicemember may have VA guarantee payment of premiums on certain types of commercial life insurance contracts from its present maximum of $10,000 to a maximum of $250,000, or to an amount equal to the SGLI limit, whichever is greater.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:
VA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and one Secretary. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and one Secretary.

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 them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & 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 non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. In connection with the milestone change in insurance operations in Philadelphia to a paperless office as described earlier, The American Legion VA&R unit there has obtained new computer equipment equivalent in capacity to that used in the VA Insurance Center, to process casework with the new imaged electronic files and to respond to a wide variety of inquiries with far greater rapidity than previously possible, and to enable switchover to the VA's change to the Windows 2000 operating system . Coordination has also been effected with the VA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia and St. Paul for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require. These efforts will also include training in VA Pension Center operations and the on-site VA&R staff will continue to monitor and report to the VA&R Director changes in these new VA procedures as they occur.

Daily operations involve 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 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 telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office 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 been provided with newer computer systems for both internal operations and to interface with the VA networks and the Internet. These are operational and have Internet (E-Mail at AMGLAVE@VBA.VA.GOV) and VA Benefits Delivery Network access. The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of VA Debt Management operations (The VA's Debt Management Center is located at the VA St. Paul center), which now comprise its main mission as transfer of all insurance accounts to Philadelphia has been completed, and in casework involving the VA Pension Center also located at the St. Paul facility.

For the period July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Insurance & Debt Management:

Letters Received:	4,970
Letters Written:	6,113
Disability Insurance Claims:	1,180
Death Insurance Claims:	2,601
Insurance Folders Reviewed:	3,461
In-Force Policy Accounts Reviewed:	4,396
Telephone Contacts :	4,615

Personal Contacts:	3,582
Submittal Memorandums Reports:	3,245
VA Case Responses Mailed: Insurance and Debt Management Cases:	7,946
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented	9,951

**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 general inquiries, and debt management case supporting documents.*

Debt Management/St. Paul Pension Center
(DMC = Debt Management Center)

DMC Original Claims:	1,134
DMC Case Audits:	2,740
DMC Debt Waiver Cases:	1,935
Pension Center Inquiries/Transactions:	1,718
Pension Center VSO Responses Mailed:	5,038

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, as well as, appeals for upgrade of military and naval discharges and the correction of military and naval records through a staff of seventeen Appeals Representatives.

Within the Table of Organization, the Principal Deputy Director is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit, the Military Review Board Unit, Debt Management Office in St. Paul, and the Insurance Activities Unit in Philadelphia.

Cases at the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a member of the Board of Veterans Appeals with the appellant. The Board of Veterans Appeals Unit consists of an Office Manager, a Senior Medical Consultant, three secretaries, and thirteen Appeals Representatives. The staff has been augmented by service officers from across the country participating in The American Legion/National Veterans Legal Services Program Veterans Law Internship Program. This intense veterans law training program provides hands-on education for interested service officers.

Two Appeals Representatives and one secretary are assigned to provide claims service to individuals residing under the jurisdiction of the Washington, DC VA Regional Office which includes the District of Columbia, as well as those residing overseas.

The Military Review Boards Unit reviews records prepares written briefs and also appears at personal hearings with an applicant before the Discharge Review Board and the Board for the Correction of Military or Naval Records of the various armed services. One Supervisor and one Appeals Representatives are assigned.

Board of Veterans Appeals

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Appeals and Special Claims Unit for the period July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2003. During this twelve months, the Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 6,893 cases. Included in

the above total were 294 scheduled hearings in Washington, DC and 186 United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims remands.

During this reporting period, the Board of Veterans' Appeals rendered a total of 26,061 decisions, which included 5,795 (22.2%) with American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,667 (28.7%) approvals, 1,259 (21.7%) remands, 2,715 (46.8%) denials, and 154 (2.6%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals. Effective February 25, 2002, the Board of Veterans' Appeals established a development section tasked to obtain evidence and add it to the claims folder so that a decision may be made rather than remanding the claims folder for development at the VA Regional Office. This process may change in the near future due to a recent decision by the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit which determined that the implementing regulation did not conform with the law which provides the claimant with one year to submit additional evidence.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of 4 cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion for advisory and/or medical opinions or assistance in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1554, provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Military Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records.

During the period July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003, the staff of the Military Review Boards Unit provided advice, assistance, representation and other services to applicants and petitioners seeking consideration by the Department of Defense discharge review and correction boards in more than 1500 instances. These involved such issues as upgrade of discharge, change of narrative reason for discharge, entitlement or amendment of physical disability severance or retirement, issuance or reissuance of military awards or decorations and other corrections to military records. Of these actions, 68 personal hearings were held and documentary review briefs were submitted in 447 cases.

The Military Review Boards Unit staff also provide training for service officers and produce and supply reference materials for applicants.

The following is a breakdown of actions by the respective service boards:

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	Presented	**Allowed**	**Percentage**
Department of the Air Force	21	3	14
Department of the Army	105	16	15
Department of the Navy	64	6	9
Coast Guard	2	0	0

MILITARY DISCHARGE REVIEW BOARDS

	Presented	Allowed	Percentage
Department of the Air Force	36	10	27
Department of the Army	62	29	47
Department of the Navy	158	13	8
Coast Guard	1	0	0

All of the Boards are having continuing success in their efforts to reduce the processing time for individual applications. This action is in response to increased Congressional oversight due to concerns regarding the Boards problems with timeliness of review, questions of independence from active components, and numerous complains by applicants and petitioners. The following are current projected timeframes:

Air Force Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 6-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC ..... 6-12 months
Hearing reviews—travel panels ..... 12-18 months

Air Force Correction Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months

Army Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 6-10 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC ..... 6-10 months
Hearing reviews—travel panels ..... 12-18 months

Army Correction Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months

Navy/Marine Corps Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC ..... 10-12 months

Navy/Marine Corps Correction Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months

Coast Guard Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC ..... 10-12 months

Coast Guard Correction Board:
Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 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 incoming and outgoing correspondence. During this period, approximately 40,000 letters, e-mails and faxes were received from claimants, service officers, and VA officials. Correspondence received by the VA Insurance Activities Units in Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN, was in excess of 4,970 and outgoing correspondence exceeded 6,113 pieces, with over 12,984 casework responses to DSOs/VSOs processed.

The combined workload for the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit, the Military Review Boards Unit, and the VA Insurance Activities Unit exceeded 10,500 cases.

Department Service Officers School

The National Commander continues to authorize the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct two 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 Appeals for Veterans

Claims 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 of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The goal of this formal training is to improve the proficiency and effectiveness of American Legion Service Officers in their effort to represent veterans, their dependents, and survivors. Another goal is to enable participants to share the knowledge, information, and material received with 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 Thirty-second session of the Department Service Officers School was held July 24-27, 2002, at the Radisson Hotel Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 118 service officer attendees. The Thirty-third session was held February 26 through March 1, 2003, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. There were 110 service officer participants. This was followed on March 2, 2003, by the Department Service Officers Seminar and National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference.

National Field Service

The National Field Service (NFS) mission is to promote universal access to high quality health care for veterans and their families through advocacy, service, and support. The objectives of the NFS are to:

- Measure Veterans Health Administration (VHA) performance in areas of importance to veterans, over time;
- Monitor network and facility performance in relation to one another to ensure equity of health care delivery across the system;
- Identify the contributing factors to any variations in health care delivery;
- Track over time the impact of legislative, policy or structural change on VHA, and
- Provide veterans with important and easy-to-read information about their health care.

The NFS continues to address these objectives by conducting site visits, tracking the performance data of Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN), conducting patient focus groups, and making recommendations to VHA and Congress based on comparative analysis of our findings.

The NFS continued to report 1 Field Representative vacancy for the reporting period of July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003. There was turnover in personnel and the period ended with one representative and a new Deputy Director for Health Care. Each Field Service Representative is assigned oversight responsibility for a number of VHA's 21 VISNs. They are also participants on several Committees, Councils and Advisory Boards at both the National and VISN levels. They prepared testimony for Congressional field hearings. Site visits were conducted in 7 of the 21 VISNs. Most importantly, the NFS provided case management assistance to hundreds of veterans who otherwise would have gone without needed health care.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Chairman, Paul A. Morin, views The American Legion Volunteer Program as a high priority. The American Legion's goal is to increase both the number of hospital and community-based volunteers

as well as the number of voluntary hours contributed each year. A goal of 6,000 volunteers and one million volunteer hours has been set.

The American Legion representative on the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee (NAC) is the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. The Assistant Director for Program Management represented the Director at the fifty-seventh NAC meeting that was held in Indianapolis, IN during April 30 - May 3, 2003. Educational workshops included: Stories of Service with Digital Clubhouse Network; High School Junior Intern Program at Tampa VAMC; Recruitment-Back to the Basics; and Enhancing Methods for Conflict Prevention and Early Resolution.

Legionnaire James E. Brennan of Kerrville, Texas was honored as the NAC volunteer of the year in recognition of his outstanding contributions, which include more than 36,000 hours and 24 years of service, to this nation's veterans

The 2003 winner of the James H. Parke Scholarship Award was Philip Nodhturft, III of Tampa, Florida. The Parke Memorial Scholarship Award was established in honor of the first Director of VA Voluntary Service, who is also the founding father of the VAVS National Advisory Committee. This scholarship is awarded annually to exceptional VAVS student volunteers.

Again this year, representatives of VA Voluntary Service provided briefings and an overview of the VAVS program at each of the eight VA&R workshops held in conjunction with the annual National Leadership and Information Conferences.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA Form 21-22, "Power of Attorney", the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. 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. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA regional offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation 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 Principal Deputy Director, as Assistant National Certifying Officer, will review and forward the request to the General Counsel of 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 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 181 requests for accreditation and 45 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2003, there were 1,184 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 131 pending accreditation. 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 that the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, service officers in the field, members of the VA&R Commission, and other interested parties are kept advised and informed about American Legion policies, recent legislative action, changes in VA regulations, policies and procedures, the Administrative section of the Director's office receives and distributes VA news releases, printed changes in VA regulations and manuals, and other informational material to all VA&R staff. This information is then disseminated through VA&R Bulletins and Memoranda. In this reporting period 33 Bulletins and 12 Memoranda were distributed.

Personnel and Organization

The following changes occurred in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division at the Washington office from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003.

The VA&R Division underwent a number of additions and changes, including new hires, Kessela Brown (BVA), Jennifer Coale (Field Service),and Mike Smith (Field Service). After the death of Tom Holland, John Zangas was transferred from BVA to the Military Corrections Board unit. Cathy Wiblemo was promoted to Deputy Director for Health Care. Don Mooney was promoted from BVA Team Leader to Assistant Director. Adessa Naylor was then promoted to Team Leader status at the BVA. Joe Sharpe, Deputy Director for Economics, was activated and sent to Kuwait with his Reserve unit. Melvin Oehlert, BVA Team Leader, is the current Acting Deputy Director for Economics. Denique Keys transferred from Legislative Division as Secretary II. Personnel loses include Carter Carrington (BVA),Mark Buzolich (BVA), Monette Fields (Field Service), and Patricia Orsino (Deputy Director for Health Care). Steve Smithson, Assistant Director for Gulf War, remains temporarily transferred to Indianapolis Headquarters until July, 2004.

Currently there are three vacancies in the BVA Unit, one vacancy in the (Veterans and Dependents Claims Unit), one vacancy in the Military Review Boards Unit and one vacancy in the Field Service Unit. Recruitment of qualified individuals to fill the existing vacancies remains one of the Division's top priorities.

The most current table of organization of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2001, is as follows:

Director	1
Administrative Assistant	1
Principal Deputy Director	1
Secretary	1
Deputy Director for Health Care Issues	1
Field Representatives	3
Secretary	1

Manager, Operations and Training 1
Deputy Manager 1
Secretary 1
Assistant Director for Program Management 1
Secretary 1
Assistant Director for Resource Development 1
Assistant Director for Persian Gulf Task Force 1
Research Analyst 1
Supervisor, Review and Correction Boards 1
Review Board Representative 1
Office Manager, Board of Vets. Appeals Unit 1
Appeals Representatives 12
Case Screener, Court of Veterans Appeals (Part-time) 1
Secretaries 3
Medical Consultant 1
Veterans and Dependents Claims Unit 2
Secretary 1

Total Personnel—Washington office 39
Insurance Field offices:
Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
St. Paul, MN
Supervisor of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1

TOTAL PERSONNEL
Field offices 4
Washington office 40
VA&R TOTAL 44

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, principal deputy director, deputy directors and assistant directors attended various Legion functions around the country, such as the National Convention, Department Conventions, Department Seminars and Service Officers Schools, the Conferences and fact-finding trips. Departments visited included: Maine, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Florida, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois, New Hampshire, Nevada, Iowa, New Jersey, Tennessee, Texas, Idaho, Maryland, South Carolina, California and Virginia. The staff also participated in two National Information Conferences in 2002 and six in Spring 2003.

The Field Service Unit performed visitations to selected VA medical centers in 7 of the 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs). The entire Division staff attended the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

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.

Six Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2002, through June 30, 2002, for an overall total of 1,291 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 National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Sixty-Eight Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation in The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program were presented during the Period July 1, 2002 To June 30, 2003. Since this type of recognition and appreciation began, 4,828 Citations For Meritorious Service have been presented.

Persian Gulf War Task Force

The American Legion created the Persian Gulf Task Force in October 1995. Its mission is to enhance The American Legion's service to our newest generation of war veterans, their families, and their advocates. Additionally, as Congress has not officially ended the Gulf War era and numerous operations and peacekeeping activities have taken place since the end of the Gulf War, the role of the Task Force has been expanded to serve the needs and interests of veterans who served in these operations as well those who participate in such deployments in the future. As U.S. troops are currently deployed overseas to fight the war on terrorism and Operation Iraqi Freedom, this new role is even more significant. Heeding the "lessons learned" of the 1991 Gulf War and avoiding similar post war/deployment problems is of great concern to The American Legion and we are continuing to monitor all pre- and post-deployment initiatives and concerns.

The Task Force has vigorously approached its mission and has undertaken many efforts to accomplish it. These efforts include various forms of outreach, oversight of scientific and clinical studies, oversight of DoD investigations and programs, oversight of VA's compensation system, site visits to VA medical centers and regional offices, the upgrading of our presence on the World Wide Web, and the maintenance of a toll free number for Gulf War veterans.

The Task Force conducted a number of Town Hall Meetings, department & service officer training sessions, and other outreach efforts this past year in Connecticut, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, North Dakota, Indiana, Illinois and Washington, D.C. These events improved our outreach to Gulf War veterans, and better prepared Legionnaires to serve these veterans within their communities.

Staff members have also traveled extensively within the medical and professional communities to closely follow issues of concern to Gulf War veterans, particularly health issues such as side effects from controversial vaccines and exposure to depleted uranium (DU). The Task Force is significantly involved with the work of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM), the American Public Health Association and

the VA's Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Research as they explore matters of interest to our Gulf War community.

Disability compensation remains a top priority for the Task Force. During the past eight years, nearly 75% of claims filed for medically unexplained/undiagnosed illnesses (Gulf War veterans' illnesses) have been denied by VA. The Task Force identified the major reasons for this extraordinarily high denial rate and worked directly with members of Congress to develop legislation to correct and further clarify ambiguous language in the undiagnosed illness law in order to enable scores of ill Gulf War veterans, many of whose claims were previously denied, to receive the benefits to which they are rightfully entitled. To this end, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001 (PL 107-103) was signed into law by the President on December 27, 2001. Although we were successful in convincing VA to notify Gulf War veterans, whose claims were previously denied, of the change in the law and the opportunity to reopen their claims, the denial rate for these types of claims remains high. Therefore, we will continue to closely scrutinize VA's implementation of the Gulf War-related provisions of PL 107-103.

The lack of baseline data on various exposures due to improper record keeping during the Gulf War has resulted in roadblocks and impediments to Gulf War-related research. In February 2002, the assistant director for the Task Force was appointed to a newly established VA research advisory committee on Gulf War veterans' illnesses. This 12-person committee, comprised of medical doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans, and VSO representatives, is charged with advising the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the future of Gulf War-related research. This panel will be considering areas of research that have not been thoroughly explored in the past. The American Legion's direct participation in this process enhances our ability to represent the interests of the Gulf War veteran community.

The Task Force has continued its steady oversight of the Department of Defense's efforts to investigate exposures of troops in the Gulf to environmental agents, and the implementation of "lessons learned" from the Gulf War. DoD has made some progress in these efforts, but it has not found any clear causes of these illnesses.

Additionally, all of the recommended changes to DoD doctrine in the wake of the Gulf experience have not occurred as quickly as we would like, particularly as they relate to medical surveillance and depleted uranium training. Moreover, recent reports from the Institute of Medicine and the U.S. General Accounting Office, as well as testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health in January 2002 and March 2003, have revealed that "lessons learned" are not being fully implemented, a major breakdown being at the field level. The Task Force has testified before both the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees regarding this issue and will continue to monitor DoD's efforts in this regard.

During the past year, the Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illness, Medical Readiness and Military Deployments (OSAGWIMRMD) has continued to transition into the realm of deployment health support. The new office, which will continue to investigate and monitor issues pertaining to Gulf War veterans' illness, as well as deployment-related health concerns in general, was recently renamed the Deployment Health Support Directorate and falls under the Under Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. The Task Force continues to work with this office to ensure that Gulf War veterans' issues are not treated as a secondary matter.

Several thousand brochures and pamphlets pertaining to Gulf War and Vietnam veteran issues have been distributed as part of our wide-scale outreach effort. The Task Force also revised the Decade of Service Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans, renaming it the Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans, ensuring relevance for

all Gulf War era veterans, including those fighting the war on terrorism and the second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Fifteen thousand were printed for distribution in conjunction with our outreach efforts.

The Task Force is working closely with other staff members of VA&R to heighten awareness of women veterans' issues. Of the almost 700,000 servicemembers deployed to the Gulf during the war, nearly 35,000 were women, composing most of the same positions as their male counterparts. There is an increasing interest in the role of women in our services, as well as their care within VA. The Task Force remains a strong advocate for those women who so honorably served and continue to serve our country. We will continue to follow these matters closely.

The Task Force has expanded its scope to include environmental hazards, such as Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, and Project 112/Operation Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), experienced by veterans of past wars and operations. It works closely with other divisions in the National Headquarters in order to provide the best service possible to these veterans, their families, and the service officers helping them.

The Task Force has also continued its efforts of cooperation with the Membership Division in order to encourage those we serve to join the Legion family. As part of this effort, the Assistant Director for the Task Force was temporarily transferred to the Indianapolis Headquarters in July 2001 to work closer with the Membership Division by providing information and expertise to Division staff regarding issues and concerns important to Gulf War era veterans and their families. The assistant director coordinates all Task Force efforts and activities with the health policy analyst located in the Washington Office.

This past year the assistant director has traveled extensively with membership staff providing a VA&R presence to membership activities. The Assistant Director has also participated in several membership events briefing attendees on the importance of The American Legion's veteran focused programs and services in relation to membership goals.

2003 VA&R Report to Membership
Sandi Dutton

America is pure gold and so are our veterans. Members of the American Legion Auxiliary are diligent in their efforts to provide service, care and attention to our forgotten heroes—our veterans. When thinking about the Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation program, the first word that comes to mind is commitment. We are committed to working towards the betterment of America's veterans. We worked hard and our work made a difference in the lives of thousands of veterans.

The American Legion Auxiliary is very proud of our sponsorship of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival! An annual event, it provides veterans receiving treatments at VA facilities the opportunity to participate in art, music, dance and drama as a part of their therapy. It is a celebration of life, accomplishment, self-confidence, and victory over adversity for many of the participants. This year more than 3,000 veterans in over 100 VA facilities participated. The national winners were recognized at a week long event in Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 21-26, 2002. Festivities included a Broadway-type stage show and a visual arts exhibit. Many members of our organization attended and thoroughly enjoyed the show and exhibit! Members also worked on the Creative Arts program at their local VA Medical Centers by attending and serving refreshments at local shows, donating funds to help with the costs associated with the costumes and art projects and assisting and offering encouragement to individual participants.

Our National President chose the Veterans Pot of Gold as her project for the 2002-2003 administrative year. Contributions were raised to meet veterans needs such as expanding homeless veterans programs and Stand-Downs and funding special needs at Vet Centers, VA medical centers and State Veterans Homes. Over $34,000 was raised for our veterans with this project.

Volunteering for our veterans is one of the major objectives of our organization. Volunteers play an important part in supplementing the care that is given to our hospitalized veterans! Ward visits, clothing bazaars, carnivals, bingo parties, sing-alongs, pizza parties and ice cream socials were organized. Our veterans were remembered at holidays with gifts, cards, sweets, tray favors and dollar bills:

- Holiday Gift Shops were held in at least 33 Departments with funds spent for gifts totaling over $621,880. Veterans shopped for gifts for their family members and in some shops for gifts for themselves. Holiday cheer was spread to thousands of veterans!
- The National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans was celebrated the week of February 14th, 2003. Members put on teas, made special Valentines Day cards, presented American Flags, provided cookies and entertainment, stuffed animals and t-shirts for our hospitalized veterans.
- Realizing that the role of our volunteers is changing, many Units participated in the Adopt-A-Ward program. Volunteers worked closely with staff at the VA medical Centers to provide the best measure of support to a particular ward. Canteen books decorated with poppies and American flags were distributed, phone cards, lap robes, slippers and goodies were donated.

Field Service volunteers assisted our veterans in "non-referral nursing homes, geriatric day care centers, foster homes, halfway houses, hospices, homeless shelters for veterans, cemeteries where veterans are buried and in the community: "

- Homeless veterans were a priority this year. Stand-Downs were held throughout the country. Our members joined with other veterans organizations, community groups and the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist our veterans who live on the street. Nourishment, haircuts, health and dental services, VA and Social Security benefits counseling, housing or shelter referral, mental health and substance abuse services, HIV/AIDS information, clothing and legal services were made available. Other Unit members worked at and donated to soup kitchens, donated blankets and jackets for homeless shelters and held food drives, prepared meals and made ditty bags for the homeless in their areas.
- Members earned Home Service hours with sewing, knitting, cooking, shopping for materials and supplies and other services performed by the volunteer in the member's own home. Volunteers made cookies, cakes and candy, fixed dinners, served breakfasts and provided food for funerals.
- Our organization assisted Fisher Houses by cooking meals, providing phone cards, donating bread, soup and other staples. Several Districts and Departments held showers for needed items that included laundry detergent, canned goods and other non-perishable items.

Our volunteers played a key role in the welfare of our ill veterans. Many of them were recognized in their Departments, Districts and Units at ceremonies, luncheons, brunches, receptions and outings. Some volunteers were acknowledged at Department conventions, some were presented gift certificates and some were thanked at special parties.

Sincere efforts were made to publicize our hard work with our veterans. We concentrated on getting newspaper coverage of special events such as gift shops and the

National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans week activities. Units worked with their local newspapers to get articles and pictures published regarding their volunteer activities at local VA medical centers. Stand-Downs were publicized within the community and to the homeless veterans in the area. And we didn't forget to alert our own members of our hard work either. Articles were written for the Post and Unit newsletters.

Our Veterans are important to us and we worked diligently to let them know it! We encouraged members to join us in our efforts in their own way and they did. We let the Veterans know that they were not forgotten and that we really appreciated their service to our country!

	Volunteers	**Hours**	**Expenditures**
VA Facilities	37,231	934,351	$2,515,800
Field Service	33,357	706,936	$1,008,238
Home Service	21,603	830,141	$ 830,229
Total	92,191	2,471,428	$4,354,267

American Legion Auxiliary
National President Elsie Bailey

Everywhere I traveled this year, I found ample evidence to support my theme this year, which reflects my long-held belief that "America is Pure Gold!"

Yes, America is pure gold, in part because The American Legion Family's programs and caring members contribute so much loving effort to preserving our traditions and supporting those who safeguard our freedom.

Our dedication was put to the test earlier this year when our members mobilized to assist military personnel deployed for "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Our members immediately joined with Legionnaires responding to requests for help from military families through the Family Support Network.

Individually, Unit members engineered their own grassroots responses to "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Members purchased Blue Star Banners for area military families and presented them to the families at the Post home.

So many of us have "been there," so we not only thanked the families, but showed them they could count on The American Legion Family to be on their side. Long after war news fades from the front page, we will not forget our veterans, or their families.

The July/August issue of *National News* offered a sampling of what our Units were doing. For example, Unit 513, Thibodaux, La., formed a support group for area military families and conducted regular meetings to network with one another, and with other local civic groups whose members wanted to help out.

The phrase, "In God We Trust," inspired Thibodaux resident Sally Sobert to launch the "Penny Prayer Project." An estimated 5,000 pennies painted red, white and blue—each including a prayer card—were sent to Fort Polk, La., a jumping off point for troops heading to Iraq.

Unit 81, Leitchfield, Ky., members partnered with local school students to assemble "care packages" of personal items, writing materials, batteries and other necessities for the troops; conducted a "support the troops" rally; and distributed red, white and blue ribbons with a yellow ribbon attached to each.

These activities were repeated a thousand-fold nationwide. At home, our members donated nearly $40,000 to my special project, the "Veterans Pot of Gold." Funds collected were used for special needs at VA Medical Centers; and funded programs to assist homeless veterans, including Stand Downs.

Auxiliary members show their concern for veterans in so many ways. There's not room enough in this report to share with you all that we accomplished, but I'm proud to report the American Legion Auxiliary lived up to equaling eight decades of service to America, its veterans and their families.

A brief rundown of our major programs illustrates our members' caring instincts. They showed themselves ready and able to grasp any "golden opportunity" to assist veterans, children and the multi-faceted American family in general.

In the Americanism sphere, more than 2,200 Units spent $110,00 sponsoring Americanism projects in the nation's schools. Our popular "Spirit of Youth" fund attracted favorable notice, with members contributing $27,352.

Our members were going for the gold right beside Legionnaires. We assisted The American Legion by volunteering our time to promote the National Oratorical Contest; Junior Shooting Sports; and American Legion Baseball.

In addition, more than 1,500 Units contributed $30,075 to Flag Education initiatives; and spent more than $85,000 for U.S. Flags presented to various groups.

We enjoy a strong Children & Youth program that complements The American Legion's own roster of programs.

This year, our members struck gold on behalf of the nation's children, donating $4.5 million, with a reported $580,551 in direct cash assistance to needy children.

A new project, the American Legion Auxiliary's "Youth Hero Award," begun this year, recognizes heroic deeds by awarding an attractive medal held by a red, white and blue ribbon. At press time, 82 medals had been distributed to kids in two dozen Departments.

"America, Pure Gold" serves a diverse set of purposes. It includes our support of the Child Welfare Foundation (CWF). Past National President Elizabeth Stewart, National Liaison to the Child Welfare Foundation, reports our members contributed $90,291 to the CWF, despite a sluggish economy.

Florida was the top single contributor on the Auxiliary side, with $11,147. Every penny contributed helps a child who needs it. Whether it was a monetary gift or volunteer hours, our members maintained a tradition of caring that makes me proud to belong to this organization.

Our devotion to children also shines through in the precious eyes of our Junior members. I named these wonderful young ladies my "gold nuggets" for all the good work they did this year.

Only 4,136 Units in 35 Departments reported their activities, so the numbers don't reflect the involvement of these future leaders. A reported 1,120 Volunteens offered great service assisting our hospital representatives in VAMC, nursing homes and domiciliaries. More than 340 Juniors completed the Leadership course.

Our Juniors worked at blood drives; distributed poppies; entertained patients at nursing homes; led recycling campaigns; collected winter coats for needy children; and took part in the "Relay for Life" and "Locks of Love" programs.

In short, our Juniors showed up anywhere and anytime their enthusiasm and skills were needed in their communities. I'm so proud of them!

That pride shows in the Girls State program, too. With 61 percent of Departments reporting, more than 12,300 young women learned about the workings of their local, state and federal governments last year.

Girls State directors did their usual stellar job in planning agendas tailored to making the educational process fun while keeping the emphasis on the duties of citizenship and the shades of meaning behind the phrase, "For God and Country."

Our Poppy Program continued growing strong, as the figures show:

# of Units of ordering Poppies	5,462
# of Poppies ordered by Units	6,508,056
Amount of Donations	$2,119,423
# of Units increasing Poppy order	690
# of Units decreasing Poppy order	278

THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
December 31, 2002 and 2001
Indianapolis, Indiana

Members of the National Finance Commission
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 (the Legion) as of December 31, 2002 and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. The consolidated financial statements of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2001 were audited by other auditors whose report dated March 27, 2002, expressed an unqualified opinion on those statements. As discussed in Note 1, the Legion has restated its 2001 financial statements during the current year.

We have audited the adjustments described in Note 1 that were applied to restate the 2001 financial statements. In our opinion, such adjustments are appropriate and have been properly applied.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the 2002 financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2002, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
March 27, 2003

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2002 and 2001

	2002	(Restated) 2001
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,234,216	$ 2,139,879
Accounts receivable		
Emblem Division	129,869	208,073
Publications Division	1,234,092	1,265,367
Other	1,846,961	1,316,986
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,136,217	617,795
Deferred membership expense	4,195,103	5,741,973
Inventories		
Emblem Division	2,939,903	1,512,033
Publications Division	240,852	272,923
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	90,434	127,150
Prepaid pension expense	16,032,673	15,693,542
	30,080,320	28,895,721
Investments		
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	21,171,317	19,273,787
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,793,453	1,651,331
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	977,040	985,877
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	38,216,302	40,781,331
Other	32,302,664	36,344,270
Special account – endowment fund	2,224,377	2,179,859
General account – endowment fund	6,190,263	5,954,300
	102,875,416	107,170,755
Property and equipment		
Washington, D.C. real estate		
Land	80,000	80,000
Building	4,377,277	4,138,918
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	3,373,420	3,611,779
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana	4,319,229	4,355,813
Washington, D.C.	1,130,353	1,066,396
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	772,833	661,969
	14,442,376	14,304,139
Accumulated depreciation	(7,063,400)	(6,625,744)
	7,378,976	7,678,395
	$140,334,712	$143,744,871

– continued –

	2002	(Restated) 2001
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 2,418,496	$ 3,744,591
Scholarships payable	872,563	914,105
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	201,843	405,979
Deferred advertising income	67,114	79,400
Deferred dues income	19,822,208	20,409,632
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	1,071,677	1,507,936
Accrued vacation benefits	616,785	589,574
Other liabilities	358,717	2,952,518
Notes payable	3,141,112	3,202,891
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	19,249,209	20,026,553
Life memberships due to states and local posts	27,804,413	28,927,243
	75,624,137	82,760,422
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted – general	15,692,427	10,787,352
Unrestricted – designated		
Citizens Flag Alliance	90,434	127,150
Computer reserve	500,000	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	100,000
Convention stabilization	469,456	415,733
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	(690,217)	2,913,559
Real estate reserve	1,924,637	1,651,331
Reserve fund	2,388,891	2,312,945
Restricted fund	18,764,888	16,937,705
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	4,753,532	5,506,037
Veteran's rehabilitation/child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	873,531	824,219
Others	1,057,527	1,062,544
	48,025,106	45,238,575
Temporarily restricted		
Buick scholarship	669,908	667,857
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	979,524	988,025
Samsung scholarship	2,571,861	2,092,950
National Emergency Fund	890,513	895,811
Others	315,937	109,846
	5,427,743	4,754,489
Permanently restricted		
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	6,257,726	5,991,385
	11,257,726	10,991,385
Total net assets	64,710,575	60,984,449
	$140,334,712	$143,744,871

Consolidated Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2002

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,293,032	$ 2,079,945	$ 23,372,977	$ -	$ -	$ 23,372,977
Direct membership solicitations	3,317,711	-	3,317,711	-	-	3,317,711
Member service fees income	1,542,308	512,385	2,054,693	-	-	2,054,693
Financial program income	251,643	-	251,643	-	-	251,643
Sales of emblem items	11,259,127	-	11,259,127	-	-	11,259,127
Advertising	8,827,810	-	8,827,810	-	-	8,827,810
Contributions	92,379	-	92,379	478,398	23,674	594,451
Label and printing fees	1,993,839	-	1,993,839	-	-	1,993,839
Sales – HPC	982,641	-	982,641	-	-	982,641
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $147,784	675,753	1,280,592	1,956,345	957,273	-	2,913,618
Net realized gains	2,268	74,645	76,913	547,258	18,030	642,201
Other	1,129,907	1,403,601	2,533,508	-	-	2,533,508
	51,368,418	5,351,168	56,719,586	1,982,929	41,704	58,744,219
Net assets released from restriction	1,123,747	-	1,123,747	(1,123,747)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	4,602,218	(4,602,218)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	57,094,383	748,950	57,843,333	859,182	41,704	58,744,219
Expenses						
Salaries	10,980,616	-	10,980,616	-	-	10,980,616
Employee benefits	2,392,054	-	2,392,054	-	-	2,392,054
Cost of sales - Legion	8,674,876	-	8,674,876	-	-	8,674,876
Cost of sales – HPC	788,201	-	788,201	-	-	788,201
Direct publication	11,319,202	-	11,319,202	-	-	11,319,202
Executive and staff travel	943,559	-	943,559	-	-	943,559
Commission and committee	1,237,629	-	1,237,629	-	-	1,237,629
Printing and postage	2,456,090	-	2,456,090	-	-	2,456,090
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,106,752	-	1,106,752	-	-	1,106,752
Office and other operating	10,808,127	-	10,808,127	-	-	10,808,127
Occupancy and usage	2,037,464	-	2,037,464	-	-	2,037,464
Special projects and programs	2,520,707	-	2,520,707	-	-	2,520,707
	55,265,277	-	55,265,277	-	-	55,265,277
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	1,826,710	751,346	2,578,056	859,182	41,704	3,478,942
Net unrealized gains – PUFL annuity	3,483,285	-	3,483,285	-	-	3,483,285
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	33,300	(3,308,110)	(3,274,810)	(185,928)	224,637	(3,236,101)
Change in net assets	5,343,295	(2,556,764)	2,786,531	673,254	266,341	3,726,126
Net assets, beginning of year	10,787,352	34,451,223	45,238,575	4,754,489	10,991,385	60,984,449
Transfer of funds	(440,615)	440,615	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 15,690,032	$ 32,335,074	$ 48,025,106	$ 5,427,743	$ 11,257,726	$ 64,710,575

Consolidated Statement of Activities (restated) Year Ended December 31, 2001

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,356,199	$ 1,808,937	$ 23,165,136	$ -	$ -	$ 23,165,136
Direct membership solicitations	2,658,217	-	2,658,217	-	-	2,658,217
Member service fees income	1,722,055	-	1,722,055	-	-	1,722,055
Financial program income	212,095	-	212,095	-	-	212,095
Sales of emblem items	9,669,588	-	9,669,588	-	-	9,669,588
Advertising	7,732,223	-	7,732,223	-	-	7,732,223
Contributions	65,456	-	65,456	460,521	37,885	563,862
Label and printing fees	1,966,499	-	1,966,499	-	-	1,966,499
Sales – HPC	846,542	-	846,542	-	-	846,542
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $139,276	1,281,098	1,444,278	2,725,376	914,997	-	3,640,373
Net realized gains	-	88,675	88,675	5,044	63,228	156,947
Other	1,374,885	1,488,765	2,863,650	-	-	2,863,650
	48,884,857	4,830,655	53,715,512	1,380,562	101,113	55,197,187
Net assets released from restriction	870,615	-	870,615	(870,615)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	3,895,174	(3,895,174)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	53,650,646	935,481	54,586,127	509,947	101,113	55,197,187
Expenses						
Salaries	10,643,361	-	10,643,361	-	-	10,643,361
Employee benefits	1,366,642	-	1,366,642	-	-	1,366,642
Cost of sales - Legion	6,425,510	-	6,425,510	-	-	6,425,510
Cost of sales – HPC	675,098	-	675,098	-	-	675,098
Direct publication	12,047,203	-	12,047,203	-	-	12,047,203
Executive and staff travel	1,059,841	-	1,059,841	-	-	1,059,841
Commission and committee	1,322,140	-	1,322,140	-	-	1,322,140
Printing and postage	2,778,108	-	2,778,108	-	-	2,778,108
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,146,700	-	1,146,700	-	-	1,146,700
Office and other operating	9,527,447	-	9,527,447	-	-	9,527,447
Occupancy and usage	1,779,207	-	1,779,207	-	-	1,779,207
Special projects and programs	2,503,294	-	2,503,294	-	-	2,503,294
	51,274,551	-	51,274,551	-	-	51,274,551
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	2,376,095	935,481	3,311,576	509,947	101,113	3,922,636
Net unrealized gains on PUFL annuity	995,941	-	995,941	-	-	995,941
Net unrealized gains (losses)	(54,870)	(937,299)	(992,169)	216,187	63,322	(712,660)
Change in net assets	3,317,166	(1,818)	3,315,348	726,134	164,435	4,205,917
Net assets, beginning of year, as previously reported	20,969,964	32,190,285	53,160,249	4,595,592	10,826,950	68,582,791
Prior period adjustment	(12,020,303)	783,281	(11,237,022)	(567,237)	-	(11,804,259)
Net assets, beginning of year as restated	8,949,661	32,973,566	41,923,227	4,028,355	10,826,950	56,778,532
Transfer of funds	(1,479,475)	1,479,475	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 10,787,352	$ 34,451,223	$ 45,238,575	$ 4,754,489	$ 10,991,385	$ 60,984,449

Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows Years ended Decmeber 31, 2002 and 2001

Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ 3,726,126	$ 4,205,917
Items not requiring (providing) cash		
Depreciation expense	776,053	739,041
Loss on sale of fixed assets	1,473	2,754
(Gain) loss on sale of investments	946,432	1,336,068
Unrealized losses on investments	3,765,633	712,660
Contributions restricted for long-term investment	23,674	37,885
(Gain) on Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	(3,483,285)	(995,940)
Accounts receivable	(420,496)	160,801
Prepaid expenses and deposits	(857,553)	(468,339)
Deferred membership expense	1,546,870	(2,379,600)
Inventories	(1,395,799)	211,971
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	36,716	(22,965)
Accounts and scholarships payable	(1,367,637)	508,217
Deferred income	343,006	1,018,883
Other accrued liabilities	(2,566,590)	164,522
Net cash from operating activities	1,074,623	5,231,875
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(478,104)	(428,188)
Purchase of investments	(50,836,386)	(82,370,377)
Sales and maturities of investments	50,419,660	77,032,090
Net cash from investing activities	(894,830)	(5,766,475)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Proceeds from contributions restricted for investment	(23,674)	(37,885)
Payments on line of credit	(61,779)	(57,332)
Net cash from financing activities	(85,453)	(95,217)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	94,340	(629,817)
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,139,879	2,769,696
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,234,219	$ 2,139,879
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid	$ 279,566	$ 124,014
Interest paid	236,111	229,861

Notes to Financial Statements December 31, 2002 and 2001

NOTE 1 - Nature of Operations and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

General: The American Legion National Headquarters (Legion) is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Approximately 50% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 15% is generated through advertising for the American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion Emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs including The American Legion Magazine, Emblem sales, veterans' assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion baseball, oratorical contests and Boy's Nation.

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC); the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (ALEF); and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material inter-organizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc., an Indiana corporation, is a full-service, direct marketing and advertising agency whose services include innovative marketing and creative automated mailing. The majority of its sales are to the Legion. The remaining sales are made primarily within the State of Indiana. American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans. The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and Posts.

Net Asset Classifications: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 117, Financial Statements of Not-for-Profit Organizations. SFAS No. 117 requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

NOTE 1 - Nature of Operations and Summary of Significant Accounting Policies (Cont.)

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: For purposes of reporting cash flows, the Legion considers all liquid investments with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents, except for those investments held or part of a managed portfolio. The first $100,000 of deposits per financial institution is insured by a government agency.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market. Inventory items are valued at average cost. Supplies 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 statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets are capitalized at cost. The Legion provides for depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation on buildings is computed on the straight-line method using a 30-year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis.

In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and written off in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these organizations is considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. However, due to net operating loss carryforwards, the Legion paid no taxes for the years ended December 31, 2002 and 2001.

Federal and state income tax expense is recorded for HPC, a for-profit corporation, as incurred.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion approximate their fair values, with the exception of the line of credit as disclosed in Note 8.

Expense Allocation: Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

Prior Period Adjustments and Restatement of 2001 Financial Statements: Certain errors resulting in the misclassification of liabilities and net assets have been corrected in the current year. The information presented in these statements for the year ended December 31, 2001 has been adjusted to correct amounts presented for that period. Prior period adjustments affect previously reported liabilities for disability withholdings, affinity program marketing, scholarships, Sons of the American Legion and Paid-Up-For-Life memberships.

Adjustments to net assets at January 1, 2001 are as follows:

Unrestricted undesignated net assets	
January 1, 2001, as previously reported	$ 20,969,964
Reduce Emp Withholdings-Disability to zero	45,000
Reduce MBNA/AL Promotional Liability to zero	132,477
Recognize previously awarded Samsung scholarships	(688,053)
Recognize assets released from restrictions (Samsung Scholarship Trust)	567,237
Recognized additional Paid-Up-For-Life liability	(12,076,964)
Unrestricted undesignated net assets at January 1, 2001, as restated	$ 8,949,661
Unrestricted designated net assets	
at January 1, 2001, as previously reported	$ 32,190,285
Reclassify SAL Liability to unrestricted designated net assets	783,281
Unrestricted net assets at January 1, 2001, as restated	$ 32,973,566
Temporarily restricted net assets	
at January 1, 2001, as previously reported	$ 4,595,592
Recognize assets released from restrictions (Samsung Scholarship Trust)	(567,237)
Temporarily restricted net assets at January 1, 2001, as restated	$ 4,028,355

Restatement of the 2001 financial statements are as follows:

Total liabilities at December 31, 2001 as previously reported	$ 72,055,405
Reduce Emp Withholdings-Disability to zero	(45,000)
Reduce MBNA/AL Promotional Liability to zero	(132,477)
Recognize Samsung scholarship liability	625,869
Recognized additional Paid-Up-For-Life liability	11,081,015
Reclassify SAL liability to unrestricted designated net assets	(824,390)
Total liabilities at December 31, 2001 as restated	$ 82,760,422
Total net assets at December 31, 2001 as previously reported	$ 71,689,466
Reduce Emp Withholdings-Disability to zero	45,000
Reduce MBNA/AL Promotional Liability to zero	132,477
Recognize Samsung scholarship liability	(625,869)
Recognized additional Paid-Up-For-Life liability	(11,081,015)
Reclassify SAL liability to unrestricted designated net assets	824,390
Total net assets at December 31, 2001 as restated	$ 60,984,449
Total expenses at December 31, 2001 as previously reported	$ 51,377,852
Adjust Scholarship, grants and awards expense to actual	(62,363)
Adjust net SAL activity into Special projects expense	(40,938)
Total expenses at December 31, 2001 as restated	$ 51,274,551
Unrealized gains on PUFL annuity	
at December 31, 2001 as previously reported	$ 0
Recognize unrealized gain on PUFL annuity	995,941
Unrealized gain on PUFL annuity at December 31, 2001 as restated	$ 995,941
Total change in net assets	
at December 31, 2001 as previously reported	$ 3,106,675
Adjust Scholarship, grants and awards expense to actual	62,363
Adjust net SAL activity into Special projects expense	40,938
Recognize unrealized gain on PUFL annuity	995,941
Total change in net assets at December 31, 2001 as restated	$ 4,205,917

Reclassifications: Certain information for 2001 has been reclassified to conform with the current year presentation.

NOTE 2 - Investment in Affiliate

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA) for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration. CFA recognized a decrease in net assets of $36,716 in 2002 and a net increase $22,965 in 2001. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been reduced by this amount and a corresponding charge has been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2002. The Legion's investment was increased in 2001.

NOTE 2 - Investments

The Legion's market value of investments is as follows:

2002 MARKET

	SEGREGATED FOR RESTRICTED AND RESERVE FUNDS	SEGREGATED FOR WASHINGTON D.C. BUILDING	OVERSEAS GRAVES DECORATION FUND	PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM	OTHER	TOTAL
U.S. Government obligations	$ 20,774,728	$ 899,127	$ 462,948	$ 9,926,736	$ 12,463,657	$ 44,527,196
State and Municipal Bonds	-	-	-	1,013,663	-	1,013,663
Corporate Bonds	-	-	-	5,510,571	2,427,215	7,937,786
Common and preferred stocks	-	-	-	15,389,836	-	15,389,836
Mutual funds	-	-	-	-	1,613,802	1,613,802
Money market accounts	184,554	880,210	507,552	6,128,644	24,012,175	31,713,135
Accrued interest	212,035	14,116	6,540	246,852	200,455	679,998
	$ 21,171,317	$ 1,793,453	$ 977,040	$ 38,216,302	$ 40,717,304	$ 102,875,416

2001 MARKET

	SEGREGATED FOR RESTRICTED AND RESERVE FUNDS	SEGREGATED FOR WASHINGTON D.C. BUILDING	OVERSEAS GRAVES DECORATION FUND	PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM	OTHER	TOTAL
U.S. Government obligations	$ 18,607,371	$ 1,492,121	$ 536,695	$ 5,901,067	$ 16,188,686	$ 42,725,940
State and Municipal Bonds	-	-	-	1,425,933	-	1,425,933
Corporate Bonds	-	-	-	10,755,655	2,242,199	12,997,854
Common and preferred stocks	-	-	-	19,186,408	-	19,186,408
Mutual funds	-	-	-	-	2,492,627	2,492,627
Money market accounts	460,528	132,000	439,879	3,190,092	23,245,761	27,468,260
Accrued interest	205,888	27,210	9,303	322,176	309,156	873,733
	$ 19,273,787	$ 1,651,331	$ 985,877	$ 40,781,331	$ 44,478,429	$ 107,170,755

NOTE 4 - Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership Fund are segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 5 - Restricted and Reserve Designated Funds

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee of the Legion. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income to the restricted fund. The Legion transferred $120,615 and $380,191 in 2002 and 2001.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 6 - Life Insurance Plan

During October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legion's Life Insurance Trust. Upon dissolution in April 1993, funds remaining in the Trust totaling $4,285,984 were transferred to a segregated bank trust account (named The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion for use in youth programs.

The Legion's National Executive Committee has directed that monies within The American Legion Life Insurance Plan used to fund oratorical contests, Boys' Nation, American Legion Baseball, and other youth programs of the Legion. At December 31, 2002, $1,100,000 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 2003.

NOTE 7 - 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 descendents of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Such scholarships are administered by the Legion.

Contributions to The American Legion Endowment Fund are recorded as increases in permanently restricted net assets, the income from which is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

NOTE 8 - Long Term Debt

During 1999, the Legion signed a note payable for $3,600,000 to fund construction of a new facility for emblem sales, information technology, member benefits and HPC. This debt is payable in monthly installments of $24,388, including interest, beginning May 1, 2000, with a stated rate of 7.18% and final payment due April 1, 2010. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $3,141,112 and $3,202,891 for 2002 and 2001 respectively.

The future maturities for the line of credit are as follows:

2003	$ 72,456
2004	77,833
2005	83,609
2006	89,814
2007	96,479
Thereafter	2,720,921
	$ 3,141,112

NOTE 9 - Leases

The Legion has several noncancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, copiers and cash registers that expire over the next five years. Rental expense for these leases aggregated $737,095 in 2002 and $744,654 in 2001.

Future minimum lease payments under operating leases are as follows:

2003	$ 471,059
2004	360,318
2005	237,361
2006	25,953
	$ 1,094,691

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through June 30, 2006. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for nine additional four-year periods. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance approximated $471,000 in 2002 and $422,000 in 2001. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 10 - Income Taxes

The following is a reconciliation of income taxes at the federal statutory rate to actual income tax recorded by HPC:

	2002	2001
Income tax expense		
Currently payable		
Federal	$ 52,291	$ 167,898
State	31,265	53,180
Deferred		
Federal	5,900	7,000
	$ 89,456	$ 228,078
Reconciliation of federal statutory to actual tax expense		
Federal income tax at statutory rates	$ 76,239	$ 192,955
Nondeductible expenses	2,487	1,500
Effect of state income taxes	14,854	44,377
Change in valuation allowance and other	(4,124)	(10,754)
	$ 89,456	$ 228,078

The components of the net deferred tax (liability) asset are as follows:

Asset		
Net operating loss carryforward	$ 25,300	$ 23,700
Liability		
Other	(24,500)	(17,000)
	$ 800	$ 6,700

The deferred tax asset and liability are included in other accounts receivable and other liabilities, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

NOTE 11 - Net Assets Released from Restriction

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2002	2001
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 57,981	$ 53,546
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	433,940	396,279
Veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth programs	478,263	368,257
Other	153,563	52,533
	$ 1,123,747	$ 870,615

NOTE 12 - Net Assets Released from Designation

Net assets were released from designations by satisfying the designations previously established.

	2002	2001
Purpose designations accomplished		
Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	$ 3,045,979	$ 2,446,541
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	1,041,709	1,014,319
Other	514,530	434,314
	$ 4,602,218	$ 3,895,174

NOTE 13 - 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 December 31, 2002 and 2001.

	2002	2001
Benefit obligation	$(30,611,098)	$(29,109,345)
Fair value of plan assets	48,023,639	45,761,001
Funded status	$ 17,412,541	$ 16,651,656
Prepaid benefit cost recognized in the statement of financial position	$ 16,032,673	$ 15,693,542

	2002	2001
Benefit cost	$ (169,353)	$ (902,957)
Employer contribution	168,957	165,554
Benefits paid	1,569,627	1,394,053

	2002	2001
Weighted-average assumptions		
Discount rate	7.0%	7.0%
Expected return on plan assets	8.0%	7.5%
Rate of compensation increase	2.5%	2.5%

HPC maintains a defined-contribution plan under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Elective deferrals are available to employees twenty-one and a half years of age who have completed one year of eligible service. HPC may make discretionary contributions to this plan.

NOTE 14 - Functional Expenses

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

	2002	2001
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$30,685,586	$29,538,162
Americanism and children and youth activities	2,533,591	2,092,445
Flag education and legislation	923,917	1,251,752
	34,143,094	32,882,359
Supporting services		
Management and general	$13,382,152	$12,484,923
Member development	7,689,821	5,885,698
Fund raising	50,210	21,571
	21,122,183	18,392,192
	$55,265,277	$51,377,852

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $4,648,617 and $3,400,883 for the years ended December 31, 2002 and 2001.

NOTE 14 - 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.

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT AUDITORS

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited and reported separately on the basic financial statements of the Legion for the year ended December 31, 2002. Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the Legion's basic financial statements taken as a whole. The accompanying analyses presented in the next two schedules have been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the Legion's financial statements and, in our opinion, the accompanying other information is stated fairly in all material respects in relation to those basic financial statements taken as a whole. The financial statements of the American Legion National Headquarters for the year ended December 31, 2001 were audited by other auditors whose report dated March 27, 2002 expressed an unqualified opinion on those statements. These 2001 statements were restated in the current year based on certain adjustments which were opined on by us.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
March 27, 2003

Supplementary Information: Reconciliation of Internal Financial Statements to Audited Financial Statements, Years Ended December 31, 2002 and 2001

	2002	Restated 2001
Change in net assets – internal financial statements	$ 1,826,710	$ 2,376,095
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials		
Unrestricted designated	751,346	935,481
Temporarily restricted	859,182	509,947
Permanently restricted	41,704	101,113
	3,478,942	3,922,636
Net unrealized gains (losses)		
General	3,516,585	941,071
Unrestricted designated	(3,308,110)	(937,299)
Temporarily restricted	(185,928)	216,187
Permanently restricted	224,637	63,322
Change in net assets – audited financial statements	$ 3,726,126	$ 4,205,917

Supplementary Information
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position, December 31, 2002

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,322,325	$ 6,026	$ 3,497	$ 902,368	$ -	$ 2,234,216
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	129,869	-	-	-	-	129,869
Publications	1,234,092	-	-	-	-	1,234,092
Related party	-	-	-	433,682	(433,682)	-
Other	1,844,011	-	-	135,978	(133,028)	1,846,961
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,010,214	3,673	-	122,330	-	1,136,217
Deferred membership expense	4,195,103	-	-	-	-	4,195,103
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	2,939,903	-	-	-	-	2,939,903
Publication division	240,852	-	-	-	-	240,852
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	90,434	-	-	-	-	90,434
Prepaid pension expense	16,032,673	-	-	-	-	16,032,673
	31,039,476	9,699	3,497	1,594,358	(2,566,710)	30,080,320
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserve funds	21,171,317	-	-	-	-	21,171,317
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,793,453	-	-	-	-	1,793,453
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	977,040	-	-	-	-	977,040
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	38,216,302	-	-	-	-	38,216,302
Other	31,166,664	-	1,136,000	-	-	32,302,664
Special account – endowment fund	-	2,224,377	-	-	-	2,224,377
General account – endowment fund	-	6,190,263	-	-	-	6,190,263
Investment in HPC	1,861,427	-	-	-	(1,861,427)	-
	95,186,203	8,414,640	1,136,000	-	(1,861,427)	102,875,416
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,138,918	-	-	-	-	4,138,918
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,319,229	-	-	-	-	4,319,229
Washington, D.C.	1,130,353	-	-	-	-	1,130,353
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	772,833	-	772,833
Accumulated depreciation	(6,475,232)	-	-	(588,168)	-	(7,063,400)
	7,194,311	-	-	184,665	-	2,378,976
Total assets	$ 133,419,990	$ 8,424,339	$ 1,139,497	$ 1,779,023	$ (4,428,137)	$ 140,334,712
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,659,029	$ -	$ -	$ 226,948	$ (467,481)	$ 2,418,496
Scholarships payable	872,563	-	-	-	-	872,563
Accounts payable – Legion	-	2,083,314	-	-	(2,083,314)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	201,843	-	-	49,714	(49,714)	201,843
Deferred advertising income	67,114	-	-	-	-	67,114
Deferred dues income	19,822,208	-	-	-	-	19,822,208
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	1,071,677	-	-	-	-	1,071,677
Accrued vacation benefits	616,785	-	-	-	-	616,785
Other liabilities	317,784	-	-	40,933	-	358,717
Notes payable	3,141,112	-	-	-	-	3,141,112
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	19,249,209	-	-	-	-	19,249,209
Life memberships due to state and local posts	27,804,413	-	-	-	-	27,804,413
	75,823,737	2,083,314	-	317,595	(2,600,509)	75,624,137
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted – general	16,058,627	-	-	-	(366,200)	15,692,427
Unrestricted – designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	90,434	-	-	-	-	90,434
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	469,456	-	-	-	-	469,456
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	(690,217)	-	-	-	-	(690,217)
Real estate reserve	1,924,637	-	-	-	-	1,924,637
Reserve fund	2,388,891	-	-	-	-	2,388,891
Restricted fund	18,764,888	-	-	-	-	18,764,888
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	4,753,532	-	-	-	-	4,753,532
Veterans' rehabilitation/child welfare(special account)	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	873,531	-	-	-	-	873,531
Other	974,228	83,299	-	-	-	1,057,527
	48,308,007	83,299	-	-	(366,200)	48,025,106
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	669,908	-	-	-	-	669,908
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	979,524	-	-	-	-	979,524
Samsung scholarship	2,571,861	-	-	-	-	2,571,861
National Emergency Fund	-	-	890,513	-	-	890,513
Others	315,937	-	-	-	-	315,937
	4,537,230	-	890,513	-	-	5,427,743
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	-	6,257,726	-	-	-	6,257,726
	5,000,000	6,257,726	-	-	-	11,257,726
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,062,851	(1,062,851)	-
Total net assets	57,845,237	6,341,025	890,513	1,461,428	(1,827,628)	64,710,575
Total net assets	$ 133,668,974	$ 8,424,339	$ 890,513	$ 1,779,023	$ (4,428,137)	$ 140,334,712

Supplementary Information
Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (restated), December 31, 2001

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 980,123	$ 12,399	$ -	$ 1,147,357	$ -	$ 2,139,879
Accounts receivable						
Emblem division	208,073	-	-	-	-	208,073
Publication division	1,265,367	-	-	-	-	1,265,367
Other	1,316,287	-	-	340,180	(339,481)	1,316,986
Prepaid expenses and deposits	547,055	2,907	-	67,833	-	617,795
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Deferred membership expense	5,741,973	-	-	-	-	5,741,973
Inventories						
Emblem division	1,512,033	-	-	-	-	1,512,033
Publication division	272,923	-	-	-	-	272,923
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	127,150	-	-	-	-	127,150
Prepaid pension expense	15,693,542	-	-	-	-	15,693,542
	29,664,526	15,306	-	1,555,370	(2,339,481)	28,895,721
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserve funds	19,273,787	-	-	-	-	19,273,787
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,651,331	-	-	-	-	1,651,331
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	985,877	-	-	-	-	985,877
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	40,781,331	-	-	-	-	40,781,331
Other	35,448,459	-	895,811	-	-	36,344,270
Special account – endowment fund	-	2,179,859	-	-	-	2,179,859
General account – endowment fund	-	5,954,300	-	-	-	5,954,300
Investment in HPC	1,726,651	-	-	-	(1,726,651)	-
	99,867,436	8,134,159	895,811	-	(1,726,651)	107,170,755
Property and equipment						
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,138,918	-	-	-	-	4,138,918
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,355,813	-	-	-	-	4,355,813
Washington, D.C.	1,066,396	-	-	-	-	1,066,396
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	661,969	-	661,969
	13,642,170	-	-	661,969	-	14,304,139
Accumulated depreciation	(6,080,363)	-	-	(545,381)	-	(6,625,744)
	7,561,807	-	-	116,588	-	7,678,395
	$ 137,093,769	$ 8,149,465	$ 895,811	$ 1,671,958	$ (4,066,132)	$ 143,744,871
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 3,862,696	$ -	$ -	$ 143,528	$ (261,633)	$ 3,744,591
Scholarships payable	914,105	-	-	-	-	914,105
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	405,979	-	-	27,392	(27,392)	405,979
Deferred advertising income	79,400	-	-	-	-	79,400
Deferred dues income	20,409,632	-	-	-	-	20,409,632
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	1,507,936	-	-	-	-	1,507,936
Accrued vacation benefits	589,574	-	-	-	-	589,574
Other liabilities	2,778,133	-	-	174,385	-	2,952,518
Line of credit	3,202,891	-	-	-	-	3,202,891
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	20,026,553	-	-	-	-	20,026,553
PUFL payable to state and local	28,927,243	-	-	-	-	28,927,243
Due to the ALNH	-	2,084,254	-	-	(2,084,254)	-
	82,704,142	2,084,254	-	345,305	(2,373,279)	82,760,422
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted – general	11,153,552	-	-	-	(366,200)	10,787,352
Unrestricted – designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	127,150	-	-	-	-	127,150
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	415,733	-	-	-	-	415,733
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	2,913,559	-	-	-	-	2,913,559
Real estate reserve	1,651,331	-	-	-	-	1,651,331
Reserve fund	2,312,945	-	-	-	-	2,312,945
Restricted fund	16,937,705	-	-	-	-	16,937,705
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	5,506,037	-	-	-	-	5,506,037
Veterans' rehabilitation/child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	824,219	-	-	-	-	824,219
Others	988,718	73,826	-	-	-	1,062,544
	45,530,949	73,826	-	-	(366,200)	45,238,575
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	667,857	-	-	-	-	667,857
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	988,025	-	-	-	-	988,025
Samsung scholarship	2,092,950	-	-	-	-	2,092,950
National Emergency Fund	-	-	895,811	-	-	895,811
Others	109,846	-	-	-	-	109,846
	3,858,678	-	895,811	-	-	4,754,489
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	-	5,991,385	-	-	-	5,991,385
	5,000,000	5,991,385	-	-	-	10,991,385
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	928,076	(928,076)	-
	-	-	-	1,326,653	(1,326,653)	-
Total net assets	54,389,627	6,065,211	895,811	1,326,653	(1,692,853)	60,984,449
	$ 137,093,769	$ 8,149,465	$ 895,811	$ 1,671,958	$ (4,066,132)	$ 143,744,871

Supplementary Information
Consolidating Statement of Activities, Year Ended December 31, 2002

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 23,372,977	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 23,372,977
Sales of emblem items	11,259,127	-	-	-	-	11,259,127
Sales – HPC	-	-	-	5,593,290	(4,610,649)	982,641
Advertising	8,827,810	-	-	-	-	8,827,810
Direct membership solicitation	3,317,711	-	-	-	-	3,317,711
American Legion Endowment Fund income	478,263	-	-	-	(478,263)	-
Contributions	462,753	23,674	108,024	-	-	594,451
Affinity income	251,643	-	-	-	-	251,643
Label and printing fees	1,993,839	-	-	-	-	1,993,839
Member service fees income	2,054,693	-	-	-	-	2,054,693
Investment income, net of fees	2,401,112	477,439	16,651	18,416	-	2,913,618
Net realized gains	623,135	19,035	31	-	-	642,201
Other	2,707,743	-	-	-	(174,235)	2,533,508
Net income in subsidiary	134,776	-	-	-	(134,776)	-
	37,885,582	520,148	124,706	5,611,706	(5,397,923)	58,744,219
Expenses						
Salaries	10,980,616	-	-	-	-	10,980,616
Employee benefits	2,392,054	-	-	-	-	2,392,054
Cost of sales	8,854,637	-	-	-	(179,761)	8,674,876
Cost of sales – HPC	-	-	-	4,486,519	(3,698,318)	788,201
Direct publications	11,319,202	-	-	-	-	11,319,202
Executive and staff travel	943,559	-	-	-	-	943,559
Commission and committee	1,237,629	-	-	-	-	1,237,629
Printing and postage	2,456,090	-	-	-	-	2,456,090
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,106,752	-	-	-	-	1,106,752
Office and other operating	-	-	-	-	-	-
Veterans and child programs	10,693,584	30,937	-	816,177	(732,571)	10,808,127
Occupancy and usage	2,037,464	-	-	174,235	(174,235)	2,037,464
Special projects and programs	2,380,516	478,263	140,191	-	(478,263)	2,520,707
	54,402,103	509,200	140,191	5,476,931	(5,263,148)	55,265,277
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	3,483,479	10,948	(15,485)	134,775	(134,775)	3,478,942
Net unrealized gains (losses) – PUFL	3,483,285	-	-	-	-	3,483,285
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	(3,511,154)	264,866	10,187	-	-	(3,236,101)
Change in net assets	3,455,610	275,814	(5,298)	134,775	(134,775)	3,726,126
Net assets, beginning of year	54,389,627	6,065,211	895,811	928,076	(1,294,276)	60,984,449
Net assets, end of year	$ 57,845,237	$ 6,341,025	$ 890,513	$ 1,062,851	$ (1,429,051)	$ 64,710,575

Supplementary Information
Consolidating Statement of Activities (restated), Year Ended December 31, 2001

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 23,165,136	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 23,165,136
Direct membership solicitation	2,658,217	-	-	-	-	2,658,217
Member service fees income	1,722,055	-	-	-	-	1,722,055
Financial program income	212,095	-	-	-	-	212,095
Sales of emblem items	9,669,588	-	-	-	-	9,669,588
Advertising	7,732,223	-	-	-	-	7,732,223
Contributions	117,371	37,885	408,606	-	-	563,862
Label and printing fees	1,966,499	-	-	-	-	1,966,499
Sales – HPC	-	-	-	6,684,821	(5,838,279)	846,542
American Legion Endowment Fund income	482,923	-	-	-	(482,923)	-
Interest and dividends	3,124,258	489,790	26,325	-	-	3,640,373
Net realized gains	93,856	62,712	379	-	-	156,947
Net income in subsidiary	339,437	-	-	-	(339,437)	-
Other	3,007,658	-	-	38,511	(182,519)	2,863,650
	54,291,316	590,387	435,310	6,723,332	(6,843,158)	55,197,187
Expenses						
Salaries	10,643,361	-	-	-	-	10,643,361
Employee benefits	1,366,642	-	-	-	-	1,366,642
Cost of sales	7,607,892	-	-	-	(1,182,382)	6,425,510
Cost of sales – HPC	-	-	-	5,330,995	(4,655,897)	675,098
Direct publication	12,047,203	-	-	-	-	12,047,203
Executive and staff travel	1,059,841	-	-	-	-	1,059,841
Commission and committee	1,322,140	-	-	-	-	1,322,140
Printing and postage	2,778,108	-	-	-	-	2,778,108
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,146,700	-	-	-	-	1,146,700
Office and other operating	8,634,749	22,327	-	870,381	-	9,527,447
Occupancy and usage	1,779,207	-	-	182,519	(182,519)	1,779,207
Special projects and programs	2,366,024	482,923	137,270	-	(482,923)	2,503,294
	50,751,857	505,250	137,270	6,383,895	(6,503,721)	51,274,551
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	3,539,459	85,137	298,040	339,437	(339,437)	3,922,636
Net unrealized gains (losses) PUFL	995,950	-	-	-	-	995,950
Net unrealized gains (losses) investments	(828,605)	115,842	103	-	-	(712,660)
Change in net assets	3,706,804	200,979	298,143	339,437	(339,437)	4,205,926
Net assets, beginning of year, as previously reported	62,487,091	5,864,232	597,668	588,639	(954,839)	68,582,791
Prior Period Adjustment	(11,804,259)	-	-	-	-	(11,804,259)
Net assets, beginning of year, as restated	50,682,832	5,864,232	97,668	588,639	(954,839)	56,778,532
Net assets, end of year	$ 54,389,627	$ 6,065,211	$ 95,811	$ 928,076	$ (1,294,276)	$ 60,984,449