

P R O C E E D I N G S O F T H E
105th N A T I O N A L C O N V E N T I O N O F T H E
V E T E R A N S O F F O R E I G N W A R S
O F T H E U N I T E D S T A T E S

[SUMMARY OF MINUTES]



Cincinnati, Ohio : : : August 14 - August 20, 2004

PROCEEDINGS
of the
105th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES
(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

Cincinnati, Ohio

August 14-20, 2004



Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS; PROCEEDINGS
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The proceedings of the national encampments of the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Veterans of World War I of the United States, Incorporated, the Disabled American Veterans, and the AMVETS (American Veterans of World War II), respectively, shall be printed annually, with accompanying illustrations, as separate House documents of the session of the Congress to which they may be submitted.

[Approved October 2, 1968.]

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES,
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
April, 2005

Honorable Dennis Hastert
The Speaker U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In conformance with the provisions of Public Law No. 620, 90th Congress, approved October 22, 1968, I am transmitting to you herewith the proceedings of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 14-20, 2004, which is submitted for printing as a House document.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Senk, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

JOHN J. SENK, JR.
Adjutant General

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COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

(Including societies that amalgamated to form Veterans of Foreign Wars)

The Veterans of Foreign Service and the Army of the Philippines amalgamated at Denver, CO, August 1913, forming the Veterans of Foreign Wars as it is today. However, the birth of the order dates from September 29, 1899, when the first national officers were elected and the eligibility clause adopted. The original chapter was granted October 11, 1899.

* indicates deceased

American Veterans of Foreign Service

1899-1900	James C. Putnam*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1900-1901	Maj. Will S. White*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1901-1902	Maj. Will S. White*	Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1902-1903	James Romanis*	Elected at Washington Courthouse, Ohio.
1903-1904	James Romanis*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1904-1905	James Romanis*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1905-1906	George Metzger*	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1906-1907	Charles H. Devereaux*	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1907-1908	David T. Nevin*	Elected at James Exposition Grounds, Virginia.
1908-1909	J. Alfred Judge*	Elected at Lebanon, Pennsylvania.
1909-1910	J. Alfred Judge*	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	Robert J. Woodside*	Elected at Jersey City, New Jersey.
1911-1912	Robert J. Woodside*	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1912-1913	Robert J. Woodside*	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

American Veterans of Foreign Service

(Eastern Branch)

1903-1904	Capt. Robert S. Hansburg *	Elected at Altoona, Pennsylvania.
1904-1905	H.O. Kelly *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

(The above two organizations amalgamated September 1905, at Altoona, Pennsylvania.)

Army of the Philippines

1900-1901	Gen. Francis V. Greene *	Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1901-1902	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
1902-1903	Gen. Irving Hale *	Elected at Council Bluffs, Iowa.
1903-1904	Gen. Charles King *	Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1904-1905	Gen. Wilder S. Metcalf *	Elected at St. Louis, Missouri.
1905-1906	Col. Alfred S. Frost *	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1906-1907	Gen. Arthur MacArthur *	Elected at Des Moines, Iowa.
1907-1908	Capt. H.A. Crow *	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1908-1909	Maj. P.J.H. Farrell *	Elected at Galesburg, Illinois.
1909-1910	Col. Charles L. Jewett *	Elected at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
1910-1911	A.H. Anderson *	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1911-1912	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1912-1913	F. Warner Karling *	Elected at Lincoln, Nebraska.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

1913-1914	Rice W. Means*	.....Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1914-1915	Thomas Crago *	.....Elected at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.
1915-1916	Gus Hartung*	.....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1916-1917	Albert Rabin*	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1917-1918	William Ralston*	.....Elected at New York, New York.
1918-1919	F. Warner Karling*	.....Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1919-1920	F. Warner Karling*	.....Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1920-1921	Robert G. Woodside*	.....Elected at Washington, D.C.
1921-1922	Robert G. Woodside*	.....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1922-1923	Tillinghast Huston*	.....Elected at Seattle, Washington.
1923-1924	Gen. Lloyd M. Brett*	.....Elected at Norfolk, Virginia.
1924-1925	John H. Dunn*	.....Elected at Atlantic City, New Jersey.
1925-1926	Fred Stover*	.....Elected at Tulsa, Oklahoma.
1926-1927	Theodore Stitt*	.....Elected at El Paso, Texas.
1927-1928	Frank T. Strayer*	.....Elected at Providence, Rhode Island.
1928-1929	Eugene P. Carver*	.....Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1929-1930	Kezekiah N. Duff*	.....Elected at St. Paul, Minnesota.
1930-1931	Paul C. Wolman*	.....Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1931-1932	Darold D. DeCoe*	.....Elected at Kansas City, Missouri.
1932-1933	Adm. Robert E. Coontz*	.....Elected at Sacramento, California.
1933-1934	James E. Van Zandt*	.....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1934-1935	James E. Van Zandt*	.....Elected at Louisville, Kentucky.
1935-1936	James E. Van Zandt*	.....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1936-1937	Bernard W. Kearny*	.....Elected at Denver, Colorado.
1937-1938	Scott P. Squyres*	.....Elected at Buffalo, New York.
1938-1939	Eugene I. Van Antwerp*	.....Elected at Columbus, Ohio.
1939-1940	Otis N. Brown*	.....Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1940-1941	Joseph C. Menendez*	.....Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1941-1942	Max Singer*	.....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1942-1943	Robert T. Merrill*	.....Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio.
1943-1944	Carl S. Schoeninger*	.....Elected at New York, New York.
1944-1945	Jean A. Brunner*	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1945-1946	Joseph M. Stack*	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1946-1947	Louis E. Starr*	.....Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1947-1948	Ray H. Brannaman*	.....Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
1948-1949	Lyall T. Beggs *	.....Elected at St. Louis, Missouri..
1949-1950	Clyde A. Lewis	.....Elected at Miami, Florida.
1950-1951	Charles C. Ralls*	.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1951-1952	Frank C. Hilton	.....Elected at New York, New York.
1952-1953	James W. Cothran*	.....Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1953-1954	Wayne E. Richards*	.....Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
1954-1955	Merton B. Tice*	.....Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1955-1956	Timothy J. Murphy*	.....Elected at Boston, Massachusetts.
1956-1957	Cooper T. Holt	.....Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1957-1958	Richard L. Roudebush*	.....Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
1958-1959	John W. Mahan	.....Elected at New York, New York.
1959-1960	Louis G. Feldmann*	.....Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1960-1961	T.C. Connell*	.....Elected at Detroit, Michigan.
1961-1962	Robert E. Hansen	.....Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.

1962-1963 Byron B. Gentry*Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 1963-1964 Joseph J Lombardo*Elected at Seattle, Washinton.
 1964-1965 John A Jenkins*Elected at Cleveland, Ohio.
 1965-1966 Andy Borg*Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1966-1967 Leslie M. Fry*Elected at New York, New York.
 1967-1968 Joseph A. Scerra*Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1968-1969 Richard W. HomanElected at Detroit, Michigan.
 1969-1970 Raymond A. Gallagher*Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
 1970-1971 Herbert R. Rainwater*Elected at Miami Beach, Florida.
 1971-1972 Joseph L. Vicites*Elected at Dallas, Texas.
 1972-1973 Patrick E. Carr*Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 1973-1974 Ray R. SodenElected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1974-1975 John J. StangElected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1975-1976 Thomas C. WalkerElected at Los Angeles, California.
 1976-1977 R.D. Smith Jr.....Elected at New York, New York.
 1977-1978 Dr. John Wasyluk.....Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 1978-1979 Eric SandstromElected at Dallas, Texas.
 1979-1980 Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.*Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1980-1981 T.C. Selman*Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1980-1981 Arthur Fellwock.....Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
 1980-1981 Arthur FellwockElected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
 1982-1983 James R. Currieo.....Elected at Los Angeles, California.
 1983-1984 Clifford G. Olson Jr.....Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1984-1985 Billy Ray CameronElected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1985-1986 John S. Staum.....Elected at Dallas, Texas.
 1986-1987 Norman G. StaabElected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
 1987-1988 Earl L. Stock*Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1988-1989 Larry W. Rivers.....Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
 1989-1990 Walter G. HoganElected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
 1990-1991 James L. Kimery*Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
 1991-1992 Robert E. WallaceElected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
 1992-1993 John M. CarneyElected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
 1993-1994 George R. CramerElected at Dallas, Texas.
 1994-1995 Allen F. "Gunner" Kent.....Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
 1995-1996 Paul A. SperaElected at Phoenix, Arizona.
 1996-1997 James E. NierElected at Louisville, Kentucky.
 1997-1998 John E. Moon.....Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah.
 1998-1999 Thomas A. Pouliot.....Elected at San Antonio, Texas
 1999-2000 John W. SmartElected at Kansas City, Missouri
 2000-2001 John F. GwizdakElected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 2001-2002 James N. GoldsmithElected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
 2002-2003 Raymond C. SiskElected at Nashville, Tennessee
 2003-2004 Edward S. Banas, Sr.....Elected at San Antonio, Texas
 2004-2005 John Furgess.....Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2003-2004

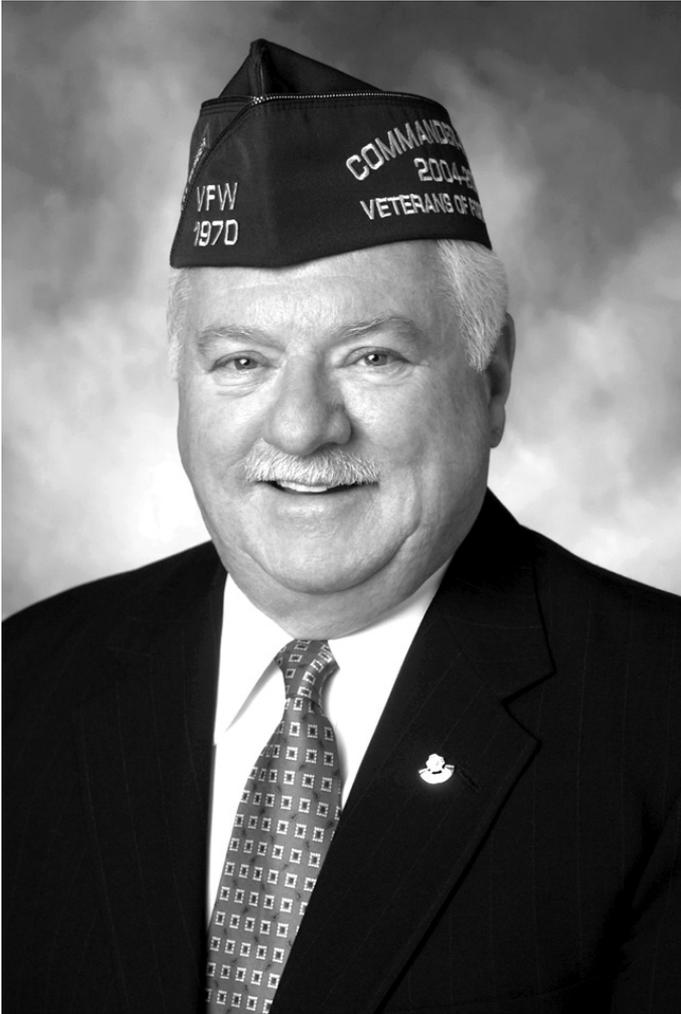
Commander-in-Chief	Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief	John Furgess.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief	James R. Mueller
Adjutant General	John J. Senk, Jr.
Quartermaster General	Joe L. Ridgley
Judge Advocate General	Matthew M. "Fritz" Mihelcic
Surgeon General	C. O. "Doc" Bohlman, MD
National Chaplain	David B. Norris
National Chief of Staff	Frank A. Burchill
Inspector General	Joseph H. Gallant, Jr.
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director	
Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration	Lawrence LeFebvre
Assistant Adjutant General, Development	Ronald G. Browning
Assistant Adjutant General, Programs/Special Projects	Michael J. Gormalley
Assistant Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General-Operations	Robert W. Crow
Director/Chief Information Officer-	
Information Technology	Robert B. Greene
Director, Buddy Poppy & Member Services	Thomas L. Kissell
Director, Communications	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Emblem & Supply Department	M.L. "Bud" Cale
Director, General Services	David L. Swindler
Director, Life Membership & Dues Processing	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership	James R. Rowoldt
Director, Military Assistance	Buddy J. Haney
Director, Publications & Editor, VFW Magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Properties	Billy R. Weissend
Director, VFW Programs, Youth Development, Scholarship & Recognition,	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Director, Administration,	
Washington	Edward L. "Leo" Andrew
Director, Public Affairs, Washington	William G. Smith
Director, Employment Service	James N. Magill
Director, National Legislative Service	Dennis M. Cullinan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs	Robert D. Manhan
National Service Officer & Director, National Veterans Service	William L. Bradshaw
Manager, Information Technology	Alan F. Jones
Manager, National Convention & Meetings	Vanessa Kane, CMP

REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS,
2003-2004

DISTRICT 1	(ME NH)	Raymond R. Lupo
DISTRICT 2	(MA VT)	Samuel R. Haskins
DISTRICT 3	(MD NJ)	Charles A. Duffett, Jr.
DISTRICT 4	(DC DE EU)	Peter J. Mascetti, Jr.
DISTRICT 5	(IN MO)	Roger E. Baker
DISTRICT 6	(VA WV)	Paul T. Moore
DISTRICT 7	(TN KY)	James E. O'Neill
DISTRICT 8	(GA AL)	*Richard Branson Ray E. Brooks
DISTRICT 9	(SC NC)	Lyn D. Dimery
DISTRICT 10	(OK AR)	*John Dilbeck Dean Derieg
DISTRICT 11	(WI IA)	Thomas J. Tradewell
DISTRICT 12	(SD ND WY)	Larry L. Scudder
DISTRICT 13	(KS CO)	John R. Lewis
DISTRICT 14	(MT WA ID)	Larry H. Longfellow
DISTRICT 15	(NM AZ)	John I. Halstead, Sr.
DISTRICT 16	(LAT AM/CAR PAC AK HI)	Frank S. Lamson
DISTRICT 17	(UT NV OR)	Walter Lewis
DISTRICT 18	(CT RI)	Robert A. Stevens
DISTRICT 19	(LA MS)	Johnnie L. Richard
DISTRICT 21	(MN NE)	Gary C. Steckelberg
DISTRICT A	(Pennsylvania)	Ronald G. Tyler, Sr.
DISTRICT B	(Illinois)	William H. Regan
DISTRICT C	(New York)	Anthony M. Ferrarese
DISTRICT D	(Ohio)	Daniel N. Long
DISTRICT F	(Michigan)	David S. Miller
DISTRICT G	(California)	John L. Fitzke
DISTRICT H	(Texas)	Jimmie D. Cantrell
DISTRICT J	(Florida)	Harvey F. Eckhoff
Past Commander-in-Chief		Ray C. Sisk
*Deceased		



Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Commander-in-Chief
2003-2004



John Furgess
Commander-in-Chief
2004-2005

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2004-2005

Commander-in-Chief.....	John Furgess
Sr. Vice Commander-in-Chief	James R. Mueller
Jr. Vice Commander-in-Chief	Gary L. Kurpius
Adjutant General.....	John J. Senk, Jr.
Quartermaster General.....	Joe L. Ridgley
Judge Advocate General	Wayne J. Thompson, Jr.
Surgeon General.....	Stephen J. O'Connor
National Chaplain	Theodore E. Bowers.
National Chief of Staff.....	Ronnie L. Davis
Inspector General.....	William J. Jolin
Assistant Adjutant General, Administration.	Lawrence LeFebvre
Assistant Adjutant General, Development.....	Ronald G. Browning
Assistant Adjutant General, Programs/Special Projects.....	Michael J. Gormalley
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director, Washington Office	Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Quartermaster General	Lawrence M. Maher
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General-Operations	Robert W. Crow
Director/Chief Information Officer- Information Technology	Robert B. Greene
Director, Member Services & Buddy Poppy	Thomas L. Kissell
Director, Communications & Public Affairs	Jerry L. Newberry
Director, Emblem & Supply Department.....	M. L. "Bud" Cale
Director, General Services	David L. Swindler
Director, Member Dues Processing	Robert A. Crider
Director, Membership.....	James R. Rowoldt
Director, Military Assistance.....	Buddy J. Haney
Director, Publications & Editor, VFW Magazine	Richard K. Kolb
Director, VFW Properties	Billy R. Weissend
Director, VFW Programs, Youth Development, Scholarship & Recognition.....	Stephen L. Van Buskirk
Manager, Information Technology.....	Alan F. Jones
Manager, National Convention & Meetings	Vanessa Kane, CMP
Director, Administration, Washington Office.....	Edward L. "Leo" Andrew
Director, Public Affairs, Washington Office.....	Joseph E. Davis
Director, Employment Service.	James N. Magill
Director, National Legislative Service.....	Dennis M. Cullinan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs	Robert D. Manhan
National Service Officer & Director, National Veterans Service.....	William L. Bradshaw

**REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS
2004-2005**

District No. 1 (ME NH)Raymond R. Lupo
 District No. 2 (MA VT)Walter G. Gansenberg
 District No. 3 (MD NJ)Charles A. Duffett, Jr.
 District No. 4 (DC DE EU)Clifford D. Fields
 District No. 5 (IN MO)Roger E. Baker
 District No. 6 (VA WV)Randall L. Bare
 District No. 7 (KY TN)James E. O’Neill
 District No. 8 (AL GA)Rayburn M. Hill
 District No. 9 (NC SC)Lyn D. Dimery
 District No.10 (AR OK)A. M. Armstrong
 District No.11 (IA WI)Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr.
 District No.12 (ND SD WY)Theodore A. Krogen
 District No.13 (CO KS)John R. Lewis
 District No.14 (ID MT WA)Richard A. Whipple
 District No.15 (AZ NM)John I. Halstead, Sr.
 District No.16 (AK HI LAT. AM/CAR. PAC.)Darryl S. Dalley
 District No.17 (NV OR UT)Walter Lewis
 District No.18 (CT RI)Armondo C. Azzinaro
 District No.19 (LA MS)Johnnie L. Richard
 District No. 21 (MN NE)Gary C. Steckelberg
 District A (PA)Ronald G. Tyler, Sr
 District B (IL)William H. Regan.
 District C (NY)Anthony M. Ferrarese
 District D (OH)Gregorio J. Vela
 District F (MI)David S. Miller
 District G (CA)John L. Fitzke
 District H (TX)Danny R. Henry
 District J (FL)Harvey F. Eckhoff
 Past Commander-in-ChiefEdward S. Banas, Sr.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE
105TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES
CINCINNATI, OHIO
AUGUST 14-20, 2004

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE
SUNDAY, AUGUST 15, 2004

(The Memorial Service of the 105th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, was called to order at 8:30 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Edward Banas, Sr. presiding. The Gold Star parents and Gold Star wives were escorted by the Sergeants-at-Arms.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement and posting of the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. VFW Honor Guard, you will prepare to advance and salute the Colors.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard advanced the Colors.)

INVOCATION

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: We will now call upon Reverend Pitman for the Invocation.

REVEREND DAVID PITMAN: Our Father in heaven, we invoke your blessings on this gathering today of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of these United States, and in giving thanks for your blessings on these United States of America we want to honor the lives that served this nation in defending and advancing liberty around the world.

We thank you for lives that served and lives that sacrificed, and we will be mindful today of the liberties that are secured by such courage and such commitment. We will thank you for this gathering that with honor we will hold high those ideals and those values, that we would pray your blessings upon what is said and sung and shown here today.

Father, we will thank you for Old Glory that waves above us. We will also thank you for eternal glory that waves beyond us, through the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who conquered death, hell and the grave.

Father, I will pray that you will comfort hearts here today, whose loved ones have gone on, and you will comfort comrades whose friends are absent, unavoidably so.

Father, I will pray now that all the honor and glory that would be due would be given, but that all honor and glory would go to the maker

and giver, the sustainer and judge of all life. We will pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Attention, please. Uncover. Comrades and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, facing the flag of our nation, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and the playing of our National Anthem.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time I would like to call on Mrs. Juanita Bohlman, the National Soloist for the Ladies Auxiliary, to sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic".

(Whereupon, National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic".)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good morning, comrades and sisters. At this time I would like to acknowledge the presence of Mrs. Eric Sandstrom, widow, and the family of Past Commander-in-Chief Eric Sandstrom, who passed away on November 3rd, in the year 2003.

MEMORIAL RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and friends, we have met at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who answered the last call. The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.

At this time I request the National Chaplain preside over this service.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and to perform the solemn duty in the spirit of faith, hope and charity. Comrades, sisters and friends, please stand and join in singing "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

(Whereupon, the assembly sang "Nearer, My God, to Thee.")

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, to whom should the true soldier look for help in the battles of life?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what assurance have we of a prolonged stay among the seasons and activities of earth?

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN FURGESS: Nor are we strangers before Thee and sojourners, as were all our brothers. Our days on earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, have you a message of condolence for those bereaved?

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES MUELLER: The Book of Life tells us that like as the father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frames and he remembereth that we are dust.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: What message has the Chaplain of the Ladies Auxiliary?

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL CHAPLAIN LINDA MEADER: I have a message of hope, which should inspire our comrades at this solemn moment and all through life. The message is from the captain of our salvation. He says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though, he were dead, yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrades, we are thankful for these inspiring thoughts. Let us learn the lesson of the hour, which is that we, too, are nearing the end of life's pilgrimage and sooner or later these services may be held in our memory.

Let us so live that when our summons comes we may depart with a good conscience and in the comfort of a sincere religion, believe in God and perfect charity toward all mankind.

Let us pray. We have been guilty, God, of looking for our leaders only in places of wealth and influence. We confess the fascination with power. We want to glorify the outwardly successful, passing over those who have learned to live wisely and with true integrity. Rather, we tend to follow after those who have blithe answers with appearance of absolute confidence, what you have offered us is better, we know.

Your plan for us is that we follow those who follow the right and the good. Your spirit fills those who walk in humility, patience and self-sacrifice. Please open our eyes that we may see those gentle faces beckoning us upward and onward in the spirit of love.

They are all around us, we are certain. Only open our eyes. Amen.

(Whereupon, Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang "Sleep Soldier Boy.")

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: We will now have a rendition from the Veterans Memorial Pipe Band.

(Whereupon, the Veterans Memorial Pipe Band gave a rendition of "Setting a Course for Lewis.")

SYMBOLIC TRIBUTE

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrades, in commemorating the virtues of our departed heroes to serve their country in time of need, we now offer our symbolic tributes.

I place upon our sacred shrine these red flowers, which symbolize the zeal of our departed comrades in upholding brotherhood, truth and justice.

Comrade Past Commander-in-Chief, what tribute have you to offer?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK: These white flowers I place as a token of the purity of affection we have for our departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, have you a tribute to offer upon this sacred shrine?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The blue of our National Standard symbolizes truth and fidelity. Therefore, I place these blue flowers from nature's bosom in token of our sincere respect for all departed comrades.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Ladies of the Auxiliary, will you offer a tribute to the memory of our departed comrades?

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT EVELYN McCUNE: I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks life everlasting. Thus do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.

(Whereupon, the Veterans Memorial Pipeline Band then played "Amazing Grace.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Sonnenberg is the Senior Pastor at the Trinity Lutheran Church in Wauseon, Ohio. He has a Master of Divinity in Theology, Trinity Lutheran Seminary. For 33 years, he has been an officer in the active Air Force, the Air Force Reserve and the International Guard, and has completed the Air Force's Squadron Officers School in Air Command and Staff College.

Colonel Sonnenberg is the Installation Chaplain with the 188th International Guard Fighter Wing in Wauseon, Ohio.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

COLONEL TIMOTHY SONNENBERG: Good morning. Thank you, Commander, for that kind introduction. It is my pleasure to be with you today to share this time as we remember those who have paid a great price for the freedom we are enjoying today.

During October and November, one year ago, I served with the 16th Expeditionary Operations Group in Southern France. Our Air Force unit was assigned to the NATO mission, responsible for protecting the delicate cease fire between the warring factions from Balkans.

Our unit provided air tankers that refueled in flight, the F-16 fighters that were patrolling the skies over the Balkans.

While France has taken some major political criticisms with its regard to the position on the war in Iraq, I want to begin by telling you about the tremendous support and appreciation that I experienced from the French veterans and the French people of Southern France.

They remember the great sacrifice the United States and our soldiers paid in World War II to free that nation from Nazi occupation. While I was there on Veterans Day that year, I participated as a U.S. Air Force Chaplain in a French replaying ceremony in the City of Marseille, France.

The two-hour ceremony was in front of a memorial dedicated to the American and French soldiers who had fought and died together in World War II. The French held a huge reception and dinner at the French Foreign Legion Headquarters for the American servicemen and women stationed there with me.

I received gripping handshake after handshake from the French World War II veterans, dressed in their blue blazers with their campaign medals, their maroon beret with their unit insignia, and they spoke very little English except to say to me, "Thank you for your soldiers."

Another activity that was happening in many of the small towns and villages in Southern France, even the year that I was there, had to do with the B-24 Bombers that had been shot down over the French countryside. Many of those communities have gone back and identified the downed American bombers, and then they began to raise money to build a memorial at the crash site.

The town committee would research the crash and find out the names of the crew members on board, and then invite the U.S. servicemen's families to come to France and be honored during the dedication of that memorial. Each year thereafter the French community holds a memorial service at the crash site to honor the American and the French soldiers. This activity is now happening 58 years after the war has ended.

Another thing I found interesting was that Southern France has five American Legion Posts, large ones. They are made up of American soldiers who stayed in France following the war and married and became a part of the community, and yet have maintained their identity as American soldiers.

Finally, I had the opportunity one weekend to take a bullet train and visit the battlefields and beaches of Normandy. That bayou that I visited, the British military cemetery where 4,144 white cemetery markers line up row after row. At this cemetery, each memorial stone has been adopted by a French family who cares for the gravestone, who plants flowers in front of it, and who lays a wreath there at Memorial Day. They also correspond with the serviceman's family back in Britain.

At Omaha Beach, I walked among the 9,387 white marble markers at the American Cemetery, 70 acres, row after row of American graves, and those are the markers of just the soldiers who are buried in France, as most who were killed were brought back to the states to be buried. It seems so unreal that now in this peaceful French countryside so many had given their life. It was incomprehensible that the scenes like those in the movie "Saving Private Ryan" have happened in such a tranquil farming community. That day the sheep were in the pastures and the farmers were raking their hay, and it gave no hint that these fields and beaches were once blood-soaked and littered with bodies and equipment.

Today, we are involved in another war, the Iraqi war. We understand from news reports that now almost 1,000 American soldiers have died, as well as the many more who have been wounded. Yet, we are kind of amazed now, a year or so later, at the light number of casualties, especially when we remember the thousands and thousands and thousands that were killed in World War I and World War II, in Korea and Vietnam.

It was General Schwarzkopf who after the Gulf War said, "The loss of one human life isn't tolerable to any of us in the military." And yet given the magnitude of Desert Storm's ground war, he said, "It is almost miraculous as far as the light number of casualties."

However, he went on to say, "It will never be miraculous to the families who lost loved ones."

We have seen those heart-wrenching stories on TV, the young wife

and small children whose husband, father won't be coming home from this war. My nephew is a Marine Commander of a Bravo Company in Iraq. He lost one of his men during a fire fight.

The fallen soldier was a 33-year-old gunnery sergeant with a wife and a three-year-old child. He was ready to serve. He was proud. He was a marine and he wanted to be there, his wife said. He was ready for the combat that would come his way. He fought the fight that needed to be fought and he died honorably. But we already know that his wife will also pay the real price for her husband's bravery and honor for a lifetime to come.

These experiences and stories of sacrifice remind me of a Bible passage from John that says, "Greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for friends."

A while back an Air Force Chaplain wrote an article entitled, "Is Freedom Worth Dying For?" The Chaplain wrote it a few years ago, and the New York Times carried a story about an anti-war demonstration at one of the Ivy League schools. The occasion was forgettable, but what was unforgettable was a news photo that accompanied the story.

It was a young man, healthy and vital and privileged, and he was carrying a placard on which was written, "There is nothing worth dying for."

"He is our child, the product of our society," wrote the Chaplain. "We desperately do not wish for him to die." But his announcement on that placard is an announcement of more than war and more than chemical weapons. "We as a society," said the Chaplain, "have some measure of responsibility for the message on that placard, for the fact that a young American, that healthiest, luckiest, most tenderly-treated young man in history, at the point of his physical power marching around the campus on a bright day of sunshine, we have some support for the fact that he could find nothing of value worth dying for, either mother nor father, nor family, nor country, nor freedom, nor God.

As much as we may agree or disagree with that chaplain's assessment, he does lift up for us today the central question. Is there anything in this world worth dying for? Was the freedom of the Baltic countries worth dying for?

Was the freedom of the Iraqi people and the elimination of their leaders of atrocity and tyranny worth dying for?

Was the freedom of the Kuwaiti people worth dying for? Was the protection of the defenseless Kurdish refugees worth dying for? Is the continued freedom of our own nation worth dying for? What would we be willing to have Americans die for today?

As we value earthly life more and more every day in the United States, it becomes increasingly difficult to answer that question. Was the death of the 79 Americans in the Persian Gulf or the 1,000 Americans in the Iraqi freedom worth it? Is there any cause or principle worth the death of a loved one?

As we struggle with this question, we are reminded of a very familiar passage also from John. "For God so loved the world that he gave his own son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The greatest day in history was Good Friday, the day the son of God was killed for others and for us. It wasn't even a good cause, because Christ died. We were sinners, we surely didn't deserve his sacrifice. Paul says in

Romans, "For while we were still helpless, God died for the wicked at a time God chose."

It is a difficult time for someone to die for a righteous person and it may even be that someone might die for a good person, but God has shown us how much he loves us. It was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us. Paul says we weren't downtrodden or oppressed, we weren't a noble cause or humanitarian concern, we were sinners. Why did he do it? Because he loved us.

Listen to the two passages. The third word in both of those passages is the word "love". "God so loved the world" and no greater love is there. The starting point of sacrifice is love, and without love there is no way that Christ would have gone to that cross, and Christ received that love from his father, and without love there is no way we would sacrifice for others.

We likewise are able to love others only as we experience the love of God. There are difficult issues to be faced today and there are no simple answers. We are torn between providing for the well-being of our own family and the Christian commitment we feel toward families around the world who are suffering, and we come back to that haunting question, "Is there anything in this world that I am willing to give my life for?" Maybe more to the point for us, is there anything in this world that I am ready to have my son or daughter, my grandson or my granddaughter, give their life for? These are very hard and personal questions.

In Christ we receive the courage to face an imperfect world and keep on living in it. We receive the courage to give the best of whatever we are called to do. The troubles that face our world will not likely vanish in our lifetime. But if we stay connected to Christ and allow his strength and wisdom to guide us, we will be able to respond unselfishly when called upon.

Today, we thank God for the courage and the sacrifice of the men and women who served our country, and especially those who have paid the ultimate price. Now, may God grant each of us the courage to commit ourselves to him, to our nation and to the well-being and freedom of others throughout our world. Amen.

BENEDICTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Reverend Mark Klette will give the Benediction.

REVEREND MARK KLETTE: Let us bow our heads. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to worship you, to give you honor, for this great organization that you have allowed to come together by experience and understanding, freedom at a price.

We thank you today for the unity, for the men and women that have come from far and wide to share in the common cause, to understand and to experience with you to define this life is like a vapor and soon to pass us. But during that time of vapor, we experience your love, your mercy and your grace.

Let this be a week of unity, Lord, of fellowship and time together. We ask for your mercy to go far and wide as we depart at the conclusion, but today, Father, we are here to serve you, to honor you for what you have

done and what you have given to us through Jesus Christ, and by his experience on the cross of understanding freedom we live this life to give you glory, to give you grace and honor.

We ask today, Father, by your spirit you will go forth in every area and every aspect, and through the mighty name of Jesus, bless each and every one today, Father, the leadership, those gathering today that we might honor you as you have honored us around the world for standing for what you have done and what you have accomplished through lives. And we give you thanks through Jesus' name. Amen.

(Whereupon, Taps were played at this time.)

RETIRING OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the Retiring of the Colors was performed by the VFW National Honor Guard.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Your order has been obeyed, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades and sisters, this concludes our Memorial Service. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Veterans Memorial Pipe Band, sponsored by VFW Post 2006, and the Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist, Mrs. Juanita Bohlman, and the National Musician, Ruth Fint.

Since we are in this room together, let me remind everyone that tomorrow morning, in order to get into this hall, you must have a convention badge. If you have not registered, please do so today. The badges will be provided for your spouses as well.

All skywalks to the hotel into the Convention Center will be closed tomorrow until after the President of the United States leaves. Anyone and everyone will have to enter at the 5th and Elm Street main entrance, and the security will be similar to that as in the airport.

Please leave backpacks and other carry items in your hotel. All bags and purses are subject to inspection and certain items could be confiscated. Cameras will be allowed in the hall, but video cameras or camcorders will not be. There will be reserved seating for the VFW National Ladies Auxiliary and Council members, Past Commanders-in-Chief and Past National Presidents and their spouses.

Thank you for attending this service. Please have a wonderful day.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I request permission to escort the Gold Star members and Gold Star parents from the hall, sir.

(Whereupon, the Gold Star parents and Gold Star wives were escorted from the auditorium at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you. That concludes our Memorial Service.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 9:40 a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2004

(The Joint Opening Session of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 91st National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary, was called to order on Monday, August 16, 2004, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., in the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, by Past Commander-in-Chief John Wasyluk, Chairman of the VFW 105th National Convention Committee.)

DEDICATION OF CONVENTION

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am John Senk, Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome to Cincinnati.

Joining us this morning are the Commanders and Auxiliary Presidents of the 2003-2004 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Won't you all please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause) Thank you very much. Thank you for your hard work.

This year 187 Commanders have earned the right to be named All American. Commanders, please stand and be recognized for your hard work. (Applause)

It is now my pleasure to officially open the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Please welcome Past Commander-in-Chief and this year's National Convention Chairman, from the great state of Ohio, Dr. John Wasyluk. (Applause)

WELCOME

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WASYLIK: On behalf of myself and all who are working so hard to make this convention a great success, I welcome you. We sincerely hope the time you spend with us will renew your pride in our nation, rededicate your commitment to America's veterans and bring new excitement to your work as a member of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Please rise as we officially open this Convention with the advancing of the colors.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room to advance the colors.

ADVANCEMENT OF COLORS

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir. Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard, you will prepare to advance, salute and post the colors.

(Whereupon, the National Honor Guard advanced the Colors at this time.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: For this morning's Invocation, we have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, David Norris.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN DAVID NORRIS: Let us pray for clean air and pure water; for glorious color in sky and tree in first bloom, in the wings of migrating butterfly, goose, and bird. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise.

For wildlife sanctuaries, open range, prairies, mountains; for backyard gardens; for cornstalks and bean stems growing tall then bending low for harvest. For your generous gifts that meet human need. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise.

Every day and night we marvel at your wondrous care. Constantly you guide our choices, inviting us to create living. All creation reflects your empowering love: rolling countryside, stark canyons, majestic mountains, delicate wild flowers, and sturdy roadside blooms. Sunrise and star, warmth and chill all declare your glory, singing together. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise.

For love that gives us soul-satisfying happiness; for families, friends, and all others around us; for loved ones here and loved ones beyond; for tender, peaceful thoughts. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise.

For letting us know you exist through families and friends who feed us more than enough food, who give us abundant shelter and clothing, who cherish your presence and honor your creation. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise.

For the pleasure of seeing your wonderful creation; for the pleasure of hearing other voices in music; for the delight of knowing and feeling; for gathering us in families and communities; for inspiring us to stretch toward new knowledge, heightened awareness; for blending of all experience into the excitement we call life. God of all, to you we raise our hymn of grateful praise. Amen.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: Please remain standing as we all recite the Pledge of Allegiance and join together in the singing of the National Anthem and the posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was had at this time, followed by the posting of the Colors.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: We will now have a special presentation.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video presentation on Commander-in-Chief Banas' year was presented at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EDWARD S. BANAS, SR. AND PRESENTATION OF OFFICIAL CONVENTION BADGE

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served the Veterans of Foreign Wars for many years and is now our Commander-in-Chief.

Ed served in the Army from 1965-'68. In Vietnam, he was assigned

to the 18th MPBDE. He was awarded the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Medal and the Army Good Conduct Medal.

In 1967, while still in the military, Ed joined VFW Post 10004 in Jewett City, Connecticut, and is currently a Life Member there. He served as Department Commander of Connecticut in 1993-'94.

On the National level, Ed has served on several Committees including Safety, By-Laws, Budget and Finance, and as Chairman for both the Americanism and Legislative Committees. He served a two-year term, 1994-1996, as a member of the National Council of Administration, representing the Departments of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

In 1998-1999, he served as the Eastern States Conference Chairman.

Ed put his military police experience to good use when he became a member of the Norwich Police Department in 1968. He served with the Department for more than 20 years. During this time, he was a member of several law enforcement associations, including the Patrolman's Benevolent Association, New London County Detective Association, Connecticut Narcotic Officers Association, and the International Narcotic Officers Association.

He attended Northeastern University for the study of Constitutional Law for Police, Police Organizations and Management. He also attended the Department of the Treasury Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, School for Criminal Investigation.

Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief, Edward S. Banas, Sr. (Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

It is my pleasure to present you with this badge in honor of our convention, and also the Liberty Bell, which you have spent all your years here defending the freedom that it represents, and then the gavel which is your authority. Thank you, sir.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief assumed the chair.)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, Past Commander-in-Chief Wasylik. Thank you all very much and welcome to the convention.

Before I begin my remarks, I want to take a moment to acknowledge all the courageous men and women of our military services, who as we meet, are valiantly defending our freedom.

As all of you know, the Veterans of Foreign Wars is deeply involved in supporting the men and women of the armed forces and their families through our programs dedicated specifically for them. I am proud of what we have been able to do for them, and I know that we will continue to do much more for all of them in the future.

I also want to take a few moments to talk to all of you about some of the perspectives I have gained over the past year; what we have collectively accomplished, and about the future of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

But, first, I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedicated service to the world's finest organization and to those we serve. I am grateful for having had the rare privilege to serve as your Commander-in-Chief.

A year ago, during the 104th National Convention, I stood at the

podium and delivered my acceptance remarks to you, in a setting similar to this one. I remember conveying to you that I was deeply grateful to have been elected by you to this office.

One year later, I stand before you with an even greater sense of gratitude. This past year has given me a greater appreciation of your constant efforts to improve the lives of those who deserve it most; our nation's veterans, those serving in our military services and their respective families.

I have a deep and abiding respect for your sense of duty, your passion for service, and your willingness to contribute countless hours of your time, a major portion of your lives, for the greater good.

Last year, after the National Convention had adjourned, we left San Antonio knowing exactly what missions we had to accomplish as an organization. We knew what needed to be done and we did it.

The war on terrorism and the subsequent deployment of our military forces overseas demanded that we respond quickly and effectively to fulfill the obligation and duty that is ours as the nation's largest combat veterans association. I am proud of the way the VFW and the Auxiliary members rallied behind the President, his administration and those who were tasked with fighting the war against terrorism.

Love of country, duty, service and honor are not merely platitudes. They are words that define our organization and reflect the values and ideals that you demonstrate on a daily basis.

During this past year, members of the VFW once again went above and beyond the ordinary in service to our nation. And while we are at war, the VFW will continue to perform a higher duty with courage and conviction.

I believe that the best of the best resides within each and every one of our Posts as reflected by all of what you do and all that you accomplish.

Once again, you have my most sincere thanks and deepest gratitude. It has been a great honor to serve you. Thank you and let the convention begin. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO EVELYN McCUNE, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Evelyn McCune was elected National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its 90th National Convention in San Antonio. Endorsed by the Department of Kansas, she is a Life Member of Whitesell-Finnell Auxiliary No. 971 in Newton where she has belonged since 1967 when she joined through the eligibility of her late husband, Darrel Steinle, a veteran of the Korean Conflict.

She served as President on every level of the organization, as National Safety Director, VFW National Home Director, National Cancer Aid and Research Director, and National Chairman for the Western Conference on five different programs.

During her acceptance speech she introduced her theme, "Kindness, Love and Peace." Since the organization was founded in 1914,

the members have conducted programs demonstrating their love for veterans, kindness towards those in need, and the desire for peace so that no more of America's sons and daughters would have to go to war.

Guided by her leadership, the Ladies Auxiliary is working towards those goals, doing all it can for veterans and those serving on the front lines in the war against terrorism as well as helping the families that have been left at home.

During her year as President, she has traveled to all 51 Departments and the Far East, and has visited the National Wheelchair Games and the Golden Age Games. Both received Auxiliary donations.

Comrades and sisters, please join me in giving a very, very warm welcome to the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary, Evelyn McCune.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: The citation being presented by the Commander-in-Chief to the National President reads: "Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Evelyn McCune, National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2003-2004.

"In special recognition of her untiring dedication to our country, and in sincere appreciation for her outstanding leadership as evidenced by the exceptional contributions of the Ladies Auxiliary to the purposes and programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Her firm resolve for 'Kindness, Love and Peace', inspired everyone she met, and served as the legacy of her presidency.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the Official Seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 16th day of August, 2004." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE BY LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT EVELYN McCUNE

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT McCUNE: Good morning. Commander-in-Chief Banas, National VFW and Auxiliary Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Past National Presidents, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

It is an honor, a great honor, for me to receive this special award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thank you so very much. This past year has been quite memorable for me as it has given me the opportunity to see firsthand how our programs help people, personally handing out the Operation Uplink telephone cards to our troops, the children's books to their families at the air bases, seeing the spirit and the determination of the athletes in the Wheelchair Games and the Golden Age Games, sharing the excitement of our scholarship winners during the Parade of Winners, and witnessing the emotional reaction from those attending the World War II Memorial Dedication were just a few of the remarkable experiences I was privileged to have during this past year.

With each unique experience, I gained a new insight and a fresh appreciation for the good that our programs can provide. Each experience proved, once again, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary are providing valuable services to our veterans and our commu-

nities. This convention marks the end of our 90th year that the Ladies Auxiliary has partnered with the VFW. As we move closer to that 100th year together, I know that there are even greater things that we can accomplish together. I am proud to have served as your National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I am honored that I have had this opportunity to serve with our Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas.

Commander-in-Chief Ed, I wish you and all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars a very enjoyable convention. I am sure that it will be with great success. Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER, CONVENTION CHAIRMAN OF THE 104TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 104th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's National Convention.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is James E. Nier, Past Commander-in-Chief and the Convention Committee Chairman for the 104th Convention in San Antonio, Texas.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Certificate being presented by the Commander-in-Chief reads: "Certificate of Appreciation, 104th National Convention Committee.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of their dedicated and tireless efforts to insure the success of the 104th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States held in San Antonio, Texas, August 23 to August 29, 2003."

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 16th day of August, 2004."

It has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JIM NIER: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. I am very pleased to accept this Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of all of the Department of Texas folks and all those responsible for making the 104th National Convention a success last year.

We were very blessed to have a great convention city in San Antonio with its Riverwalk. Being chairman of the convention is the easy part. The work is really done by those involved in all of the coordination, the organization and the working of events and all of the activities that take place. It was a pleasure working with Larry LeFebvre and Vanessa Kane and Diane from the National Organization. They were most helpful.

The Department of Texas Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary gave unselfishly of their time to make your stay in San Antonio a memorable one. Glen Gardner, Jr., the Adjutant Quartermaster, and all the Committee Chairmen truly did an outstanding job.

It is the volunteers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies

Auxiliary who truly make it happen, all the requirements of what needs to be done behind the scenes. In our case, last year, the number of volunteers was well over 100. Many of them were the same hard-working members that made the 1998 convention in San Antonio a success.

They don't ask for anything, they don't want any recognition, they just want to serve you and this great organization. They do like to be told that they did a good job and, yes, they like to be told that they are appreciated. They have been thanked, they have been told how much they are appreciated. We hope that in the future we will once again have the opportunity to host a national convention in the great State of Texas. We will be ready.

Again, thank you, Commander-in-Chief, and may you have a most productive convention here in Cincinnati, Ohio. God bless. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF PLAQUE TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JACK CARNEY, VFW/PAC

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The success of the organization has always depended on those who dedicate themselves to a higher cause and to the greater good of those we serve. They are the ones who make things happen and get things done. If there is one man who embodies the true spirit of the organization, that man would be Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney. As everyone here knows, Jack Carney has not only dedicated much of his life to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, he has also worked tirelessly as Director of the VFW/PAC.

And let me say this, Jack didn't just assume a title when he directed the VFW/PAC, he totally immersed himself into the job and is largely responsible for keeping the VFW a force to be reckoned with on Capitol Hill. His dynamic leadership on the PAC helped to ensure the membership of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary receive timely and detailed information regarding the legislative priorities of the organization and the efforts of our legislative service on Capitol Hill, thus making VFW one of the most effective lobbying groups in Washington, D.C.

We would be remiss in not recognizing Jack for all that he has done for the VFW National Home as well. As Interim Director, he skillfully directed the daily activities of the Home for nine months, no small job in itself. Jack then continued to serve the needs of the National Home as a Board Trustee.

And if that weren't enough, Jack also served as the VFW point man during the Korean War Commemoration. Jack Carney is truly a man of exceptional energy, compassion and strength. He has touched the lives of thousands of people in a positive and meaningful way. In recognition of his work and achievements, we are proud this morning to present this plaque today.

Please join me in welcoming this outstanding individual, Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The award being presented to Jack Carney reads, "Appreciation Award to John 'Jack' M. Carney.

"For your outstanding contributions to veterans through your selfless

service to the VFW National Home and VFW Political Action Committee.

Your many years of dedicated service and outstanding leadership to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its affiliates have made a tremendous difference in those organizations' successes."

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JACK CARNEY

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, for not only the plaque but the very kind introduction. I would like to keep that with me wherever I go, just to make sure I remember that. You know, I am proud this morning to stand before you at the 105th National Convention and to tell you 25 years ago at the 80th National Convention a Committee headed up by Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt decided it was time for the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary to become involved in politics, and politics to support those candidates that recognize the needs of the veterans of this country. So for them, I am honored to say 25 years of success only means the path is open for 25 more years.

To the Adjutant General and his staff, the Quartermaster General and his staff, and certainly to the Washington Office that accepted me as a part of their family when I arrived in 1998, I want to tell them how much I appreciate the courtesies and friendship they extended to me.

To the National Secretary of the Ladies Auxiliary and her staff, I want to say you were most cooperative to me and you certainly, certainly helped me. To Jonas of Virginia, who served as the Treasurer, he was my right hand. To Theresa Morris, who was scared to death when I arrived in 1998, what is this guy going to do to the PAC, I want to thank her for her service.

To Pat Beaver that now serves in the capacity as administration of the PAC, I want to thank her. We brought Pat home and she does a tremendous job.

To the many members of the Board of Trustees of the PAC I had the privilege of serving with, thank you. Thank you for having the patience with me sometimes bypassing what you would want me to do, only because you are my bosses.

To the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary, there is not enough words for me to say and to thank you, that I want to let you know how important you were to rally around when the call was made by me.

To the Departments' PAC Chairmen and the Ladies Auxiliary Chairmen, goodness sake, you worked hard. You were tired of receiving telephone calls from me, but you did the job and you did the job well.

To the Department Adjutants and secretaries across this great country of ours, many thanks. Many thanks for what you did. Many thanks for the cooperation that I received. You know, when I went up there, I said we have to do something and I need something now.

I consulted Ron Browning, the Assistant Adjutant General of Marketing. I said, "Ron, we have got to get started. I want something going. We need money." I want to thank Ron, because he led me in the right way. I want to thank Kelly Brown, who was a representative to the PAC. She worked closely with me.

I want to tell you when I first arrived in Washington, I answered a

telephone call one morning during the first week, and there was a congressman on the phone. He said, "I am calling to talk to the Director." He said, "I want to know about the endorsements in 1998."

I said to him at that time, "By the way, Congressman," and I will not mention his name because we became friends, I said, "There has been a new PAC Chairman. His name is John M. 'Jack' Carney." He said, "I would like to talk to him." I said, "You are."

I explained what we were going to do and that was a trying time, but I was so proud of the Board. I want to tell you I am extremely pleased that the Commander-in-Chief in 2002 has appointed Sal Caprichio of Rhode Island to be the PAC Director. He is a great man and he will do a great job for the PAC. He is doing that.

Finally, I enjoyed every office and every assignment that I have had. That is because of the dedication of the men and women that make up the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. Thank you. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF HONORABLE CHARLIE LUKEN, MAYOR OF CINCINNATI

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: As we have already experienced, Cincinnati is known for its remarkably warm hospitality. No doubt when we all leave this great city it will be with a host of lasting memories.

Here to greet us today is the Mayor of the outstanding City of Cincinnati, the Honorable Charles Luken.

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE CHARLIE LUKEN, MAYOR OF CINCINNATI

MAYOR LUKEN: Thank you. Good morning to you all. The distinguished dais, to the supporters of veterans everywhere, and most importantly to you, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, welcome to Cincinnati, Ohio. Coming to Cincinnati, you have come to the heartland of America, and I hope you get a chance to walk around and look at this beautiful city, a city that Winston Churchill once described as the most beautiful city in America.

It is communities like Cincinnati all over America that owe each and every one of you a debt of gratitude. You honor us by coming here to Cincinnati.

The poet Longfellow once said of Cincinnati, "It is the queen city." Mark Twain, who used to roll up and down this river, once said about Cincinnati, "When the world comes to an end, you want to be here because things happen ten years late in the City of Cincinnati."

I think what Mark Twain was talking about is this community has a reputation for being a little conservative, and that's okay, because in that conservatism is belief in the principles for which veterans have always stood, loyalty, honor, duty and courage.

It is on behalf of the people of Cincinnati that I want to give you our most heartfelt welcome to our city. I hope you will have the opportunity to enjoy our city. We have arranged some very nice weather for you. By the way, thanks for bringing the two presidential candidates to our city.

With Ohio as important as it is in the election, we think sometimes

they are going to establish residence here, but they come here today to salute you, and they come here today to speak to America about what they plan to do for our most precious of citizens, the veterans of this country and those that continue to serve our country around the world. (Applause)

In that spirit, I have a proclamation, because they never invite me anywhere without one. But it is again an honor, and I will not read this entire thing. It contains the sentiments that hopefully I have tried to articulate to you. It is officially the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary of the VFW Week in Cincinnati.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Cincinnati, Ohio. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE BOB TAFT, GOVERNOR, STATE OF OHIO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Governor Bob Taft was inaugurated as Ohio's 67th Governor for his second term in January of 2003. He has focused on moving Ohio forward by rebuilding Ohio's schools, helping every child learn to read and improving services for seniors.

Through Ohio's third frontier project, Governor Taft is expanding the state's high-tech research capabilities and promoting start-up companies, creating high-paying jobs for Ohio's future.

Governor Taft began his career in public service as a volunteer for the Peace Corps in East Africa. He has served Ohioans as a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, as a Hamilton County Commissioner, and as Ohio's Secretary of State.

Please welcome our distinguished guest, the Honorable Bob Taft, Governor of Ohio. (Applause)

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE BOB TAFT, GOVERNOR, STATE OF OHIO

GOVERNOR TAFT: Thank you. Thank you all and good morning. Thank you, Ed. I am honored to be here with Mayor Luken, with Keith Harmon, the VFW Department Commander from Ohio who has done a tremendous job on behalf of Ohio for veterans, Mr. Bob Lafferty, a Vietnam veteran and Director of my Governor's Office of Veterans Affairs, who also works tirelessly for our veterans.

Most importantly, I am honored and humbled to be here with all of you, the brave men and women who have given so much to preserve our freedoms and to defend our nation. I welcome you to Ohio this morning and to my hometown of Cincinnati. I want to thank the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW for taking the lead in advocating for the health, the employment and the other vital benefits for our veterans.

You, our veterans, have served our nation in difficult times. You have put your lives on the line. We owe you our deepest gratitude for the service you gave to our country. You were there when our country needed you. We have an obligation to be there when you need us.

Here in Ohio, we honor and support our veterans in a number of ways. The Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame, which I host and we help organize each year, honors outstanding veterans and is considered one of the high-

est honors a state can bestow upon retired military members.

Each year we induct veterans who honorably served their country through military service and who have continued to serve and inspire here at home. We have restored the microfilms containing discharge information of 1.6 million Ohio veterans, and digitized an additional 200,000 discharges. We can now send out records within one day of receiving a request, speeding up the processing of VA benefits and medical claims, ensuring that our veterans can access the benefits to which you are entitled.

Each year we organize and I speak at an official wreath-laying ceremony on Memorial Day at the Ohio State House and our beautiful Veterans Plaza, which I hope you will visit one day. That service is attended by veterans from throughout the state. I was also pleased to open Ohio's second Veterans Home last November, which is making certain that our veterans in need can live out their lives in dignity.

I am honored to be Governor of a state with the fourth largest number of veterans in the country, 1.2 million strong. We are also very proud of the almost 6,000 Ohio-based military men and women currently deployed in the defense of freedom throughout the world.

The state has established seven Family Assistance Centers located throughout the state. I want to thank the VFW and the Auxiliary and all the veterans for supporting those who are serving us overseas and their families here at home in Ohio.

I also salute the VFW for taking strong stands on the issues that matter to veterans, protecting our American Flag by taking a strong stand against conduct leading to its desecration, protecting full funding of veterans' entitlements and benefits preserving "under God" in our Pledge of Allegiance. This is an issue we battle over and won here in Ohio because our state motto is, "With God all things are possible." (Applause)

As you may hear here in Cincinnati, the VFW stands tall and strong. We hope you enjoy this beautiful city and our great state, and don't forget our shopping centers, folks, that sales tax. Thank you all once again for all you do for the veterans to whom we owe so much Thank you and God bless you all. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SET TO GOVERNOR BOB TAFT AND MAYOR CHARLIE LUKEN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my pleasure to introduce Marjorie Friesen, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, presenting Governor Taft and Mayor Luken with commemorative American flag sets. Let's give them a round of applause. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR FRIESEN: "I am your flag. I am the flag of the United States of America. I am called Old Glory. I am called the Stars Spangled Banner.

"I am the rockets red glare, the bombs bursting in air. I am the eminence of patriotism. I am the trenches of France, Belgium, Anzio, Normandy, Omaha Beach, Guadalcanal and Korea.

"I am the jungle of Vietnam, the sands of Desert Storm, the streets of Bosnia and the sandstorms of Iraq.

"I am one nation under God. I am the names of those who never

came back to keep this republic free.

"When you salute me, you are actually saluting them. I am the symbol of America, the home of the proud, the brave and the free."

Governor Taft and Mayor Luken, will you, please, join me up here. On behalf of the 660,000 plus members of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am proud to present to you this flag. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MR. LIN, WEN-SHAN, VICE MINISTER,
VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have to tell you that it is going to be a pleasure for me to introduce this next gentleman. I just recently had the opportunity to traverse Europe and return from Taiwan and the Republic China. The gentleman I am going to introduce, comrades and sisters, is the Vice Minister of Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China. His name is Lin, Wen-Shan. He is a very pleasant gentleman.

One of the things that makes the Veterans of Foreign Wars unique is our close relationship with the other veterans organizations around the world. Perhaps none of these relationships is warmer than our relationship with the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China.

The Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China has been successful in creating employment and development programs that have proven immeasurable benefits to the military veterans of that nation. For more than 20 years, the VFW is proud to have been a part of encouraging those programs.

We are proud to reaffirm our pledge of brotherhood and comradeship with this outstanding group this morning.

Please join me in welcoming the Vice Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, Mr. Lin, Wen-Shan. (Applause)

GREETINGS - MR. LIN, WEN-SHAN, VICE MINISTER, VETERANS
AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

MR. LIN, WEN-SHAN: Thank you. Dear Commander-in-Chief Banas, National President McCune, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: Good morning.

It is a great honor of mine to come to address your National Convention on behalf of all the veterans in my country, the Republic of China. This is my first time attending the VFW Annual Convention, and I am really happy to come to this beautiful city of Cincinnati, in the great state of Ohio, to meet all VAC friends in the VFW.

On behalf of General Kao, Hua-Chu, the new Minister of Veterans Affairs Commission of my country, I want to wish you a successful 2004 National Convention, and all of you a wonderful stay during the week.

Last month, the VAC had the pleasure of receiving Commander-in-Chief Banas, National Adjutant General Senk, and their spouses in Taiwan. However, it is a pity that their stay could not be any longer.

Besides the Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Veterans Home and the National Palace Museum, we have many other installations serving our veterans, and many other scenic spots worth seeing. I hope whoever is

making the next trip there can arrange to have a longer stay so as to get a much better picture of how the Republic of China is serving their veterans and what Taiwan is like.

Many of you think of scooters when you think of Taiwan, but besides scooters, we have many, many others to be seen. Please feel free to contact us. Just one call away, and you will be our guest of honor there.

In the past year, the loss of late President Ronald Reagan and the engagement of American soldiers in Iraq can be the two incidents that concern you Americans the most. President Reagan is a world hero, and so are the American soldiers. Even though some Iraqis from the Saddam Hussein regime were shown molested, it doesn't cut short any of our respect for what the majority of American soldiers have contributed to preserving world peace and freedom.

This past May 20, we in Taiwan had our President re-elected and sworn in, but the people on the island are still under Chinese Communist missile threats. To maintain a balanced military power, our government has proposed a purchase of defensive weapons and equipment from the United States, the total amounted to \$1.8 billion United States dollars, and we need your support to pass resolutions urging the federal government to approve the sale.

Your endeavors in this regard in the past year have been very much appreciated, and we look forward to your continuous assistance, Ever since 1980, when our two organizations entered into a brotherhood agreement, and even the 20 years before then, the VFW and the VAC have maintained a very cooperative and supportive relationship. And now, we also pledge to you that we will try our best to keep it so. Thank you and I wish you all good health. (Applause)

MR. HANS SONG: I have the honor of reading the citation. The citation reads, "Mr. Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of China.

"In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with Cravat, No. 3609, by the Government of the Republic of China, in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations."

This is signed by Mr. Chen, Shui-bian, President, Mr. Yu, Hsi-kun, Premier, and Li, Jieh, Minister of National Defense. (Applause)

The inscription on the plaque states, "Presented to Mr. Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of friendship and cooperation between the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China. Presented by General Kao, Hua-Chu, Minister, Veterans Affairs Commission, the Republic of China, August 16, in the year 2004." (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER - KYLE BAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Over the past 57 years, the Voice of Democracy program has enabled high school students from across the country and overseas to think, write and speak out for freedom and democracy.

Today these students compete for more than \$145,000 in national scholarships, not to mention the more than \$2.5 million in awards and scholarships given annually by Posts, Districts, Departments and their Ladies Auxiliaries.

These VFW scholarships enable many young Americans to continue their education in colleges and universities of their choice.

We are pleased to have with us today the 2004 First Place National Winner in the Voice of Democracy Contest.

He graduated from Nute High School in Milton, New Hampshire, and was sponsored by VFW Post 3893 and its Ladies Auxiliary in Milton when he entered the contest.

Here to present his award-winning essay, "My Commitment to America's Future", the 2004 First Place National Voice of Democracy winner and the recipient of the \$25,000 T. C. Selman Memorial Scholarship, please welcome Kyle Baker. (Applause)

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER - KYLE BAKER

MR. KYLE BAKER: Thank you. Mr. Banas and the esteemed members of the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary: It is my honor to be here today. Thank you for having me. The title of my essay is "My Commitment to America's Future", which is the theme of this year's Voice of Democracy Contest.

It is a bright summer day, and a soft breeze gently whispers through the maple leaves. A little boy is playing alone in the driveway at his grandma's house. Above him, the American flag billows and waves, trying to remove itself from its anchor at the top of the flag pole and drift down in front of him to make its presence known. The boy plays on, not realizing what it took to keep that flag flying high.

A few years later, on the 11th of September, 2001, the same boy, now a bit older, stares at the television in shock and disbelief. He watches as the towers collapse, ending so many lives and bringing anguish to so many families.

The boy's classmates, sitting all around him, reflect in their eyes the desperation, sorrow and helplessness the boy himself feels. He realizes at that moment how precious the freedoms are that he sometimes takes for granted.

He realizes what a privilege it is to live in America, and that the future of his country is now changed forever. He goes home that night wondering what he can do for his country at such a time of loss. What commitment can he possibly make to the future of America after such a tragedy?

Now it is July of 2003 and the boy stands in front of the Vietnam Memorial seeing "The Wall" for the very first time. He is overcome by how many names there are. He walks solemnly and slowly, passing by the countless flowers, letters, photographs, even teddy bears left at the wall by the families of the fallen. He wonders if some of the people walking near

him are searching for one of the names, an uncle maybe, or even a father.

He can picture a young man only a few years older than himself, crouching frightened in thick jungle brush, wondering if he will ever come home. He can picture this young man removing a photograph, wrapped in plastic, from his pocket. It is a photograph of the young man's high school girlfriend, the same girl this man had decided he would ask to marry him as soon as he came home from the war. "Be mine forever," he undoubtedly said as he kissed her goodbye. "Was it their last goodbye" the boy wonders. "Was this young man's name engraved here on the wall somewhere?"

The boy walks on, gazing at panel after panel, feeling sadness, but also immense gratitude with the passing of each and every name. He reads the names, trying to imagine what each man might have looked like. He wonders how many children they might have had, or whether or not they, like the young men he pictured, left a sweetheart behind when they went to fight for their country. So many names. So many faceless reminders of the highest commitment one can fulfill.

The boy keeps moving slowly, when something at the foot of the wall catches his eye. He bends down to look, and there sits a small American flag, resting amongst a bouquet of flowers. Tears well up inside him for a moment, and the boy can think of only one thing he can do to show his appreciation for all those lives reflected by the names in the marble. He places one hand on a panel, closes his eyes, and whispers "thank you."

It is October 22nd, 2003, and that same little boy who used to play in the driveway at his grandma's house underneath a billowing American flag sits in a classroom, wondering how he can write about his commitment to America's future.

He wonders whether or not he should promise to do great things with his life, or whether or not he should tell the story of someone else who had. Yes, that little boy is me.

Upon preparing for this essay, I realized that it would not do to recite the words of our country's great leaders or prominent citizens, regardless of how moving and profound those words may be. I realized that this essay was not about how much research I had done, or how much I knew about the political structure of our nation. No, I realized that this time I needed to convey what I considered to be my commitment to America's future, using my own words, and expressing my own feelings.

Well, here is what my commitment to America's future is. My commitment to America's future is simply to remember America's past.

I will remember our fallen heroes, those brave souls who paid the ultimate price to ensure the safety of future generations. I will remember those that live on, continuing with the task bestowed upon them by the voices of days gone by. I will never lose sight of all that it took to provide me with the freedoms that I once took for granted, and I do not and should not stand alone with my commitment.

When I see the flag in grandma's driveway billowing proud and tall in the same soft breeze, I am reminded of why that flag is still flying. This is my commitment to America's future, and it is something that not only I, but all of us, as Americans must never forget.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO 2004 ALL AMERICAN COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Now, the moment that you have all been waiting for, that is except to see the President. One of the most prestigious awards earned as a Commander in the Veterans of Foreign Wars is to be named a member of the All American Commanders team.

Now, Commander-in-Chief Edward Banas, Sr., Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, who will be doing a CNN interview at this moment, and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller will present All American Commander awards to this very elite group of commanders. We ask the commanders to line up as we must get through this very rapidly.

The 2003-2004 All American Commanders:

ALABAMA

Jerry H. Anger, Post 668
James R. Giles, Post 924
Richard H. Kizziah, Post 6022

ALASKA

Ron F. Eller, Post 7056
John W. Mattison, Post 9785
Department Commander Michael Higdon, Post 1029

ARIZONA

William C. Leech, Post 9972
Department Commander Frank V. Page, Post 7968
Larkin C. Craig, District 1, Post 7061

ARKANSAS

Jack E. Smoot, Post 2278
Billy R. Hogue, Post 3543
Russ P. Harvell, Post 9095
Ronald D. Sharp, District 5 & Post 9577

CALIFORNIA

Eduardo Solis, Post 184
Billy W. Salyards, Post 233
Alexander J. Griffin, Post 4647
James A. Lambert, Post 8547
Donald J. Goodwin, Post 9223
Paul Pastor, Jr., Post 11133
Steven D. Cannizzaro, Post 11294
James W. Rocket, Post 11546
Paul D. Whitzel, Jr., District 17, Post 10125
Michael McKelroy, District 23, Post 9223
Henry H. Wadahara, Department Commander, Post 9970

COLORADO

Donald J. Alberts, Post 4051 & District 5

William C. Frye, Post 4265
Lloyd G. Hovland, Post 5061
Dennis Unrein, Post 5843
Ronald J. Lattin, Department Commander, Post 5061

CONNECTICUT

Richard G. DiFederico, Jr., Post 7330
Rodman Fulton, Department Commander, Post 9965

EUROPE

Joseph Mulligan, Post 27
Thomas Buffington, Post 8862
Robert E. Crawford, Jr., Post 9334
Ronald R. Smith, Post 10436
James M. Hager, Post 10658
Gladwin K. Spohr, Post 10692
Ronald Robinson, District 1, Post 2566
Leo Robbins, District 3, Post 3885
Thomas Buffington, District 5, Post 8862
Dean A. White, Department Commander, Post 27

FLORIDA

George McCarron, Jr., Post 1966
Howard I. Maas, Jr., Post 7909
Robert D. Toliver, Post 8087
Johnny Owens, Post 8182
Emmett G. Buchanan, Post 8207
Gary D. Blake, Post 9986
William C. Bloomquist, District 1, Post 7674
Arnold W. Gruning, District 2, Post 3308
Joseph J. Pacheo, District 11, Post 8058
Ronald M. Stickney, District 15, Post 7115
Glenn W. Jackson, District 18, Post 2093
Chester H. Pyatt, District 21, Post 8087
William H. Griggs, District 21, Post 10167
William J. Gault, Department Commander, Post 8154
Samuel Jenkins, Post 10082
James P. Keith, Post 10097
Roland Witt, Post 10132
James Witham, Post 10141
Roy E. Chatraw, Post 10167

GEORGIA

Louis C. Graziano, II, Post 7778
Dominic J. Listermann, Post 12002
Francis G. Faxon, District 10, Post 668
Edward P. Grealish, Jr., Department Commander, Post 3200

HAWAII

Richard F. Horan, Post 970

Richard J. Haake, Department Commander, Post 3850

IDAHO

James C. Adams, Post 63

Dale W. Smith, Department Commander, Post 3646

ILLINOIS

Robert J. Zeman, Post 1197

Donald R. Cox, Post 2649

Edward C. Collins, Post 3579

Raymond F. Henry, Post 4308

William G. Oerly, Post 4551

John P. Russo, Post 10302

Raymond J. Bachewicz, District 5, Post 2327

Marshall C. Hawk, District 7, Post 454

Thomas E. Brislen, District 19, Post 7446

Terry W. Vance, Department Commander, Post 9789

INDIANA

Paul D. Brewer, Post 972

John L. Baker, Post 1120

Harley Andrews, District 7, Post 6606

William A. Thien, Department Commander, Post 3281

KANSAS

Greg Burkhart, Post 1714

Gary Batt, Post 6240

Francis Stremel, Post 9076

Jefferson D. Lawson, Department Commander, Post 6654

LATIN AMERICA

Edward C. Olds, Department Commander, Post 3835

LOUISIANA

Hubert F. Huggins, Post 1962

Kenneth W. Slaydon, Post 3106

William E. Allen, District 6, Post 3106

Lincoln J. Savoie, Department Commander, Post 5153

MARYLAND

Randy George, Post 6506

John M. Reiman, Post 6694

Billy R. Home, District 14, Post 9743

Raymond M. Shipley, Department Commander, Post 5370

MICHIGAN

Richard A. Redfern, District 8, Post 7581

MINNESOTA

James R. Newcomer, Post 1296

Kenneth J. Peltier, Jr., Post 1350
Leon R. Ulferts, Post 3915
Richard D. Asbury, Post 6316
Dean W. Marksuson, District 2, Post 1210
James Tuorila, District 6, Post 428
Stan Kowalski, District 7, Post 363
Steven P. Van Bergen, Department Commander, Post 6587

MISSISSIPPI

Jerry W. Beard, Department Commander, Post 3806

NEBRASKA

Virgil A. Burris, Jr., Post 9798

NEVADA

Carlos R. Kuykendall, Post 1753
Merlin B. Hollinger, Post 8336
Jerry M. Chamlee, Post 10047
George Dennis, Department Commander, Post 8250

NEW JERSEY

Frank Martino, Jr., Post 303
Antonius H. Neggers, Post 3401
Richard C. Foster, Post 5343
Fred Betteridge, Post 6257
Carey W. Pritchett, Post 6590
Nathaniel Jackson, Post 7923
Bernard Corbin, Post 10065
Christopher J. O'Connor, District 11, Post 7677
Joseph C. Rogers, Department Commander, Post 3401

NEW MEXICO

Roger F. Miller, Post 6917
Vincent B. J. Lawrence, Post 7686
Raul Sanchez, District 3, Post 7686
Jesus R. Gonzalez, Department Commander, Post 4384

NEW YORK

Roland C. Abare, Post 1019
Michael M. McKinney, Post 4915

NORTH CAROLINA

Euell H. Griggs, Post 2972
Robert R. Prouix, Post 10630
Allen W. Daniels, District 7, Post 10225
Elree T. Smith, Department Commander, Post 10999

OHIO

Charles R. Smith, Post 4510

OKLAHOMA

Kenneth C. Pike, Post 4876

Donald R. Fenter, Post 5263

OREGON

Wayne Sharp, Post 81

Michael J. Reynolds, Post 1383

Christopher J. Lanham, Jr., Post 2468

James E. Watson, District 12, Post 2468

Robert L. George, Department Commander, Post 3973

PENNSYLVANIA

Lawrence R. Doyle, Post 928

Robert F. Harris, Jr., Post 1599

Douglas G. Kritz, Post 6166

Edward J. Deissroth, Post 6704

Timothy M. Anderson, Post 6771

Marcario M. Reiko, District 18, Post 1213

William H. Smith, District 21, Post 7374

SOUTH CAROLINA

Francis W. Havlin, Post 8760

SOUTH DAKOTA

John D. Cauley, Post 628

TENNESSEE

Cheryl Hall, Post 11160

Carl T. Jackson, Department Commander, Post 684

TEXAS

Arturo Rios, Post 2035

Phil M. Williams, Post 3892

Earl A. Baumann, Post 4372

Harry C. Munn, Post 6008

Hubert L. Brast, Post 8577

Bobby D. Cook, Post 8790

Guadalupe Lopez, Jr., Post 9192

Cary N. Brawner, District 17, Post (4709)

Richard G. Powell, Jr. District 28 (Post 9078)

Dennis Barber, District 14, (Post 3892)

Ronald C. Hornsby, Department Commander, Post 10428

UTAH

Raymond C. Tracy, Post 4355

Michael A. Parks, Post 9413

Lowell Didas, District 2, Post 4355

Daniel P. Crossley, Department Commander, Post 3586

VERMONT

Michael A. Colby, Post 782

Philip A. Harnois, Department Commander, Post 6674

VIRGINIA

Marvel H. Loy, Post 392

Ronald C. Laney, Post 1503

Harry C. Huff, Post 2216

Harold J. Roesch, II, Post 3219

Chester L. Willis, Post 8252

Robert Owen, Post 8599

Harold Roesch, District 1, Post 3219

Peter M. Snelling, Department Commander, Post 2157

WASHINGTON

Arthur L. Ridge, Post 2995

WEST VIRGINIA

Norm Kraft, Post 1212

James D. Horner, District 5, Post 1212

Samuel P. Baldwin, Department Commander, Post 1212

WISCONSIN

John R. M. Hahn, Post 1318

Rudolph V. Medvidek, Post 1530

William H. Rabuck, District 2, Post 1318

Calvin F. Wells, District 11, Post 8021

Allen F. Kochenderfer, Department Commander, Post 10406

WYOMING

Earl D. Sellers, Jr., Department Commander, Post 4343

Let's give them a round of applause. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD, RECOGNITION OF THE 2003-2004 MILITARY INITIATIVE PROGRAM RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD, NATIONAL CONVENTION RECRUITER AWARD

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The winner of the Military Initiative Program Recruiter of the Year Award, for recruiting the most new active duty, Reserve or National Guard members, is John R. Lewis, a member of Royal Gorge Post No. 4061, located in Canon City, Colorado.

The citation being presented to him reads: "MIP Recruiter of the Year Award presented to John R. Lewis in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Military Initiative Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring efforts during the 2003-2004 membership year contributed immeasurably by personally signing up over 1,500 new MIP members.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Courage and Conviction' team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 16th day of August, 2004." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Banas and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE JOHN R. LEWIS

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS: I would like to think of the times in my life that I look forward to and backward at as the milestones of my life. Through the past years, in my association with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I have had many milestones, and this is one that I will look back on for a good many years. I want to thank all of you for what you do out there. I will wear the hat, but you are the people that earned it for me. Thank you. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas wanted to stress the importance of recruiting as well as rewarding those individuals who worked so hard to recruit new, reinstated and MIP members into the VFW.

The winner of the National Recruiter of the Year Award for 2003-2004 for recruiting the most new and reinstated members, excluding MIP, is Bruce A. Withers, member of Kitzingen Post No. 10436, Kitzingen, Germany.

The citation being presented reads, "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, National Recruiter of the Year Award presented to Bruce A. Withers in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiative and untiring effort during the 2003-2004 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the National membership goal of recruiting 180,000 new or reinstated members.

"You are commended for your professional achievements and recognized for your dedication to the goals of the 'Courage and Conviction' team.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 16th day of August, 2004." This has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS

COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS: Comrades, I will make this short, because you probably will want to take a break before President Bush gets here. I would like to thank the comrades of the Department of Europe, who supported me, not only this year but last year. I will let you know this is two years in a row I have been the National Recruiter.

I also want to thank all the comrades and sisters, Ladies Auxiliary members in the audience here for their support, because back in 1991, when I first came to conventions of this nature, I really got the feel for what this organization was all about.

I firmly believe that we will ask every eligible veterans to join this great organization because it does so much. I will tell you that our Commander-in-Chief, Edward S. Banas, Sr., recently came to Germany and

presented a \$25,000 check to the Landstuhl Medical Center to assist those soldiers that are being medivaced out of Iraq through Germany. Commander-in-Chief, I want to thank you for that effort.

The last thing you need to know is that to get this type of award, it really requires the support of one individual that I love very much, and that is my wife. Honey, if you would stand up, I would like you to be recognized. Where is my wife? She is right there. (Applause) Thank you all very much and please say a prayer for our soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines that are deployed all over the world. God bless them and bring them home safely. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I think in fairness to everyone we now await the arrival of the President of the United States. I am going to introduce you to the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Jim Mueller, and ask him to speak to the audience for a few minutes, and then he will introduce the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, John Furgess, who will replace me in 102 hours, and then we will have our main speaker, the President of the United States. Please stay with us. I give you Jim Mueller. (Applause)

REMARKS - JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, to our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, to all the National Officers, to the Past Commanders-in-Chief, those that are here, the Ladies Auxiliary, Evelyn McCune, the President, to all of you, my good comrades:

It is a pleasure to be here this morning, too, to welcome you to the 105th VFW National Convention. I would, first, like to take this opportunity to say to Ed, our Commander-in-Chief, a tremendous year. It was an honor to serve with you and to be on the Team VFW. Ed's leadership, his dedication has made us all proud of this organization.

To the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John, I will never forget our trip to Vietnam and to the homecoming at Chu Lai. It will always be in my heart. I first would like to offer my sincere congratulations to all of the All American Commanders, the Departments, who are all 100 percent.

I want to thank the different Departments that I have visited this past year for your kindness, your hospitality that has been shown to me. We have made tremendous strides this past year. We have become by our Veterans Service Program a choice for American veterans to use. Our legislative program, we have been making tremendous strides in that. If you were in Washington, D.C., at the Legislative Conference this past year, the tremendous testimony given by Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas has made us all proud. We need to keep those efforts up, stress for full funding, for the VA mandatory funding of the VA budget, more funding for our military to keep up the modernization and readiness of our military, and we must never forget about our POW/MIAs.

I look forward next year with your support to be traveling again to the different Departments, and we must keep up the good work of the organization. Thank you for allowing me to serve as the National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. God bless all of you and God bless our military. (Applause)

It is my pleasure to introduce the next comrade who in three or four days will lead this organization. I am pleased, and help me welcome Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. (Applause)

REMARKS - SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you very much, Senior Vice to be soon, Jim Mueller, from the great Department of Missouri. Where is Missouri? It is right here. (Applause)

Comrades and sisters, welcome. I don't think there are things in life more exciting than the Joint Opening Session of a National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. What do you think about that, the 105th? (Applause)

Ed said, "John, stretch it a little bit," and you all probably know I can do that. I want to pause just briefly to introduce a couple of people. You have met her, she has traveled with me a lot. She has been my wonderful wife for 33 years. I am going to ask her to stand. Alma, please stand and be recognized. (Applause)

Three people up here on the tier, you have not met before, Alma's sister, Susan, from Clarksville, Tennessee, the home of the 101st Airborne Division, Susan Moore. The two young men who are very dear in my life, who are here, who just took their first airplane ride, who are attending their first ever meeting with a group this large, my two oldest grandchildren, members of the wonderful Boy Scouts of America in Lake Wiley, South Carolina, Brandon Brown and his brother, Andrew Brown. Please stand. (Applause)

Comrades and ladies, I would like to share just a moment with another wonderful young lady who also in just a couple of days is going to be elected and installed as the National President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary. Very few people in our country have that wonderful opportunity, and she is about to experience all those wonderful things, challenges, decisions, wonderful travel all across the world, literally.

Please make welcome from this great state of Ohio, JoAnne Ott. (Applause) And how about a hand for Steve Ott, the Widower of the Year next year. (Applause)

The Commander-in-Chief is going to get a hook in just a minute to get me away from this microphone, but until he does that, let me share just briefly a wonderful experience that I had last Veterans Day when many of you were involved in your own hometown, in your own Districts with Veterans Day activities in these 54 wonderful Departments, these 50 states and the Department of Europe, the Department of the Pacific, the Department of Latin America/Caribbean, and the Department of the District of Columbia.

Most everyone in this room in one way or another was involved in Veterans Day activities 2003. Leo Andrew and I from our Washington office flew out to Bosnia and Kosovo, and on Veterans Day morning, November 11th, 2003, I visited with those wonderful youngsters at Camp Bonstell. I noticed some of the audience this morning have been there.

Either one of our Past Commanders-in-Chief may have visited there, or one of our younger members in the audience may have served their

country there in uniform. But it was my first time. I was surprised to learn that all those military operations are now under the control of the Minnesota Army National Guard. Where is Minnesota this morning? What a wonderful group of young men and women that are there.

They had a formation in my honor and I was there to honor them, bright, energetic, dedicated men and women from the National Guard serving there. Then we went over to Kosovo not far away, when they had what they called a Town Hall Meeting, when again the members of the National Guard from Pennsylvania, and where is Pennsylvania, our largest Department, those bright, young, energetic, dedicated men and women asked me questions about the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

While we stood in this building answering the questions, the First Sergeant of the unit stood up and said, "Chief, would you mind if I tell these people why they should be members of the VFW?" I said, "First Sergeant, be my guest." He reached in his billfold and pulled out his Life Member card. You could have heard a pin drop in that audience. It was their First Sergeant speaking. He said, "I earned this. I didn't buy this." And he reached in his other pocket and he pulled out his country club membership card. He said, "Now, I wrote them a check for this one, but I earned this one. Every person here," he says, "should be not only a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars but a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars." And the way Pennsylvania has done so well in membership, they probably are all Life Members this morning.

We are going to hear in just a few moments from the Commander-in-Chief of the United States, the President, with a major announcement about troop restructuring, speaking to this audience. Most of our members, as you now know, are Vietnam veterans. I have an opportunity one more time to ask all Vietnam veterans to please stand as a group and be recognized. That is all Vietnam veterans. Look at that, comrades. Look around. Thank you for your service. (Applause)

There are those young men and women in Bosnia, and those young men and women in Afghanistan will be seated where you are seated this morning, just as dedicated as you are, just as interested as you are in veterans activities. They are our future.

Later in the week, the Commander-in-Chief will honor another group of veterans who have been our backbone for 50 to 60 years, those veterans of World War II, who once filled all of these chairs. Will you-all please stand and be recognized. That is the World War II veterans. (Applause)

What a proud past we have for 105 years. Please be with us Friday morning when I tell you the story about Teddy Roosevelt and those Rough Riders going up San Juan Hill 105 years ago. What a history. But, you know, I am not going to leave out this morning those group of veterans that served their country so well for three years in Korea. Korean War veterans, let's stand and be recognized. (Applause)

The Chief said, "Wrap it up, John." How about Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom? Please stand and be recognized. (Applause) That is great. Thank you, comrades, for who you are. Thank you, ladies. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and sisters, I have the privilege to announce to you that Air Force One has just landed. We have a few minutes to go before the President of the United

States is here. I want to thank publicly the entire staff in both the Kansas City and Washington offices, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and most obviously the President of the Auxiliary, Evelyn McCune, for a very, very good partnership this year.

I would like to take a point of privilege as the Commander-in-Chief and introduce my wife once again for this year, Sandra. (Applause) This should be a very, very exciting time. I know that we will all exercise true VFW and Auxiliary discretion.

We will have a very, very pleasant morning here, and just to absorb one or two minutes, I want to tell you, as I have said before, as I have traversed the highways and byways of America, if anyone ever asks you why we, the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary exist, it is, my friends, because the price of freedom is so expensive.

For those that don't understand the price of freedom, then they should come to the Army Walter Reed Hospital or Landstuhl a few weeks ago in Germany and meet a GI that has lost his limb, but not his dignity. If that is not enough reason for you to belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary, I am sure I could introduce you to a mom and dad who were told their son or daughter will never, ever come home.

If we still need more reasons why we have to exist and take care of our veterans and the young men and women that serve us, then I know we can go to Ft. Campbell and find the young soldier's wife who was told that her husband would be disabled forever, not attaining the age to allow him to vote in an election.

So, we have a mission, we have a place in our community and in the United States of America, and as the leading veterans service organization obviously in the world, you should be very, very proud of what the veterans who came before us have put in place as traditions and virtues.

Values are in the Sears, Roebuck catalog, virtues are in your heart. I know you will never let them go, or dilute what 104 conventions have done prior to this one. So I am going to leave the podium. Don't go anywhere. I am sure that within five minutes the Executive Director of the Washington office will come out and greet you, and I can tell you that that motorcade is more than likely traversing the highways and byways of Cincinnati coming here to say hello to you. Thank you for being with us this morning and don't go anywhere.

...Recess. ...

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my honor to introduce our next guest speaker. He has been a fighter pilot in the Texas Air National Guard, a businessman, and a major league baseball team owner. He was the first person in history to be elected to two consecutive four-year terms as the Governor of Texas.

And since one very terrible day in September of 2001, he has led this country with courage and conviction in a war on terrorism, a war we

must win for the sake of our country and the freedom of loving people everywhere.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary, I present to you the 43rd President of the United States of America, President George W. Bush.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome and thanks for inviting me for your 105th National Convention. I am proud to be here. One of the great honors of being Commander-in-Chief is meeting the courageous men and women who stand watch for freedom. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to look them in the eye and say on behalf of our country thank you for your service (Applause)

The same is true of each of you here today. When the enemies of freedom were on the march and our country and the world needed brave Americans to take up arms and stop their advance, you stepped forward to serve, and today I am proud to stand before you as Commander-in-Chief, look you in the eye and say, "America thanks you for your service." (Applause)

I want to thank Ed Banas for his service in being an effective Commander of the VFW. I appreciate the job he has done, and I want to thank his wife, Sandra, for standing by his side during this important time for the VFW. Ed, thank you, sir, for your service. (Applause)

I also thank my friend Bob Wallace, the Executive Director of the VFW. I want to thank Governor Bob Taft for joining us today from the State of Ohio, my friend Tony Principi, I will say something about him here in a minute, and Congressman Rob Portman, Congressman from Ohio is here with us, as well. I am honored that these elected officials, and in Principi's case appointed official, are with us today.

I want to thank Jim Furgess, the incoming VFW National Commander-in-Chief and Alma. I want to thank Evelyn McCune, the VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President, and her husband, Don. I want to thank JoAnne Ott. I want to thank the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary members for letting me come and address you. (Applause)

In the audience today are two people I have gotten to know during a very traumatic period during their lives, Carolyn and Keith Maupin are with us today. They are from this part of the world. Their son Matt has been missing in action for four months in Iraq. I have vowed to them we will do everything we can to find their loved one, Matt. I appreciate their courage. I continue to send my prayers to these two fine Americans during these difficult times for them. May God bless you, Keith and Carolyn. (Applause)

The Veterans of Foreign Wars has always stood up for our nation and those who wear the uniform. Since your founding in 1899, the members of the VFW have been serving the men and women who served America. I appreciate your dedication. The VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary are volunteering by transporting sick and disabled vets to and from their medical appointments. You are showing great compassion.

You are supporting the men and women who serve today. Some

1,500 VFW Posts have adopted military units deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and other distant theaters. You have distributed more than 3.5 million pre-paid calling cards to our deployed forces. You have sent thousands of care packages to our troops in the fields. You have helped the families back home with groceries and home repairs, and other necessities. America respects our military and their families. I thank you for showing that respect every day. (Applause)

All our nation's veterans have made serving America the highest priority of their lives and serving our veterans is one of the highest priorities of my administration. To make sure my administration fulfills the commitments I have made to America's veterans, I selected one of the finest men ever to serve as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a combat-decorated Vietnam veteran, Secretary Tony Principi. (Applause)

Thanks in large part to Tony's leadership, my administration has a solid record of accomplishment for our veterans. When my 2005 budget is approved by Congress, we will have increased overall funding for our nation's veterans by almost \$20 billion, or 40 percent, since 2001. (Applause)

We have increased funding for our veterans more in four years than the previous administration did in eight years. To provide health care to veterans, we have increased VA medical care funding by 41 percent over the past four years. We are bringing care to more veterans more quickly.

Since 2001, we have enrolled 2.5 million more veterans in health-care services. We have increased out-patient visits from 44 million to 54 million. We have increased the number of prescriptions filled from 98 million to 116 million. We are getting the job done. (Applause) We have reduced the large backlog of disability claims by about a third. We will reduce it even further. We have cut the average time it takes to process disability claims by 70 days. We have focused resources on the veterans who need it most, those with service-related disabilities and low incomes and special needs.

We have established a new scheduling system to make certain that veterans seeking care for a service-connected condition are first in line. For more than a century federal law prohibited disabled veterans from receiving both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. Combat-injured and severely disabled veterans deserve better. I was proud to be the first President in over 100 years to sign concurrent receipt legislation. (Applause) We are getting the job done in Washington, D.C.

My administration has launched a \$35 million program to provide housing and health care and other support services to homeless veterans. No veteran who served in the blazing heat or bitter cold of foreign lands should have to live without shelter, exposed to the elements in the very country whose freedom they fought for. (Applause)

We are modernizing the VA health centers and building new ones, especially in the South and West where increasing numbers of our veterans live. Since 2001, we have opened 194 new community-based clinics nationwide. And through the CARES initiative, we are providing \$1 billion -- and have requested another half billion for next year -- to modernize VA facilities, and to provide better care for veterans in areas where the need is growing, including here in Ohio. (Applause)

Our VA Hospitals are, on average, 50 years old. That's why we are

modernizing our facilities to make sure our veterans have 21st Century health care. For example, here in Ohio, we are building one of the largest new VA Clinics in America in Columbus, Ohio. We are spending more than \$100 million to consolidate two VA Hospitals in Cleveland into a single 21st Century facility. When it comes to providing first-class care for our nation's veterans, we are getting the job done. (Applause)

Our nation's debt extends not just to the veterans who served, but to the families who supported them in war and depend on them today. Last December, I signed the Veterans Benefits Act, authorizing \$1 billion in new and expanded benefits for disabled veterans, and surviving spouses and their children.

America's veterans have defended America in hours of need, and to honor the veterans from the Second World War for their service to our country, the World War II Memorial now stands on the Washington Mall. I thank you for your efforts and your hard work to get this Memorial built, and we honor all of those here today who fought to defend freedom in the Second World War. (Applause)

Like the Second World War, the war we face today began with a ruthless, surprise attack on America. The world changed on that September morning and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of al-Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terrorist cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy; Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Afghanistan is now a place where many young girls go to school for the first time. America and the world are safer.

Before September 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies sent a clear and strong message, the leader of Libya has abandoned its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. America and the world are safer.

Before September 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He had harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors.

He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of instability in the world's most volatile region. He was a threat. One of the lessons of September 11th, a lesson this nation must never forget, is that we must deal with threats before they fully materialize. (Applause)

I remembered what Saddam Hussein was like. I looked at the intelligence. I called upon Congress to remember its history and look at the intelligence. I thought it was important to bring Congress, get their opinion on the subject of Saddam Hussein.

So members of both political parties, including my opponent, looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion that I came to: Saddam Hussein was a threat. I went to the United Nations; the U.N. Security Council looked at the intelligence and came to the same conclusion, Saddam Hussein was a threat.

As a matter of fact, they passed a resolution 15 to nothing which

said to Saddam: Disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. As he had for the past 12 years, he refused to comply. He ignored the demands of the free world. He systematically deceived the weapons inspectors.

So I had a choice to make, either forget the lessons of September 11th and trust a madman, or take action to defend America. Given that choice, I will defend our country every time. (Applause)

Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we thought we would find, Saddam Hussein had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to our enemy, to the terrorists.

It is not a risk after September 11th that we could afford to take. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer because Saddam Hussein sits in a prison cell. We have more hard work to do. I will continue to work with friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere.

See, you can't talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them and defeat them in foreign lands, so we do not have to face them here at home. America will continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity.

We have put together a strong coalition to help us pursue the terrorists and spread the peace. There are over 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. I appreciate the sacrifices of the mothers and fathers of those countries, to have their sons and daughters stand with our troops to spread freedom and peace.

I will continue to build on those alliances and work with our friends for the cause of security and peace, but I will never turn over America's national security decisions to leaders of other countries. (Applause) We will keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will help them become peaceful and democratic societies.

These two nations are now governed by strong leaders, they are on the path to elections. We set a clear goal, and Iraq and Afghanistan will be peaceful and democratic countries that are allies in the war on terror. We will meet that goal by helping secure their countries, to allowing a peaceful political process to develop, and by training Afghan and Iraqi forces so they can make the hard decisions, so they can defend their country against those who are preventing the spread of freedom. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary. (Applause)

It is important we send the right signals when we speak here in America. The other day, my opponent said if he is elected, the number of troops in Iraq will be significantly reduced within six months. I think it sends the wrong message -- it sends a wrong signal to the enemy.

They could easily wait six months and one day. It sends the wrong message to our troops, that completing the mission may not be necessary. It sends a wrong message to the Iraqi people who wonder whether or not America means what it says. Our friends and allies must know that when America speaks, we mean what we say. We will stay until the job is completed. (Applause)

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. A free and peaceful Iraq and a free and peaceful Afghanistan will be powerful, and examples in a neighborhood that is desperate for freedom.

You see, by serving the ideal of liberty, we are bringing the hope to others, and that makes America more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we are spreading the peace. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries are peaceful countries. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we are serving the deepest ideals of America. We believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world, freedom is the almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world. (Applause)

These are crucial times. We have an historic opportunity to win the war on terror by spreading freedom and peace. Our commitments are being kept by the men and women of our military. I have had the privilege of traveling to bases around our country and around the world.

I have seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands. Those who wear our uniform deserve the full support of our government. For almost four years, my administration has strengthened our military.

We have enacted the largest increases in defense spending since Ronald Reagan served as the Commander-in-Chief. We have increased military pay by 21 percent. We have provided better housing and better training and better maintenance. And last September, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq, I wanted to make sure they had the very best, so I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions.

The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel and spare parts. The VFW strongly supported my request. I thank you for standing up for our troops. Your work on Capitol Hill paid off; after all the funding received strong bipartisan support -- so strong that in the United States Senate, only 12 members voted against the funding, two of whom were my opponent and his running mate. (Applause) When pressed, he explained his vote, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion before I voted against it." He went on to say he is proud of the vote and the whole thing is a complicated matter. There is nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat. (Applause) We have more work to do to defend freedom and protect our country. We will ensure that our forces are well-prepared and well-positioned to meet the threats of the future.

Our armed forces have changed a lot. They are more agile and more lethal, they are better able to strike anywhere in the world over great distances on short notice. Yet for decades, America's armed forces abroad have essentially remained where the wars of the last century ended, in Europe and in Asia.

America's current force posture was designed, for example, to protect us and our allies from Soviet aggression; the threat no longer exists. More than three years ago, we lost a comprehensive review of America's global force posture, the numbers, types, locations and capabilities of U.S. forces around the world.

We have consulted closely with our allies and with Congress; we

have examined the challenges posed by today's threats and emerging threats. And so, today I announce a new plan for deploying America's armed forces. Over the coming decade, we will deploy a more agile and more flexible force, which means that more of our troops will be stationed and deployed from here at home.

We will move some of our troops and capability to new locations, so they can surge quickly to deal with unexpected threats. We will take advantage of 21st Century military technology to rapidly deploy increased combat power. The new plan will help us fight and win these wars of the 21st Century.

It will strengthen our alliances around the world, while we build new partnerships to better preserve the peace. It will reduce the stress on our troops and our military families. Although we will still have a significant presence overseas, under the plan I am announcing today, over the next ten years, we will bring home about 60,000 to 70,000 uniformed personnel and about 100,000 members and civilian employees, family members and civilian employees.

You see, our service members will have more time on the home front, and more predictability and fewer moves over a career. Our military spouses will have fewer job changes, greater stability, more time for their kids and to spend time with their families at home.

The taxpayers will save money, as we configure our military to meet the threats of the 21st Century. There will be savings as we consolidate and close bases and facilities overseas no longer needed to face the threats of our time and defend the peace.

The world has changed a great deal, and our posture must change with it, for the sake of our military families, for the sake of our taxpayers, and so we can be more effective at projecting our strength and spreading freedom and peace. (Applause)

Today, our troops have the most advanced technologies at their disposal -- weapons are more lethal, more precise than were available for you.

Our troops are more mobile, they can communicate better. Yet, their success in the wars we fight is being made possible by the same thing that made your success possible: Personal courage, love of country, dedication to duty. As our troops fight today in Baghdad, Najaf, and the Hindu Kush mountains, and elsewhere, I know America's veterans feel a special pride in them.

They are carrying on your legacy of sacrifice and service. They are determined to see the mission through. This country stands with them. I want to thank you for the example you have set for our men and women in uniform. I want to thank you for your idealism, for your dedication to God and our country. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you all very much.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: That concludes our program for today. We hope that you have enjoyed it and we will see you back here

tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:55 a.m.)

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS BANQUET
AUGUST 16, 2004

(The Distinguished Guests Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, was called to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m., by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess.)

CALL TO ORDER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 105th VFW National Convention Banquet.

I am John Furgess, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the VFW and your Master of Ceremonies for the evening. I hope all of you have enjoyed your wonderful day here in the beautiful City of Cincinnati. (Applause)

We are very pleased to have you with us this evening, especially the VFW National and Department leaders, and our VFW Ladies Auxiliary leadership and members. We are honored by your presence and also that of our distinguished guests, and I will introduce them to you following the dinner.

Please stand for our Invocation and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

I will now invite National Chaplain David Norris to lead us in the Invocation.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN NORRIS: Let us pray. God, as we come to the table tonight we are tired. Some of us have had a hard day. We know you love us as we are. Help us to love each other as we are.

Help us to make this meal time a time that will help us. Help us not to argue or say unkind things. Help us rather to know what to say to each other that will encourage and lift our hearts.

If one of us should erupt in anger, help us to understand that, too, and forgive. Be with us, then, at our meal, and refresh us, body, mind and spirit.

Thank you, God, for this food which is ours through your goodness. Bless the persons who worked to provide it and the persons who prepared it. Keep us mindful of all blessings that come into our lives from you and help us in turn to be blessings to others. Amen.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Chaplain. Comrades and sisters, please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, the Pledge of Allegiance was given at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Please be seated and enjoy the meal.

(Whereupon, the meal was served at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Good evening, once again, ladies and gentlemen. I would very much appreciate having your attention as we begin our program this evening. It is now my pleasure to introduce our head table guests, and I would like to begin at the lower tier. I would like to ask our guests to please stand when their name is called and to remain standing until the entire lower tier is introduced. And, audience, here is the drill.

Please hold your applause until the entire lower tier has been introduced. Each one of them is worthy of a standing ovation. Let's recognize the entire lower tier. At the end, to my left, the Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Matt Mihelcic of Illinois.

The National Secretary-Treasurer of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Celia Davis and her husband, Ken, from Missouri.

The Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, JPAC in Hawaii, Brigadier General Montague Winfield

I am pleased to present the Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, from Memphis, Tennessee, and a former 20-year County Veterans Service Officer, John Keys.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Prisoners of War, Missing Personnel Affairs, the Honorable Jerry Jennings.

Our next guest is the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Designate of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Gary Kurpius, and his guest, Nancy Ramsey, from Alaska. We are certainly honored to have with us tonight the Deputy Vice Minister of Veterans Affairs from the Republic of China, Mr. Lin, Wen-shan.

We are pleased to welcome the Director, Overseas Liaison, Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China, Mr. Hans Song.

We are especially honored to welcome the Executive Director of the American Battles Monument Commission, Colonel Ken Pond, U.S. Army Retired.

Next is the Inspector General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Joe Gallant, and his guest, Ginger Haney from Maine.

The National Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Dr. C. O. "Doc" Bohlman, and his wife, Juanita, the Ladies National Soloist, from Oklahoma.

It is my pleasure to present the hard-working National Recruiter of the Year for 2003-2004, Bruce Withers, from Germany, and his wife, Honey.

Let's recognize our lower tier. Thank you. (Applause)

I would like to now begin with the introductions of our guests at the upper tier. Once again, please remain standing until the entire tier is introduced. Please hold your applause until the entire tier is recognized.

The National Chaplain, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United

States, Chaplain David Norris from California. I am pleased to welcome the Commanding General of the 337th Theater Support Command, New Orleans, Louisiana, Major General David Kratzer.

The National Junior Vice President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Sandy Germany from Alabama. The Adjutant General, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, John Senk, Jr., and his wife, Madelyn.

National Senior Vice President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, JoAnne Ott, and her husband, Steve, from Ohio.

The Chairman of the 105th VFW National Convention and Past VFW Commander-in-Chief, Dr. John Wasyluk, and his wife, Jean, from Ohio.

I am most pleased and proud to present my wife, Alma Furgess, from Tennessee. Let's give this side a warm VFW welcome. (Applause) Thank you. Please be seated.

Now, for those seated to my far right, the Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Joe Ridgley, from Missouri.

Our next guest needs no introduction and will receive special recognition tomorrow during our Business Session, popular singer, song writer, Tony Orlando. (Applause)

I am especially pleased to introduce the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Evelyn McCune, and her husband, Don, from Kansas.

The Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Jim Mueller, and his wife, Pat, from Missouri.

We are indeed honored to have with us tonight a member of the President's Cabinet, who is dedicated to serving our nation's veterans. It is my pleasure to present the Secretary of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Tony Principi.

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce the lovely and gracious wife of our Commander-in-Chief, Sandra Banas, from Connecticut.

I will skip our next two guests. Let's give the standing guests a round of applause. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EDWARD BANAS, SR.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served America's veterans for many years. It has been a privilege for me to be a part of his "Courage and Conviction" leadership team during this past year. He has been a source of pride and inspiration to all of us. I know that many others share in our gratitude for a man who has done so much for so many literally around the world.

Ed is a man who has dedicated his entire adult life to the service of others. He is a staunch veterans advocate, a tireless worker, and is passionate in all of his beliefs.

He was elected to the position of the VFW Commander-in-Chief at the 104th National Convention in San Antonio, Texas, on August 29, 2003.

Ed served in the United States Army from 1965-'68. In Vietnam, he was assigned to the 18th MPBDE Brigade. He was awarded the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Medal and the

Army Good Conduct Medal.

In 1967, while still in the military, Ed joined VFW Post 10004 in Jewett City, Connecticut, and is currently a Life Member there. He served as Department Commander of Connecticut in 1993-'94.

On the National level, Ed has served on several Committees, including Safety, Bylaws, Budget and Finance, and as Chairman for both the Americanism and Legislative Committees. He served a two-year term, 1994-1996, as a member of the National Council of Administration representing the Departments of Massachusetts and Connecticut. In 1998-1999, he served as the Eastern States Conference Chairman.

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and sisters, please join with me in proudly welcoming our Commander-in-Chief, Ed Banas. (Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much. I hope that each and every one of you are enjoying their week so far. I have only a few points of privilege to share with you before we continue with the program. I know this evening has been very, very special, as was the earlier part of the day.

However, everything changes in our lives. You know one year ago I stood before you as your newly-elected Commander-in-Chief. At that time I was fully aware of my own limitations and had no intention of competing with any of my great predecessors in office.

I expressed complete confidence that the administration then starting and now soon ending would fully measure up to the high standards of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I have to tell you that I based that confidence upon the assistance I was certain would come from former Commanders-in-Chief, the officers, the Committees, and above all from you, the membership.

My confidence has been fully justified, comrades. Thanks to all, the year has recorded a steady rise in the power and prestige of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Now, as I come to the end of that road, I can say the friendly cooperation of the warm comradeship of all of you have dispelled any difficulties I might have had.

You have answered promptly and wholeheartedly every call I made upon you for service. My heartfelt thanks to you, my fellow comrades, as I soon step back in the ranks to serve under one John Furgess, whose record of accomplishments ensures us that under his leadership our beloved Veterans of Foreign Wars will go forward only to greater achievements.

I thank you once again for allowing me to be your Commander-in-Chief this year. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In her acceptance speech, she introduced her theme, "Kindness,

Love and Peace." Since the organization was founded in 1914, the members have conducted programs demonstrating their love for veterans, kindness toward those in need, and the desire for peace so that no more of America's sons and daughters would have to go to war.

During her term she has demonstrated exceptional strength and commitment as she led the Ladies Auxiliary to new heights of patriotism and service.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity and the chance to work with her during her year as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary. It has been an experience both of us will always remember.

Please join with me in welcoming from the great state of Kansas, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Evelyn McCune.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REMARKS BY LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT McCUNE: Thank you, and good evening. To Commander-in-Chief Banas, National VFW and Ladies Auxiliary Officers, comrades, sisters and special guests:

It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to come together this special evening. Tonight we celebrate a year of achievement for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. I want to take a moment to thank all of you once again for coming through when America needed you.

Members from Auxiliaries and Posts around the country have been sending care packages and pre-paid long-distance phone cards to those serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and wherever else around this world. Your response to help those deployed continues to make me extremely proud that I am a member of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

Now, for 90 years, the members of the Ladies Auxiliary have tried to be good citizens by being there to help, whether it is sponsoring cancer research, writing letters to our Congressmen, donating blankets for the homeless, or cheering hospitalized veterans. All of us are proud to carry on that wonderful tradition of service.

I want to thank all of our special guests here tonight for helping us celebrate an outstanding year of service to American veterans, their families and our country. I hope you-all enjoy tonight's festivities, and my wish for each and every one of you is that you have kindness, love and peace. God bless each one of you. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2004 DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Colin Powell was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate as the 65th Secretary of State on January 20, 2001.

Secretary Powell was a professional soldier for 35 years, during

which time he held myriad command and staff positions and rose to the rank of Four-Star General. His last assignment was as the twelfth Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in the Department of Defense.

His civilian awards include two Presidential Medals of Freedom, the President's Citizens Medal, the Congressional Gold Medal, the Secretary of State Distinguished Service Medal, and the Secretary of Energy Distinguished Service Medal.

Tonight, comrades and sisters, ladies and guests, we honor Secretary Powell with the Veterans of Foreign Wars Dwight D. Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award given in recognition of an individual's contributions to the cause of American security, unity and world peace.

Please join me in welcoming the Secretary of State, Colin Powell.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Citation being presented by the Commander-in-Chief reads, "Dwight David Eisenhower Award, Distinguished Service Medal and Citation awarded to Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of his innumerable contributions to our nation through many years of distinguished military and public service. Secretary Powell's steadfast resolve in the wake of the events of September 11th, 2001, inspired the nation. With an innate understanding of the realities and difficulties of the coupling of military force with diplomatic skill, he has served the nation as few others have. This service, in conjunction with his firm belief that our main purpose is to extend democracy, prosperity and freedom to every corner of the world, stands as a brilliant example to all Americans, and is truly in keeping with the ideals and traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 16th day of August, 2004. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE AND PRINCIPAL ADDRESS -
SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL

SECRETARY OF STATE POWELL: Thank you.

FROM THE AUDIENCE: Hoo-ah!

SECRETARY OF STATE POWELL: Hoo-ah! Where are you? (Laughter) I haven't forgotten. Let me just tell you what, it is good to be home, it is good to be with family again. I think I have spoken to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America at least six or seven times over the last ten or twelve years, and to be with you is always a source of inspiration.

I will leave here this evening as I have left all previous occasions with you, fired up, knowing what America really is all about, knowing what service is all about, knowing what patriotism is all about. (Applause)

I thank you for the generous introduction I have received and, Ed, let me extend to you and Sandra my congratulations, along with those of all

of your buddies here, for the great service that you have rendered to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, not just for the past year or three years, but for all the years that you have stood up for America's veterans. Thank you, Ed. (Applause)

I offer my best wishes to John Furgess as he takes over, and I wish he and Alma all the best of success in the year ahead, and I know that they will do an absolutely brilliant job. And I am so pleased to once again be with my friend Evelyn, Evelyn McCune. She and Don have served VFW and the nation so well.

And I remember her coming to my office and I remember her talking about her slogan of "Kindness, Love and Peace", and I offer her my congratulations, and also to your incoming President of the Ladies Auxiliary, JoAnne Ott. And it is a great pleasure to be with one of the best friends the veterans of America have ever had, the Honorable Mr. Principi. My man, Tony Principi. (Applause)

And speaking of great Tony's, my man Tony Orlando has been serving this nation and our veterans for so many years, and I can't tell you what a thrill it was for me to walk in here this evening and see my friend, Tony. Thank you, Tony, again.

You know, this great beloved country of ours has given me the opportunity and the privilege to serve in so many ways, to hold so many titles, to be Secretary of State, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Advisor. But I will always be proudest of one title. I am a "Veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States of America." (Applause)

I am deeply grateful to the VFW for honoring me with the Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award. I am glad to have this chance to come to your National Convention here in the great State of Ohio and the great City of Cincinnati to say thank you, not just for the award, but for the VFW's 105 years of devoted service to our men and women in uniform and to our country.

Decade after decade, the VFW and your wonderful Ladies Auxiliary have kept the faith with our troops and with their families. You have advocated for them. You have advocated for a strong defense when others did not. You have been there through thick and thin, not just when it has been popular and easy to do so.

I know, I served many years in the Army. I was there in the post-Vietnam period when things were very tough for us. I was there in the early Reagan years when things got better. But it made no difference whether things were better or things were worse. The one thing we could always count on was the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. (Applause)

I have seen you in action. I have seen what you do, and I thank you. And, you know, there is so much more that you do that isn't noticed often enough. After I retired from the Army and spent a little time writing a little book and doing some other things, I then got involved with youth programs.

I looked around this great nation of ours, with all of its wealth and all of its success, and I found young people that were in need, so I became the founding chairman of an organization called America's Promise, the Alliance for Youth, where we reached out to take care of young people who

were in need, young people who wondered if the American dream was there for them.

And we started to create alliances with organizations around America. And one of the first organizations to stand up and say, "We want to be a part of this," was the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. So I thank you for that, and I thank you not only for what you did for America's Promise, but for all the youth programs that you support to prepare the next generation of America's leaders. You are not just sitting around telling war stories, you are working for the future of this great country. Veterans never stop serving. (Applause)

It is a special honor for me to receive an award named after General Dwight David Eisenhower, an icon to me, as he was to everybody in this room. He signed my commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1958. He inspired me ever after, unto this day.

As the great battles of the Second World War raged, General Eisenhower realized that once the guns fell silent, the biggest challenge our country would face would be to build a world of enduring peace. And that is exactly what Eisenhower did as President during the Cold War's first dark decade.

President Eisenhower understood that we and our allies and friends had to stand strong and united on the front lines of freedom, against Communism, even as we demonstrated to the Communist leaders a willingness to work with our new foes to prevent mutual nuclear annihilation.

Eisenhower believed that if we upheld our values, if we believed in them, if we provided the shield behind which freedom and democracy could flourish, the day would certainly come when the million suffering under Communist oppression would once again know liberty.

That great day did come, and America's steadfast strength hastened its coming. Your steadfast strength hastened freedom's coming. I vividly remember addressing your National Convention in Baltimore in 1990 when I was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

There was still a Cold War, but things were changing. Just the year before, 1989, democratic revolutions had swept across Central and Eastern Europe. The Berlin Wall was torn down by people going to that wall on a cool November evening and banging it apart with axes and hammers and their bare hands, and when they did that it was the beginning of a new era.

The Soviet Union itself, this "Evil Empire" that we worried about, had not yet collapsed, but the end was in sight. Soviet President Gorbachev realized what was happening and he acquiesced in the rebirth of a Europe that was going to be whole, free and at peace.

Remarkably, the leader of the evil empire that I and so many of you had trained our whole lives to fight, was now working with us to bring peace to troubled regions of the globe. I will never forget at that time when I was serving as Chairman, but I had just stepped down as National Security Advisor for President Reagan, and I saw these changes taking place, and I tried to convey to my Army buddies when I got back to the Army from the Pentagon and in the Pentagon, when I got back from the White House, I tried to give them some sense of what was going on.

And I said to them, "You have got to understand, I was over there with Reagan for two years. I watched the meetings he held with President

Gorbachev." I will never forget the meeting that I held with President Gorbachev in the Kremlin with Secretary of State Schultz, and Gorbachev was saying, "I am going to change things in ways you never could have imagined. Watch what I am going to do."

And I looked at him skeptically. I was a soldier. And he finally looked back at me and he realized that I had this skeptical expression on my face, that I didn't believe what he was saying about openness and changing the Soviet Union. And he thought for a moment, he looked up, realized that I wasn't really a politician or a diplomat, I was just a soldier.

So he had an idea and he looked back down, and President Gorbachev turned to me, and I will never forget the expression, the smile that came over his face, and he leaned forward and he said to me, "General, General, I am very, very sorry. You will have to find a new enemy." (Applause) And I thought to myself, I don't want to, I like this enemy. (Laughter)

Life is very easy. I understand this. You have got your Army on the right side of the Iron Curtain, mine is on the left side of the Iron Curtain. Why confuse things? (Laughter) But that was not to be. Democracy swept that Iron Curtain away. We were able, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, to bring back so many of our troops from Europe.

While I was Chairman and now Vice-President Cheney was Secretary of Defense, we brought back 200,000 troops from Germany. We reduced the size of our force, 500,000, because the Cold War was over. We didn't need that many troops.

Now, Secretary Rumsfeld, as President Bush announced to you earlier today, is making the same kind of historic transformation to take advantage of technology, to take advantage of the new world, to recognize the new threats in the world, to readjust our force structure even more. But the one thing you can be absolutely sure of, this restructuring will result in an armed force that is just as good as any we have ever seen in our history. He is going to do it the right way. (Applause)

But at the time of our convention when we were all together in 1990, yes, we knew the Cold War was about to go away, but that isn't what was on our mind. All eyes were not riveted on the world-changing events in Europe. All eyes were focused on the Persian Gulf.

Saddam Hussein's army had invaded neighboring Kuwait and was terrorizing the people of Kuwait. I will never forget the day that President George Herbert Walker Bush analyzed the situation and, with a single sentence, predicted what the future would be. He simply said, "This will not stand" and it did not stand. (Applause)

We and our coalition partners put together a great force under the leadership of General Norm Schwarzkopf and we threw Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and we liberated the Kuwaiti people. Many of you here today served in Operation Desert Storm, that first Persian Gulf War. You can be ever, ever, ever proud of what you did and I will be forever proud of having been your Chairman at that time.

It is now over a decade and a half since I spoke at your convention in Baltimore. The nations of Central and Eastern Europe are not only free, they are either already members of NATO -- our former enemies have joined our alliance, they are members of the European Union, and if they are not yet members, they aspire to be members of both the European

Union and NATO.

A still-evolving, democratic Russia is working in partnership with us and with other nations to find peaceful solutions to the problems we face in the world, whether it is the Middle East peace problem, or the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons.

But notwithstanding these changes, today, once again, at this convention, all eyes are on Iraq. Another George Bush is in the White House, and thanks to his leadership and the bravery and skill of our armed forces, Saddam Hussein is now where he belongs, in a jail cell awaiting justice. (Applause)

Saddam Hussein is no longer gassing civilians and filling mass graves. He can no longer squander Iraq's oil wealth on palaces and weapons, while his people go without and the country's infrastructure crumbles. He can no longer pursue his aggressive designs on the region. He can no longer invade his neighbors.

The tyrant who terrorized his own people and who aided and abetted terrorists is in no position to obtain, develop, use or proliferate weapons of mass destruction. We may not have found the stockpiles that the best available pre-war intelligence told us to expect, but the bottom line remains the same, as the President said to you today, and it is a stark bottom line: Through twelve years of defying UN resolutions, twelve years of sanctions, twelve years of cheating, Saddam Hussein and that evil regime never, ever lost his intention to have and to wield weapons of mass destruction, and he never, ever gave up his capability to produce them.

A sworn enemy of the United States, Saddam Hussein could have passed on that weapons of mass destruction capability to terrorists. This may be a post-Cold War world, but it is also a post-September 11th world, and in such a world that was a risk, a risk that President Bush could not afford to take, would not take. Saddam was the kind of tyrant the President knew well, he would stop at nothing unless something stopped him, and we stopped him for good. (Applause)

President Eisenhower once said, "The history of free men is never really written by chance but by choice; their choice!" That is still true today, though much has changed since President Eisenhower's time. If Fascism and Communism were the two great tyrants of the 20th Century, terrorism is the tyranny of the 21st Century.

No one who has witnessed the horrors of war, as you have and I have, ever wants or chooses to see another world war, or any kind of war, any regional conflict of the kind that still infects the world. Yet, free peoples do not stay free for long if they permit their enemy to strike at a time and place of the enemy's choosing, and that is precisely what terrorists aim to do.

They seek to attack us and attack our allies and to attack our friends at will, all around the world and right here in the United States. They seek to attack us again as they did on September 11th, 2001. The past few years also have seen murderous terrorist attacks in places as wide-ranging as Bali and Baghdad, Mombassa and Bogota, Riyadh and Madrid, Casablanca and Carachi.

We will answer these attacks. President Bush is determined to confront the hard realities of terrorism with the same decisiveness that President Eisenhower and other American Presidents met the security challenges of

the past. And thanks to President Bush's bold leadership, nations all around the globe have come together in an historic effort to wipe terrorism from the face of the earth. It will be a long, hard fight, but we will succeed. (Applause)

This is a new kind of war. It is not the kind of war that you and I were trained for. Our foe is not located in a single country. There are no clear battlefields to see. There are no front lines to mass against. Terrorism is a constantly forming and reforming network of extremist groups. To defeat such an enemy it will require vigilance and tenacity, patience and international cooperation on an unprecedented scale.

Together with nations on every continent, we and our partners are bringing to bear every tool of statecraft against the terrorists and their networks. We are using diplomatic tools, intelligence and law enforcement tools, financial instruments and, yes, when necessary, military force.

As a result, since September 11th, 2001, more than two-thirds of al-Qaida's top leadership have been killed and captured. More than 3,000 al-Qaida criminals have been detained in over 100 countries. Terrorist cells have been wrapped up in Singapore, in Italy, right here in the United States.

The Saudis are going after them with vigor and are more successful with each passing day. It is becoming harder and harder for terrorists to support and finance their operations, to move about freely, to find sanctuary, to communicate, to plot and to acquire deadly weapons.

And as a result of these efforts and terrorist attacks that did not take place, because of these efforts, countless lives have been saved. And in the process of prosecuting the global war on terrorism, our magnificent young men and women in uniform and their coalition partners have liberated 30 million Afghans and 25 million Iraqis from cruel oppressors. (Applause)

I have been telling audiences for weeks now, and did it again earlier at an Editorial Board meeting here in Cincinnati, 55 million people, in Afghanistan and Iraq, have been liberated. They are now looking to the future with hope and without fear in their hearts. In Afghanistan, 9 million people have registered to vote. Nine million people have said we want freedom. (Applause)

I went to Afghanistan earlier this year and they took me to a registration place in a school for women, and these women who had been oppressed and suppressed by the Taliban were standing in line, prepared to prove their citizenship so that they can get their registration card.

In Afghanistan, three million refugees -- imagine that -- in the last two and a half years, three million Afghans who had been living in Pakistan, who had been living in Iran, who had been living everywhere but Afghanistan, three million people voted with their feet to come back to Afghanistan, to make new lives for themselves because the United States of America and its coalition partners got rid of the Taliban and freed Afghans to stand for the Afghan people, and now they are getting ready to vote for their own freely-elected President in just a few weeks time. What an accomplishment. We should be so proud. (Applause)

Just yesterday in Iraq there was a national conference. I worried about it all last week and through the weekend. Would they actually be able to meet? Mortars are going off, car bombs are going off, people are trying to stop them, to keep them from meeting. Would these 1,100 Iraqis actually get up, take a look at the situation and go into the international

zone to assemble? Would they do it? They did it. Eleven hundred Afghans showed up.

And when I read my paper this morning to see how the newspapers characterized the event, they said there was a lot of squabbling, there was a lot of noise, there was a lot of disagreement, there was a lot of debate and shouting. I said, "Are you sure it isn't the Congress in Washington?" (Laughter)

And I called Ambassador Negroponte, our Ambassador over there, and I said, "John, what actually happened?" He said, "There was a lot of squabbling, there was a lot of noise, there was a lot of debate and there was a lot of disagreement. Colin, it's called democracy -- and it was wonderful."

And they want a country that is free. They want free elections. They want to be represented by their own leaders. They want their armed forces, and we are going to help them get all of that and it will be a success. (Applause)

I was in Baghdad just a few weeks ago. I spoke to the new leaders. They get up every day wondering whether or not they might be assassinated. But they get up, nonetheless, and they go to work. They are determined to succeed. They are going to hold these elections. They are going to take the risks that come in the process of creating freedom and democracy in a country that has seen no such thing in history.

I also spent a little bit of time at the end of the day with some of our troops. After an all-day meeting with the Prime Minister and the President of the country, and the other ministers, and doing what you have to do as Secretary of State, late in the afternoon Ambassador Negroponte and I went out behind his office and several hundred troops were lined up, mostly Americans, but there were Brits there and Aussies and Poles and Ukrainians, and all kinds of other nations.

That's what makes me mad when people say, "Well, you don't have a coalition." You should have been with me in Baghdad two weeks ago. I will show you a coalition. Now, 3 nations were there. Don't tell me we don't have a coalition. (Applause)

But what moved me so much was to stand in front of them and to talk to them a little bit, you know, try to warm an audience up a little bit. And I told them that they should be so proud of what they were doing: They were putting their lives at risk, they were working hard to make a new nation free.

I told them that 10, 15, 20 years from now when they had gone on to other occupations or retired and they are sitting in their family rooms and rec rooms telling their children and grandchildren about what they did, telling them stories, some of them which, you know, might even be true -- I know you guys. I know what you do.

I said, "You were the ones," you can tell your grandchildren and children, "You were the ones who went there. You didn't hold back, didn't quibble. You were active. You were Reserve. You were Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, Coast Guard, civilian, every other federal agency you could imagine. You didn't hold back. When your nation called and when the Iraqi people called, you were there, just as veterans have always been there when they were called, and you should take this memory of what you did to bring freedom to this country back home with you and be forever proud

of your accomplishment."

I also went to Walter Reed last week to see some of the troops who had been injured. I went to the orthopedic ward and met a number of these wonderful, wonderful young men and women who had been injured, and you just can't help but be enormously proud of them.

One young man who had lost his leg, the only thing he wanted to talk to me about was not his injury, not how it happened, but what he said to me was, "General, how soon do you think they can get me back up on my new leg so I get to get back into the Army and get back into the fight?" That's the kind of kids we have. (Applause)

With that kind of spirit, you can be sure we will prevail. We have a challenge ahead of us with this insurgency. We have got to defeat it. We have also got to do everything we can to build up the Iraqi forces as quickly as possible, so that they can take over the burden of the fight.

They are taking many more casualties than we are now. They are willing to fight, and when they take casualties and one of those police stations is blown up, the next day you find even more Iraqis volunteering to serve. So the challenge before us is clear: Defeat the insurgency and get on with the business of reconstructing this country and putting it on a solid, peaceful, democratic foundation.

When the world sees that, the world will understand what such a nation can mean for the rest of that region and the rest of the world as a model. Already, our strong stand against Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction is paying off in other ways.

Our resolve was a factor in Libya's decision to renounce its weapons of mass destruction. It took a look around and said, "This is not a good thing to do." And we found a diplomatic solution, and they gave up their weapons of mass destruction.

International pressure is also mounting on Iran to reveal the true nature of their nuclear program, and a democratic Iraq will give momentum to the President's reform efforts throughout the Middle East. We want to help the nations of the Middle East, nations across the globe, to enjoy the twin blessings of freedom and peace.

As a General and as a President, Dwight David Eisenhower understood the use and the limits of military power. He also understood the importance of winning the hearts and minds of people throughout the world. He said that, "Though force can protect in an emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and cooperation can finally lead men to the dawn of eternal peace."

That is why President Bush's national security is not just confined to matters of defense policy or matters of pre-emption. A major part of the President's national security strategy is the promotion of good governance in developing nations.

It is strengthening our partnerships with nations around the world. It is building up our alliances. It is taking steps to lift millions of people out of poverty and despair. We are at the forefront of the world's efforts to improve international health and well-being.

The United States has helped to forge a new international consensus on the use of foreign assistance. Experience has shown that foreign assistance works best when it is targeted toward those countries that believe

in the rule of law, that govern justly, that adopt sound economic policies and believe in their people and invest in their people.

President Bush has come forward with the most significant initiative on foreign assistance since the Marshall Plan in the late '40s. It is called the Millennium Challenge Corporation and we are going to be spending up to \$5 billion a year by 2006 to invest in those countries, those developing countries that say we understand the rule of law, good governance, the end of corruption, democracy and open markets, and they will find America waiting there with an open hand to help them move down that path, and we have just identified the first 16 countries to receive this kind of assistance.

What has impressed me is how many other countries have come to me who are not one of the 16 and they said, "Excuse us, Mr. Secretary. What do we have to do to be one of the recipients?" "It is easy" Democracy, freedom, the rule of law."

So the President's policy is a comprehensive one. It is a policy that is prepared to use military force when necessary to defend our interest, but it is really a policy that rests on partnership, alliances, helping people, helping people solve the problems of HIV/AIDS, one of the greatest killers on the face of the earth now.

8,000 men and women and children died today because of AIDS, another 8,000 will die tomorrow, and the President is determined to do something about it. It is not just a health and humanitarian issue. It is a security issue which undercuts nations and their ability to move forward toward peace and freedom.

He spent \$15 billion. He has allocated \$15 billion toward this effort, and people who say we are not giving enough ought to know we are giving twice as much as the rest of the world combined, and we should be proud of that. (Applause)

My friends, in this new century which is so different than the century we left, we face many new challenges. We face problems. I deal with these problems daily, whether they are in the Middle East or in Sudan, other places in the world. We face so many wonderful opportunities as more and more people look to America for inspiration.

As every veteran in this room understands, we can meet the challenges that we face, just as we have always met the challenges that we face, and we can seize these opportunities, but only as long as young Americans are willing to step forward to serve our country and to serve humankind.

As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I was privileged to lead such men and women, and today in the Army and the Navy and the Air Force, the Marines, Coast Guard you will find the newest generation of such magnificent young Americans. As Secretary of State, I am also proud to lead another group of dedicated Americans who serve our nation with skill and with passion: The dedicated men and women of the Department of State.

They sign up for duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other high-risk posts around the world. They go on unaccompanied tours. I call them my troops, because that's what they are, just as surely as the men and women who served under my command in the 3rd Armored Division or the 2nd Infantry

Division, the 101st, the 4th Infantry Division.

My diplomats may not wear a uniform but they are also serving on the front line of American diplomacy and on the front lines of freedom around the world serving this nation so very, very well. (Applause)

Fellow veterans, time and again in the past century, and now in this century, fate and destiny have put our country in a position where the world looks to America for leadership and for help. The world looks to us, often with a mixture of respect and resentment, because we are powerful.

We are the world's greatest economic power. We are the world's greatest military power. The world looks to us, too, because our democratic values remain a powerful inspiration to people everywhere. And how have we used this unrivaled power?

We have not sought to conquer anyone. We have never been comfortable with occupation of any land. We do not covet anyone's territory. We do not seek to impose dominion over anyone. Instead, we have sent our wonderful young men and women forth from our shores in harm's way to help others, to protect others, to liberate others.

Many of them have lost their lives in our foreign wars and America has asked for nothing in return, except just enough land in which to bury them. This is a unique nation that we are privileged to be citizens of. It is a unique nation that people look to. We can be proud indeed that successive generations of our sons and daughters have selflessly served as soldiers in foreign wars and gallantly fought for a freer world, a better world, a world of hope where tyrants and terrorists cannot thrive.

I am deeply grateful to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America for presenting me with the Eisenhower Award. As General Eisenhower once said, "Humility must always be the portion of any man who receives a claim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends."

This award will be a cherished symbol to me and of the bond that I share with you, my fellow veterans. But it will belong really to all those wonderful young men and women that I was privileged to serve with over so many, many years. And your reward will remind me always of my duty toward those who proudly wear the uniform, those brave young men and women who are now serving on the front lines of freedom throughout the world.

Their families pray for their safe return as do all of us here this evening, just as our families once prayed for our safe return. And, of course, our hearts go out especially to those loved ones who have given their lives in service to our country. They will never be forgotten.

No life given in the name of liberty is ever given in vain. We will forever keep faith with the fallen for they have kept faith at the very end with our nation's highest ideals. So may God bless all the men and women serving in our armed forces. May God bless all of our fellow veterans, and may God always continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, a prolonged standing ovation was had.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more time

for the great Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. (Applause)

Comrades and sisters, we are fast approaching the end of a wonderful day, a day that I think will find its way into the history of this great organization, when the President of the United States addressed our opening session and the Secretary of State addressed this very distinguished banquet. Please give yourselves a round of applause. You are so much an important part of this great organization. (Applause)

Now, once again, I would like to call on our National Chaplain, David Norris, as he leads us in our Benediction. Chaplain.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN NORRIS: Let us pray.

O, God, give us more love, more self-denial, more kindness to Thee. Make us kindly in thought, gentle in word, generous in deed. Teach us that it is better to give than to receive, to forget ourselves than to put ourselves forward, to minister than to be ministered unto.

Unto Thee, the God of love, be all the glory and praise, both now and evermore. Amen.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. Have a restful evening, and we will see you tomorrow morning. Thank you. (Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 9:10 p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 17, 2004

(The First Business Session of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, at 8:15 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief Banas.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you, please, prepare the room and commence with the opening ceremonies and with the salute to the Colors.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(National Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the Convention in the salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance, and National Chaplain David Norris gave the Opening Prayer from the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time we will have a report from the Committee on Convention Rules, Past Commander-in-Chief Clifford Olson.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON: Good morning, comrades. I would just like to make note that my Co-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief John Staum, has been hospitalized for a quadruple bypass, so you are going to have to listen to me to read off these 19 rules.

The Committee on Convention Rules met Sunday afternoon on August 15th, and agreed on the following recommendations, which are respectfully submitted to you for your consideration.

1. That, in accordance with the National By-Laws and Manual of Procedure, and with the exceptions noted below, Demeter's Manual shall be recognized as parliamentary authority for this Convention.

2. That when a registered delegate desires to make a motion or address the Convention, he shall rise, address the Chair as "Comrade Commander-in-Chief," and after being recognized, shall state his name, Post number and Department, before proceeding.

3. A registered delegate shall be permitted to speak but twice on any one subject, or any pending resolution for a period of 10 minutes each, except by consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present; provided, that chairmen of Convention Committees may speak as frequently as necessary in connection with reports of their Committees; and in the event of controversy, the presiding officer shall not entertain any motion which will curtail further debate without affording the maker of the

motion or a member of the particular group presenting the resolution an opportunity for five minutes of final rebuttal.

4. All resolutions offered by individual registered delegates must bear the endorsement of the Department Commander or in his absence the Department Adjutant. All resolutions must be submitted to the office of the Adjutant General for numbering and referral to Committee no later than 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, August 18, 2004, and must be accompanied by a written explanation as to why the resolution was not presented to the Department Convention for consideration.

5. All resolutions offered on the floor of the Convention, or otherwise, shall be in writing, and shall automatically, and without reading, be referred to the Adjutant General for assignment to the proper Committee

6. Committee chairmen, in reporting on resolutions referred to their Committee, shall first read those resolutions on which favorable action is recommended. Specific resolutions shall be set aside for individual action at the request of any delegate, the others being voted upon collectively.

After action has been taken on all such resolutions, the chairman shall read the number and title of those resolutions which the Committee has disapproved. A resolution disapproved by the Committee shall be automatically rejected unless a motion is made and seconded that it be approved, in which case it shall be brought up for debate and Convention action.

7. This Convention will not consider any resolution dealing with race, creed or religion, or endorse anyone for public office. This Convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds.

8. This Convention will not consider any resolution endorsing legislation sponsored by any other veterans organization, or requesting us to join with any other organization in sponsoring legislation not expressly proposed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

9. No person not a duly registered delegate or member of the National Convention shall participate in debate, directly or indirectly, or on any subject before the Convention.

10. Unit rule of voting shall not be allowed in this Convention.

11. Voting strength shall be determined as those delegates registered as of the close of the credentials registration booth the previous day and as reported to the National Convention each morning.

The Department Commanders will receive, prior to the beginning of each Business Session, a list of Posts that have properly registered delegates. Only delegates representing those Posts listed on the report will be accorded voting privileges.

12. On roll calls, the Department Commander of each delegation shall poll his delegation's registered delegates on the floor and shall announce the vote of his delegation.

13. Registered delegates of a delegation may arrive at a vote in any manner they see fit, but shall announce it in terms of full units and not in terms of a fractional part of a vote.

14. Reconsideration of a motion or resolution upon which final disposition has been made shall not be allowed after the session at which it was acted on has been recessed, unless the body is notified of such contemplated action prior to the close of that session.

15. When the report of the Department Commander of the delegation is not acceptable to all registered delegates of the delegation and a poll of the Department registered delegates is demanded by three registered delegates of said Department, the Adjutant General shall poll the registered delegates, without discussion of question.

16. Voting shall be by acclamation, except when a roll call be demanded by ten registered delegates representing Posts in ten separate Departments, or by order of the Commander-in-Chief.

17. Nominating speeches for the National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. The time allocated to encompass all seconding speeches shall be limited to a total of four minutes. Nomination and election of national officers will be held according to the Congressional Charter, By-Laws, and Manual of Procedure, Article VI, Section 609.

18. Registered delegates and persons recognized by the Chair shall be entitled to a respectful hearing, and the Chair shall have the authority to clear the gallery or the floor or have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort from the floor any person or persons who may create any disturbances which interfere with the orderly procedure of the Convention.

19. Consent of two-thirds of the voting strength of the Convention present is necessary for suspension of the rules of this Convention Comrade Commander-in-Chief, those are the proposed convention rules. I move their adoption.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER (Post 57077-Missouri): I second that motion

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion on the floor and a second to accept the report of the convention rules submitted by our Chairman, Cliff Olson. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carries.

At this time we will have the report of the Convention Credentials Committee, presented by Dave Butters

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): Commander-in-Chief, I want to thank you for your appointment to be your National Convention Registration Chairman. I am David Butters, a delegate from Post 475, Newark, Delaware. I stand before you to report the number of delegates registering their credentials as of the close of business yesterday at 4:00 p.m.

Total delegates, 10,291; total Department Commanders, 54; total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 25; total National Officers, 37. That is for a

grand total of 10,407 delegates. A majority is 5,204. Two-thirds is 6,938.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, we will have a report of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual, from Chairman Arthur J. Fellwock.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK (Post 1114 - Indiana): My name is Art Fellwock, a member of Evansville Post 1114, Evansville, Indiana, Chairman of the Bylaws Committee. I was assisted in this position with a very able Past Commander-in-Chief, John Stang, who is the Vice-Chairman.

This year, unlike many other years, we didn't have too many by-law changes, and as some of you who may have had a copy of the by-laws, may have gone over them, the Committee went through these by-laws very thoroughly. We discussed them, had open discussion, and the Committee recommended the adoption of B-1, which is Section 711, Buddy Poppy. Amend Section 711, National By-Laws, by adding the words "for Children" after "National Home" in the second paragraph. In other words, where we had in there "National Home", we are adding the words "for Children". So it will read, "National Home for Children." The Committee recommended this adoption and, therefore, I make a motion that we adopt B-1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STANG (Post 3147- Kansas): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a motion and a second to adopt B-1. Any discussion? Any discussion? Any discussion? Being no discussion, we will move the motion. All those in favor of adopting B-1 will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ART FELLWOCK (Post 1114- Indiana): The remainder of the by-law changes, B-2, B-3, B-4 and B-5, the Committee rejected. If no one wishes any of those to be set aside, they will naturally die. Since we have adopted B-1, this automatically adopts, then, M-1 in the Manual of Procedure. It also automatically adopts R-1 in the Amendments to the Ritual, because you have just adopted B-1.

Those words which we added will be added to the Manual of Procedure and to the Ritual. That is my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much. We will have the report of the Committee on Finance and Internal Organization by its Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief John F. Gwizdak.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080- Georgia): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates to this convention,

the Finance and Internal Organization Resolutions Committee met the other day with Vice-Chairman Ray Soden. We had all in attendance except for three.

The resolutions that were presented are Resolutions 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206 and 207. After deliberation, the Committee found no resolution that they could approve within Committee, so there are no resolutions to present to you at this time for approval.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: If there is no motion, these resolutions are automatically rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080-Georgia): The Committee, during their deliberations, wants to recommend to the National Organization, so that it is included in the minutes of our convention, that Resolution 204, which is shortening the Obligation Required of all Persons Joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars, be taken up by the National By-Laws Committee for consideration and study for future amendments to the by-laws.

The Committee also said that Resolution 202, which addresses Homeless Veterans Committee, because the convention cannot establish anything that would take funds, we recommended at that time, and so it is included in the minutes of this convention, that Resolution 202 be read and studied by the National Veterans Service Committee so that possible action in the future could be taken and that the Commander-in-Chief would be advised as far as the Committee appointment.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief and delegates to the convention, that concludes our report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The next report will be the Committee on General Resolutions. The Chairman is Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK (Post 9791- California): Thank you, Commander. I would like to thank you for this appointment and certainly for the Vice-Chairmen that you gave me, Bob Currieo from Arizona, and John Moon from Ohio, and Comrade George Lisicki from the great state of New Jersey.

Our Committee met at 2:00 o'clock Sunday, and we had Resolutions Nos.301 through 311. Our Committee recommends adoption of Resolution 304, which is Retention of the Pledge of Allegiance As Is, and Resolution No. 307, a Constitutional Amendment to Prohibit the Desecration of the American Flag. Those were the two resolutions that we adopted.

Adopted with amendment was Resolution No. 301, which was the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial. Here is how the Resolved now reads with the amendment.

"Be It Further Resolved, that we encourage and urge all VFW Posts to support the new American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C., with no solicitation of VFW Posts, members or non-member support-

ers to ever be considered.”

That’s the amendment.

Also, Resolution No. 303, we added an amendment. The American Museum of Military History is the title of that resolution. The Resolved now reads, “Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States that we endorse and support the development of the American Museum of Military History, with no solicitation of VFW Posts, members or non-member supporters to be ever considered.”

We also made an amendment to Resolution No. 311. The title of that resolution was the Vander Clute-Dickerson Memorial Ride. The amendment was to delete “Dickerson” from the resolution. Those were our Committee’s recommendations on the adoption, and the adoption with those amendments.

Are there any set asides on any of those? Then I move that we adopt Resolutions Nos. 304 and 307, and adopt with amendments Resolutions Nos. 301, 303, and 311.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB CURRIEO (Post 9972- Arizona): I am Bob Currieo, a delegate from Post 9972, Department of Arizona. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? If not, we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying “aye”; all those opposed.

The “ayes” have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK (Post 9791- California): Our Committee recommends rejection on Resolutions Nos. 302, 305, 306, 308, 309 and 310. I don’t see anybody coming to the microphone.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: They stand rejected if no one contests them. Thank you.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs is in the back and will be out shortly. I am going to detour on this and I am going to ask Mike Wysong and Sal Caprichio to give their PAC report, which I have been told will not last more than six minutes.

REPORT OF THE VFW POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

COMRADE SALVATORE CAPRICHIO (Department of Connecticut): Thank you, Chief Banas. You heard the report during the meeting concerning the success of the PAC. Being in management throughout the years of my private life, I realized that the foundation is one of the main issues and the other is to surround yourself with good people.

The foundation we use at the PAC is directly related to Past Commander-in-Chief Carney, who has set the foundation which we build on today. The people that we have on the Board are great people to work with. They are very professional. We thank you, the members, the comrades, for your generosity and support.

One of the other reasons for our success is the gentleman I will introduce to you right now, our Chairman, Mike Wysong.

REMARKS BY VFW PAC COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN WYSONG

COMRADE MICHAEL WYSONG: Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Delegates and Distinguished Guests:

Thank you for the opportunity to give an update on the VFW PAC activities. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I send a special thank you to the Adjutant General and his staff, the Quartermaster General and his staff, and the Executive Director of the Washington office and his staff, for the spirit of cooperation and support given to the Political Action Committee this year.

I had the pleasure to work with very energetic and forward-thinking members of the VFW PAC Board of Directors. I want to take a moment to thank them all for their hard work, but I also want to single out one, and that is VFW PAC Director Sal Caprichio.

Under his tutelage these past two years, the PAC has truly moved into the 21st Century. He has instituted many new processes and has streamlined our operations and saved valuable resources. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend to Sal our sincere appreciation for all of his efforts and extraordinary accomplishments.

My comrades, I can report to you that our fundraising activities are exceeding all expectations. For this election cycle, we will distribute close to \$300,000 to candidates, and spend an additional \$75,000 on political advocacy initiatives. That's a direct result of your efforts and the generous donations of both the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary members. I thank you all.

We are now in a position to increase our political activity and go forward with new initiatives that will directly enhance the ability to make positive differences in the lives of veterans and military personnel, as well as strengthen our military security and defense posture.

The Board has been very aggressive in doing just that. We are charting new ground as we move into our twenty-fifth year of political activity. Let me share with you just a few initiatives we have adopted. In a Congressional District where members' support is critical on a piece of legislation or to influence a Senator, we will purchase a newspaper ad or radio spot addressing specific issues to exert constituent pressure on that lawmaker.

For example, the text may read or the spot may say, "Ask your member of Congress to support and vote in favor of increased VA funding", or it may say, "Contact Senator Corzine and ask him why veterans don't have the same health-care as he does."

Another initiative, in a couple of months we are going to target five VFW PAC-endorsed candidates, who are in highly contested and close races. We will purchase positive media ads that express the VFW PAC endorse-

ments and encourage the electorate to vote for that candidate.

Finally, we have already produced and are distributing at this convention, and we will send to each Department a CD with a 30 and 15-second radio spot to get out the vote. This message can be used over and over again for any election in the future. Please listen as we air those spots for you right now.

(Whereupon, the radio spots were played at this time.)

My comrades, how did you like that? (Applause) A byproduct of all these initiatives will be increased awareness of the Veterans of Foreign Wars which will help in our recruiting efforts for new members. Our political activism will be in full compliance of the law, and we will not be afraid to tackle the tough issues and influence the outcome of elections to benefit veterans. That's our charge, that's our mandate, that's our responsibility. With your continued help and support, we will be victorious.

One final note. As you know, we are in an election year. This past Saturday the PAC Board of Directors approved a list of candidates that will be endorsed in races for the United States Senate and House of Representatives. This was a lengthy process and was coordinated with each Department.

All Departments and endorsed candidates will soon receive official notification. I thank you all for all that you do to strengthen the VFW PAC Political Action Committee. We can't do it without you. Please stop by our booth in the Exhibit Hall for some additional information, and we hope to see many of you at our workshop on Wednesday afternoon at 2:00 o'clock.

PRESENTATION OF PAC AWARD TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

COMRADE MICHAEL WYSONG: It now gives Sal and I great pleasure on behalf of the VFW PAC Board of Directors to make a very special presentation to Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas. Chief, this magnificent golden eagle is given to you in recognition for your outstanding and unwavering support of the VFW Political Action Committee. Thank you for all you do and for allowing us to serve.

COMRADE SALVATORE CAPRICHIO (Department of Connecticut): It reads, "VFW PAC, Golden Eagle Award to Edward E. Banas, Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, for his exceptional support for 2003-2004." Thank you very much, Chief. (Applause)

COMRADE MICHAEL WYSONG: Chief, that concludes my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: If anyone should have gotten the eagle, it should have been Michael and Sal Caprichio. For those that pay attention to the PAC, you know they have done wonders with that identity in our organization.

At this time we will have the report of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, presented by its Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PASTCOMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144- Massachusetts): Thank you very much, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, good morning. Commander-in-Chief Banas, it is my pleasure to report that your Convention Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs convened in Room 231 of the Cincinnati Convention Center at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 15, 2004. Your instructions were read, roll call was taken, and procedures were discussed.

A portion of the Committee members were designated the POW-MIA Subcommittee. The Committee and Subcommittee carefully deliberated each of the 46 resolutions. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Allen "Gunner" Kent, Post 9972, Arizona, and the Chairman of the POW-MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart, Post 483, New Hampshire, and Vice-Chairman of the POW-MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer, Post 6869, Illinois.

The staff adviser, Bob Manhan, Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee and the Subcommittee on POW-MIA for their active participation in the Committee meetings.

At the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, we had a very special guest speaker, who traveled halfway around the world to address this Committee, Mr. Lin Wen-shan, Vice-Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China. Mr. Lin discussed the military cooperation between the United States and the Republic of China, and the situation in East Asia, and thanked the VFW for its consistent support to the Secretary of the Republic of China.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the report. If you or any of the delegates at the convention would like a resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed by reading the resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval, as written.

No.408, Remain United with Allies to Preserve Freedom and Security.

No.409, Limit Foreign Ownership of U.S. Businesses and Properties.

No.412, Ballistic Missile Defense is a National Security Priority.

No.413, Oppose Lifting the Defense Department Ban on Homosexuals in the Armed Forces.

No. 414, Maintain an Effective U.S. Coast Guard.

No. 415, Strengthen Intelligence Agencies and Capabilities.

No. 428, Strengthen Security at Department of Energy Laboratories.

No. 431, Support the Death Penalty for Acts of Treason, in War and

Peace, Against the United States of America.

No. 432, Maintain Pressure on Castro.

No. 433, Oppose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

No. 434, Oppose International Criminal Court.

I move at this time for the adoption of those resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART (Post 483 - New Hampshire): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? There being no discussion, we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144- Massachusetts): I will now proceed by reading the resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended.

No. 410, Take Action on the Illegal Immigration Problem.

No. 411, Punish Terrorists and Support the War on Terrorism.

No. 416, Support for the Republic of Korea.

No. 418, Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

No. 419, Retain the Selective Service.

No. 420, Monitor the Panama Canal Carefully

No. 421, NATO Enlargement.

No. 422, Restore Economic Sanctions Against North Korea.

No. 423, Tighten U.S. Policy on High Technology Exports.

No. 424, Take Action Against Countries that Proliferate Ballistic Missile Technology and Weapons of Mass Destruction.

No. 425, Increase the Defense Budget.

No. 426, Support Increased Ship Building for the United States Navy.

No. 427, Improve Military Readiness.

No. 429, Increase Military Base Pay and Entitlements.

No. 430, U.S. Response to Chinese Actions.

No. 438, Support Equity for Reserve and Guard Members.

No. 443, Medal of Honor for Rex T. Barber, Colonel (Ret.) USAF.

I move for the adoption of these resolutions, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART (Post 483 - New Hampshire): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Is there any discussion on the motion? We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion on the motion? Is there any discussion on the motion? There is no argument this morning. That is wonderful. There is no discussion and we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The motion carries.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144 - Massachusetts): Finally, those resolutions the Committee recommended for rejection:

No. 417, Support Withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

No. 435, Support Continued Live Fire Training at PFC Herbert K. Pililaau Range at Makua Valley, Oahu, Hawaii.

No. 435, Total Force Policy and Viable National Guard and Reserve Forces.

No. 437, Award Distinctive Medals for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

No. 439, Award Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Retroactive to March 3, 1946.

No. 440, Establish a Campaign Ribbon for those Stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

No. 441, Support Retroactive Korea Service Medal and Korea Presidential Unit Citation.

No. 442, Establish Combat Recognition Badges for Other than Infantry, Special Forces and Army Medical Department Personnel.

No. 444, Award Imminent Danger and Hostile Fire Ribbons.

No. 445, Oppose Law of the Sea Treaty of the United Nations.

No. 446, Take Action on the Illegal Immigration Problem.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: If no one makes a motion to adopt, they stand rejected. Is there anyone at the microphones?

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GEORGE ROBINSON (Post 9400 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am George Robinson, Post 9400, Department of Arizona. I ask that Resolution 439 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: You need to make a motion to adopt that, sir.

COMRADE GEORGE ROBINSON (Post 9400 - Arizona): I move that Resolution 439 be adopted.

COMRADE GEORGE MEEKS (Post 3513 - Arizona): I second the motion.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144- Massachusetts): Resolution No. 439, Award Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Retroactive to March 3, 1946.

"Be It Resolved, that we petition the President of the United States to rectify the unjust omission of the original executive order by awarding the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to all military personnel who have served overseas in expeditionary status during the period commencing March 3, 1946, and ending June 30, 1958."

The Committee recommended rejection on the basis that no one on active duty will benefit from this resolution. The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal was established in 1958, some 46 years ago.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Is there any discussion? Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GEORGE ROBINSON (Post 9400 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it is true that no one possibly on active duty will benefit from the retroactive eligibility of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. However, retirees and/or personnel that are separated from the service back in the 1950s could possibly submit a 180 to have their eligibility established with the VFW.

What the benefit would be to the VFW, I do not know. There was no medal of eligibility as far as the expeditionary forces were concerned during the period 3 March, 1946 to 1958, unless you were a Navy man or a Marine. There was no Expeditionary Medal common to all five branches of the service.

During that time, however, there was quite a bit of expeditionary peace keeping, military service performed throughout the world. During the Berlin airlift, 30 B29s were stationed in England to keep the reliability of the Berlin airlift in progress. Nothing was given recognition for this.

During June, 1951, and February, 1952, nuclear-equipped B-50 bombers were rotating through Anderson Air Force Base in Guam in support of the United Nations in Korea. At the time of that nuclear build-up on Guam, forces were increased, and in the Philippine Islands as well as the seas around the Southwest Pacific.

In the early 1950s, all types of bomber aircraft were transitioning England at 90-day intervals with classified targets, and the Soviet Union had orders when everything was represented in the Holocaust. President Kennedy established that Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal in 1961 retroactive to 1958.

Why 1958 was selected, I have no idea, but it fell far short of going back far enough to cover a lot of peace-keeping missions. What I am requesting right now under the motion is that we consider the retroactive issuance of eligibility for the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal back to 1946 as that was the final day for the Asiatic Pacific and the American Events Medal eligibility for World War II.

When I authored the resolution, it was passed unanimously at the Post, District and Department. I am only asking now that the membership consider doing the same thing at our convention here today. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you. Is there any other discussion? Is there anyone at any of the microphones? Is there any other discussion of this issue? We are going to move the motion. To vote "aye" is to adopt; to vote "nay" is to reject. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed "nay".

Counting on my hearing aid, comrades, I got two weeks ago, the motion is rejected. Are there any other set asides? If there are not, then the remainder are rejected.

I will recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BILL CHAGNON (Post 5960 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Bill Chagnon, Post 5960, Arizona, Department Commander. On the last rejection, I call for a roll-call vote. We can get ten other Commanders up here.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: If it is acceptable to you, sir, rather than go through the roll-call vote, I will let the issue be voted on the floor once more, if that is acceptable to you.

COMRADE BILL CHAGNON (Post 5960 - Arizona): Thank you,

Commander-in-Chief. It is acceptable.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: All those in favor of accepting will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it. Thank you, comrades.

PRESENTATION OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL
TO THE HONORABLE ANTHONY J. PRINCIPI,
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, we are pleased to have with us this morning the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi.

Appointed by President Bush and confirmed as the nation's fourth Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Principi brings to this key cabinet post a wealth of experience as a veterans advocate.

A naval veteran of the Vietnam War, Mr. Principi served as Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs from 1989 to 1992. He was named Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs by then President George Bush and served until 1993.

In 1996, Mr. Principi was appointed Chair of the Senate Committee on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance.

A strong veterans advocate, he oversees the nation's largest health-care system, a system with an annual budget of \$51 billion, and a work force of some 219,000 people at hundreds of medical centers and clinics. He also oversees operations at national cemeteries.

This year we are pleased to present the VFW Distinguished Service Medal to Secretary Principi for dedication to the welfare of veterans and members of the armed forces.

Please give a warm welcome to a VFW Life Member and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Anthony Principi.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented to Secretary Principi reads, "Distinguished Service Medal and Citation presented to Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "As a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, a combat-decorated Vietnam veteran, Counsel to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, Chief Counsel and Staff Director of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, Deputy, and then Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs from 1989 to 1993, to his present position as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, he has dedicated his life to enhancing the quality of life of veterans, members of the armed forces and their families. We are proud to honor him for his lifetime of advocacy and service to America's present and former defenders.

"In Witness Whereupon, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2004." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward

S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

REMARKS - THE HONORABLE ANTHONY PRINCIPI

SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PRINCIPI: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, thank you, for this wonderful honor. I can't tell you how proud I am. Commander-in-Chief Banas, Adjutant General Senk, Distinguished Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America: It is a great, great pleasure to be with you at this meeting.

At the outset, let me just express my deep gratitude to the Commander-in-Chief for his great leadership of a truly remarkable organization, for his tremendous advocacy for the VA and the benefits we provide, for his friendship and support over the past year. I am deeply indebted to him for his great leadership and for his friendship. He is just a decent and good man. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

Also, I want to express my deep thanks to the Adjutant General and the great Washington staff under the leadership of Bob Wallace. Some of the progress we have made over the past three and a half years is directly attributable to the wonderful team the VFW has assembled in Washington, D.C. I thank them so very much.

I congratulate and extend my best wishes to the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and I look forward very, very much to working with him in the future. I have a wonderfully prepared speech, my staff does a great job whenever I travel around the country to make it easier for me; but today, given the long relationship and the close friendships with the men and women in this room, I would just like to take a few minutes to speak from the heart about the issues facing the agency, our successes, our challenges, and my vision for the Department.

I want you to know how very proud I am to be your Secretary. I want you to know how very humbled I am to serve as your Secretary. The men and women in this room, the men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, individually and collectively, represents what it means to be an American.

When your country ask you to serve, you served. Many came back with scars, physical, mental. All were willing to lay down their lives for freedom. When you came home, you asked for very little. You asked for the gratitude of a nation and to help to rebuild your lives following your service.

When you came home, the members of this organization did not stop serving. They continued to serve their fellow veterans, their community and their nation. Poppies, Operation Uplink phone cards, Military Assistance Program, millions upon millions of hours of volunteerism is impossible to quantify those millions of hours of VA volunteers and what they have given back to the VA, the veterans, the Voice of Democracy Scholarship Program and the many, many other things that you have done

as an organization as individuals to serve this great nation, to serve your fellow veterans.

Indeed, you represent the greatness of America. You are the bedrock of this nation. I thank you for your advocacy, I thank you for being our partner. I thank you for helping me and our Department revolutionize health care and services so that 21st Century veterans have access to 21st Century health care and benefits delivery.

I know that funding is on your mind. It is on my mind as well. It is always on my mind. I will continue to fight as long as I am Secretary, to fight with you to ensure that we receive the adequate resources to enable us to provide those benefits to our nation's veterans.

But I also want you to know that because of your advocacy, because of the support of our President and the men and women in Congress who support our programs on both sides of the aisle, we have achieved some success.

When I became Secretary, my budget was about \$48 billion. Again, thanks to your advocacy my budget today is over \$65 billion, and should go to \$70 billion in October with the new fiscal year. Because of that we have been able, because of you, to treat one million more veterans and 2.5 million have been enrolled in the system over the past three and a half years. That is great news.

We have had 54 million outpatient visits this year. That is a record. We now have 856 outpatient clinics. It wasn't long ago we didn't have any. You helped to make that possible so veterans don't have to drive countless hours to access the VA. They can now do so closer to their homes.

These are the kinds of things we need to continue to do. That's why I believe that care is so important. I know it entails tough decisions. But we need to build a blueprint for the 21st Century. We need to modernize our infrastructure to the changes in medicine in the 21st Century, to the changes in the demographics in the veterans' population.

We need to ensure we have new hospitals and new clinics, new nursing homes in the right place, and the facilities we choose admission to or decide to close down old buildings, we never should do so until we are sure, we are absolutely sure that the receiving facility is there to take care of our veterans in 21st Century modern health-care hospitals and clinics and not the ones that were designed after World War I. That is what we have to do. (Applause)

On the benefit side of the house, as you know, one of my highest priorities is to reduce the backlog of claims. Here, too, with your advocacy, the help of the VFW National Service Officers, we have made progress. When I became Secretary, the backlog was about 650,000 claims. We were underwater. We had to get to the surface or we were going to drown. We brought in new leadership, we increased the staff. We started holding people accountable for the first time. We established performance standards and changed the way we do business. In 2001, we decided 481,000 claims. That sounds like a sizable number.

At the end of last year, 2003, we decided 827,000 claims, mostly for disability compensation. That is real progress. We need to do more to decide these claims. Too many veterans are dying before decisions on their claims. I am confident that we will continue to do so in the future.

Finally, let me say that we also have another responsibility, and that's to ensure that veterans who pass on are interred in national shrines, in cemeteries that we can be proud of. Regrettably, we are losing about 1,800 veterans a day. Many are World War II veterans. Korea and Vietnam are regrettably close behind.

We simply do not have the interment space. I am very proud that the President and the Congress have authorized me to open up eleven new national cemeteries, five before the end of next year, and six by 2009, to increase our interment capacity by 85 percent. That is the largest expansion of our cemetery system since the Civil War. I think that is a great step forward.

In closing, I want you to know that a few weeks ago I returned from Iraq. I went over for two purposes. First and foremost, to thank our troops. I have two sons in Iraq and I had been wanting to get there to thank this magnificent cadre of men and women in uniform.

Let me tell you, I thought I had fought with the best in Vietnam, and I still believe that in my heart, but I want you to know the men and women in uniform today in Iraq and Afghanistan, around the world, are the best in our nation's history. They are smarter, they are more courageous, and they are compassionate. (Applause)

America, the world is so blessed, so very blessed, to have these men and women. You know, when I was there a bomb went off, a car bomb went off by some coward who just wanted to kill the innocent rather than to improve the life of their own people. It was the American soldiers that went over and cared for those wounded Iraqi civilians. It was the American soldier who embraced the fathers and the mothers of people who were killed in that car bomb. They are the best. The media may not always portray it that way, but they are future members of this organization and we need to stand by them. I commit to you when they come home we will be there for them. (Applause)

Again, thanks for what you do, my deepest appreciation for this award, and I accept it on behalf of the 223,000 people of my Department who day in and day out bring the VA to life. We are not perfect, but we will continue to strive to redeem the debt we owe to you and your comrades. God bless you and God bless the men and women who defend our great nation. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW-MIA

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA (Post 144 - Massachusetts):
Comrade Commander-in-Chief, prior to that break we had completed the

report on the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. I would like at this time to call to the podium Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart, the Chairman of the POW-MIA Subcommittee, to report on your Subcommittee resolutions.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART (Post 483 - New Hampshire): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Commander-in-Chief, Members and Delegates of this convention:

I am proud to report that our POW-MIA Subcommittee convened in Room 244 of the Cincinnati Convention Center, Monday afternoon, August 16, at 1:00 o'clock p.m. Your instructions were read, procedures were discussed.

The designated members of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee met to consider the following resolutions regarding POW-MIA issues. The Subcommittee listened to two guest speakers, the Honorable Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Director of Defense on POW Missing Personnel Office from Washington, D.C., and Brigadier

General Montague Winfield, Commander, Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command, JPAC, from Hawaii. Mr. Jennings provided the POW-MIA Subcommittee with an update on activities and initiatives of the Defense Prisoners of Wars and the Missing Personnel Office.

He was followed by General Winfield, who provided an overview of the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command and their activities for this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chairman of this Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer, and also our Adviser Bob Manhan, Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs.

Commander, with your permission, I will begin with the POW-MIA Subcommittee report. Let me assure you, comrades, when we left that meeting there was no doubt in my mind, and I want to echo the words of the Secretary by saying that we have the finest, the brightest, the most dedicated men and women who wear the uniform in this country, and we need to send a loud and clear message to each and every one of them. If we ever to send any men or women into harm's way, we will not leave without accounting for each and every one of them.

I will now proceed with reading the resolutions that the Committee recommends for approval as written.

Resolution 401, Support Public Awareness Projects.

Resolution No. 403, Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms.

Resolution No. 405, Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States of America.

Resolution No. 406, No Time Restraints for POW-MIA Accounting.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that we support the Committee's recommendations.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER (Post 6869- Illinois): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: You have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? If there is no discussion, we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART (Post 483 - New Hampshire): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I will now read the resolutions the Committee recommends for approval, as amended.

Resolution No. 402, Assist Vietnam's Recovery of MIAs as a Sign of Good Faith.

Resolution No. 404 - A Full Accounting for Commander Speicher.

Resolution No. 407 - Support of House Resolution 103 to Establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, at this time I move that we support these recommendations.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER (Post 6869-Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion at any of the microphones? Any discussion? If not, we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

INTRODUCTION OF COMRADE ROBLEY REX

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, I am going to take a point of personal privilege this morning and introduce to you a comrade that I met a year ago, a good comrade of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His name is Robley Rex. That gives you an idea, if you have a name like Robley Rex, how old you possibly could be.

He is a World War I veteran and he is 103 years young. He is the oldest veteran in the State of Kentucky. Now, I met him at a VFW Post in Kentucky on my tour last year, and I had to wait a few minutes because he had been dancing and was a little out of breath.

However, I want you to know that Robley's volunteer hours that he spends at the VA Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, amount to more than 12,000 helping veterans and their widows. For the past 30 years, he has served as the Chaplain and Service Officer at Post 8369 in Louisville and has never missed a monthly meeting.

However, the last National Convention he attended was in Cincinnati in 1924. He was married to his late wife, Grace, for 68 years. He says he still loves pretty women. Robley's favorite saying is, "A friend is the most favorable thing in life."

Even after 75 years of service to veterans, Robley's message and beaming smile keeps going as long as he does. Freedom cannot prevail without loyalty to God's laws and law of our land, as he says. If you will allow me the privilege to jump down off this dais for a minute and present the oldest veteran from the State of Kentucky the Commander-in-Chief's

medallion, I would say thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF MAJOR GENERAL DAVID E. KRATZER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, it is now my pleasure to introduce Army Reserve Major General David E. Kratzer, the Commanding General of the 377th Theater Support Command from New Orleans.

The General was deployed for almost two years to Afghanistan for Operation Enduring Freedom and to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom

Under his logistics command were 43,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines, who provided every level of service imaginable in a deployed environment, from food, fuel and ammunition, to medical, security and fire protection. General Kratzer has commanded three companies, two battalions and a group. He is a distinguished military graduate from the Western Illinois University's ROTC program, and he is also a graduate of the Army War College.

However, before I bring him up, I just want to pass on a quote from the General that was published in the Army magazine last fall. He said: "We are here for one reason only, to take care of that soldier who is in the fox-hole. If you keep that goal in mind, then everything else fits into place."

That quote speaks volumes about the quality of leadership our military has today. Please help me give a warm VFW welcome to Major General David Kratzer. (Applause)

REMARKS - MAJOR GENERAL DAVID E. KRATZER

MAJOR GENERAL KRATZER: Thank you, thank you very much. Well, good morning. What a pleasure it is to be here with you today.

Commander-in-Chief Banas, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Veterans: I bring greetings from Lieutenant General James Helmly, Chief of the United States Army Reserve, and the 202,000 men and women serving today in the United States Army Reserve. I am also proud to serve as a citizen soldier. It has been my honor to be the Commander twice, once in Afghanistan and again in Kuwait and then Iraq.

I am also an administrator for the University of Florida, so I declare you all Gator fans right now. Some people took exception to that. I am sorry. We are off to a rough start. (Laughter) Well, let me tell you today's Army Reserve is an organization focused on soldiers, engaged in the global war on terrorism, integrated into the joint force, and for the first time it is an all-volunteer force. That is a remarkable thing.

If you look at this chart, the Army Reserve has changed from a force and reserves to an integral part of the world's joint force. The Army has been deployed more in the last 12 years than it was in the previous 75. Our units

have had a great deal of experience and now they can mobilize quickly and effectively.

As General Helmly said, we have changed the way we change. Today, the United States Army Reserve has over 36,000 soldiers serving on active duty. Over 25,000 of those soldiers are in the CENTCOM area of operation. Almost 10,000 of them are in the United States keeping us safe today.

The United States Army Reserve represents a tremendous bargain for America. As you will see on the next slide, we represent only six percent of the budget, but 29 percent of the combat support, and 44 percent of the entire Army Combat Service Units.

We bring civilian skills to the job. Ninety-six percent of the Army Civil Affairs is in the Reserve. Those are the folks doing the heavy lifting right now in Afghanistan and Iraq. It represents most of the transportation, military police, our medical units, the Reserve component, the doctors, the nurses, the dentists.

These are the young men and women out there today in 118 to 130-degree heat, who are hauling the fuel and the ammo and water. Since the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, more than 100,000 soldiers in the Army Reserve have been immobilized to support the global war on terrorism.

They represent over 2,000 communities, your communities. Our soldiers are the linkage to the folks back home. You-all know someone who is deployed today, I bet. This is what it is all about. The courage and patriotism of the individual soldier out there today, who is on patrol, who is in that convoy, bringing peace to war-torn communities throughout the world, has been greatly tested.

Our Army Reserve soldiers are standing watch for us tonight in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Iraq, and many other outposts in all of the bad neighborhoods around the world. Who are they? Well, they are the 75th Training Division out of Houston, Texas.

Those soldiers are there training the new Iraqi Army today. They are the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade from Riverside, Maryland, helping rebuild Iraq during this transition. They work very closely with the Third I.D. and the First Armor before they are deployed, and now these soldiers are getting ready to be deployed and come home as well. They are the 361st First Brigade from Decatur, Alabama. Those soldiers ran the joint military mail terminals up in Baghdad and processed 90 million tons of mail.

They are also represented by the oldest enlisted soldier serving in Iraq, Sergeant First Class Kluger, a little over 59 years old, out of Ft. Lauderdale. Sergeant Kluger is a Vietnam veteran and he is also an iron man. He runs iron man competitions and he is a triathlete. They are represented by Captain John Smathers from Laurel, Maryland. John came home with four Bronze Stars, two Purple Hearts, a broken left arm and a damaged left knee. John said he would go back today.

I mentioned before that General Helmly said we had changed the

way we change. We are re-engineering our systems to be fast, flexible and ready. The President talked about repositioning our forces to be more expeditionary. Well, we have in the Army Reserve, General Helmly has launched a plan to actually recreate and transition the Army Reserve while we are at war.

The Army Reserve is going to change. It is going to become ten expeditionary packages, each one capable of deploying, hopefully for about six months, returning home and then coming back. This is for the future, and this is what is going on right now, so we will have ten of those packages.

So, the Reservist will know over a five or six-year span, they will stand in the door for one year every five years. If anything happens, they know they are the ones that will go to war. They will be the first ones out. If that year passes and nothing happens, they go back into a training cycle. We have got to do this.

We have got to give some predictability to our soldiers so that when they know that they are reaching that time of deployability, they can talk to their families and they can talk to their employers, and we can do a better job than we have ever done in our history. We are doing that today

The Army Reserve is receiving the most modern training and equipment available. General Helmly has made it pretty clear it doesn't matter what component you are from. If you are in combat, if you are going to be deployed, you get the best stuff.

I flew in here with a young man, a Specialist McCain, who lives in Covington, Kentucky, who is home for his two weeks in the middle of his year of deployment. He didn't know I was a General. I said, "Son, I have got to give a speech tomorrow. I am going to talk about the Army. What do you want me to say?" I have got some stuff to take back. Our soldiers have not changed." I said, "How is life?"

He said, "The food sucks." I got that. He said, "You know, it is pretty amazing, we have got the Internet. We are an hour and a half away from the nearest base camp, about 800 soldiers out there in that outpost." And he said, "We have got the Internet. I can talk to my wife, not every day but at least once a week.

"They have these little cameras that sit up on the computer and we can do teleconferences when we are talking to each other. There is an MWR Center and there is a telephone bank there. Our soldiers are learning to use the Joint Deployment Logistics Model, JDLM. You are saying what in the heck is that?

Let me tell you something, during the first days of the war we launched into Iraq, a terrible sandstorm hit. We couldn't see anything out there. The trucks couldn't see, the convoys couldn't see the bumper in front of them. But because they had this thing called a Mobile Tracking System, it kind of looks like a North Star System on a Cadillac sitting on top of their vehicle, through a satellite we could watch them.

"So, we actually could track logistics elements for the first time on

the battlefield and we could tell these guys. We saw one convoy that was going straight in the sandstorm, and it veered over to the left. We sent a text message to the cab of that truck to turn right about 600 meters and then turn left, and you are back." He typed back, "Thanks a lot."

We found out that the logistics forces were getting hit later, and our convoy forces. The enemy was trying to interdict our supply lines. They are trying to do that. We halted everything. We formed a training center up in Northern Kuwait and we put all of our convoy forces through live fire training, right in the middle of the war.

They stopped and they couldn't go forward until they had their live fire convoy training. I had two company commanders come to me and said that was the best training they ever had and that it saved lives.

Today we are doing that live convoy training. That is standard procedure now for units going over from the United States before they are ever deployed. Our units are also learning military operations in urban terrain. We are learning to operate in and amongst these buildings in urban centers.

These logistics folks are doing a great job out there. By the way, when you hear it is 118 degrees, it is not really. If you measure that about health level, the reflection of the sun off the sand is like an oven. It is about 130 degrees. These kids are out there today getting the job done.

This is an awards ceremony in Kuwait. These were soldiers. Some of my soldier are actually just redeploying from Iraq. Those are Bronze Stars. This is a new generation of heroes returning today. They have answered the call to patriotic service just like you did, and in the next ten years they are going to be our leaders.

These are the people who are going to enter elections and get into the House, and they are going to get into the Senate. You are going to see more of our leaders who are veterans and who have experience. "Why are we there? Why don't we get out?" I hear that all the time, "Why are we there?"

Let me tell you something, December, 2001, I deployed a small team. We flew in and we were inserted at night into Balkh Air Base in Afghanistan and worked our way down to Kubal. What I saw was 30 years of war, the destruction and devastation of the Capital City reduced to rubble.

It looked like Dresden after World War II. If we left that country alone, it become the exporter of drugs and a training ground for terrorists that found its way to our shores on September 11. We have brought stability to the country. We have given the Afghanistan people a chance to enter the world in a safe way.

We have now the same opportunity in Iraq. This is tough business. Some of our units have been extended nine months, twelve months, boots on the ground, and some beyond twelve months. But they are getting the job done. Most of them want a normal life.

They want safety, they want good schools for their children and they want adequate care. The world is watching and we can make a differ-

ence. We can give them a chance. This is my unit. This is the day they were getting ready to deploy. That was back in 2001. We are still there.

We are ready for tomorrow. Our men and women answered the call. We are the best trained, most experienced Army Reserve in the history. If you don't believe that, go to your local Army Reserve Center and look at the right shoulder and see how many combat patches are there.

These are the new warriors. They are going to return and when they return they will be going back to their old jobs. They will be your firemen, your policemen, your letter carriers, your lawyers and your dentists. This couldn't even be more timely. I couldn't have done this if I had tried.

Ten days ago, right there standing with me and the best Command Sergeant Major in the United States Army is Colonel Mark Hatchett, retired now from New Orleans VFW. He delivered 250 phone cards to my headquarters in time for the next rotation of our troops to take them with them when they go back overseas. Operation Uplink is working. Thanks.

I am here to ask you to do the tough job which you have always done, and that is to stay the course and support our troops. Stay behind us. These kids need to know that you are there, just as you have always been there, and welcome them back home. God bless you and thank you for inviting me here today. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, General Kratzer, On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we would like to present to you this Courage and Conviction silver medallion of the Commander-in-Chief. Thank you so much for your service. Thank you for being with us. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT TO KEN POND, AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: One of the many responsibilities of the American Battle Monuments Commission is to administer, maintain, and operate American memorials and overseas military cemeteries. This is no small task. There are 24 permanent American military burial grounds on foreign soil with nearly 125,000 U.S. war dead interred and 21 separate monuments honoring American armed forces where they served.

Ken Pond has fulfilled the role of Executive Director with untiring and superlative efforts. His broad experience and understanding of the needs of America's veterans have ensured a better appreciation of the missions and activities of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

In recognition of his exceptionally strong support for the construction of the World War II Memorial, we are pleased to present the VFW Gold Medal of Merit to Retired Army Colonel Kenneth S. Pond, the Executive Director of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Please join me in welcoming Ken Pond for this presentation. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads, "VFW Gold Medal of Merit to Colonel Kenneth S. Pond, USA (Ret.),

Executive Director, American Battle Monuments Commission.

“In recognition of his untiring and superlative efforts as Executive Director of the American Battle Monuments Commission and his outstanding support to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States during visits by national leaders of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary to American Cemeteries overseas. His dynamic leadership, broad experience and understanding of the needs of America’s veterans have ensured a better appreciation of the mission and activities of the American Battle Monuments Commission. His exceptionally strong support and significant role in the construction of the World War II Memorial earns him the admiration and appreciation of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2004. Approved by the Council of Administration.”

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - KEN POND

COMRADE KEN POND: Commander-in-Chief Banas, Distinguished Guests, Veterans of Foreign Wars:

I can’t begin to tell you how humble I am to receive this award. I probably do not deserve it, but then I have got arthritis and I don’t deserve that, either. For the past 17 years, I have had the high honor of serving in the American Battle Monuments Commission, one of the greatest organizations in America.

A personal highlight of these years has been the opportunity that it gave me to associate both professionally and personally with my fellow friends in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I can’t help but reminisce just a moment. I know you are on a tight schedule, but I must tell you a story that happened 15 years ago in the eternal city of Rome.

I was meeting your Commander-in-Chief at that time, Wally Hogan, who had invited my wife and I to a dinner party, and so we came to pick up Wally at this very nice hotel. Many of you may think Paris is the fashion center of Europe, but there are those in Rome who argue with you.

Here comes Wally down the steps with his wife, and I bring my wife in, and both of these lovely ladies are in the exact same dress. It is impossible to believe, but to show you what great sports they were, we went out and we had a great time.

One of the humorous things that I remember about my many years, in my 17 years in association with the VFW, for 17 years we have had great Commanders-in-Chief who have given us support, and not only the Commander-in-Chief but the entire organization; all of you that are sitting there.

The staff in Kansas City has been absolutely fantastic. Sir, I must tell you that you are well fortified in Washington. Mr. Bob Wallace and his right

arm, Leo Andrew, have been there at times when we, as a member of the Federal Government of the United States, were unable to speak, but if we whispered could speak, and they really helped us get where we were going.

Former President Ronald Reagan is the deepest and noblest aspiration of the human spirit." No one exemplifies this truth more than you who sit here today. Each of you traveled to distant shores in defense of freedom. Each of you heard the guns.

Each of you risked your life for freedom. Every day the light of freedom shines in each of you because you carry the proud title of veteran. We veterans, who have tasted combat in the service of our country, share a bond that transcends any word by the name of friendship.

Because of who you are and what you are, this award means much more to me than you will ever know. It will hang in my home as I go into retirement, and I will see your faces. I will see that long legion of men and women who came to the forefront to defend our nation, to make it a free nation and to pass a free nation, today a free nation, forever a free nation, because we will have you taking care of us.

So, I thank you for this award from the bottom of my heart, and I will always remember this day. Now, as we say in the military when we are transmitting to the Navy or one of these other guys, "Break, break, new subject."

One good deed deserves another. Wherever you were on May 29th, 2004, the day we dedicated the National World War II Memorial, you know what an emotional day it was. Hundreds of thousands of veterans gathered in Washington and millions watched on television across the country.

I doubt Washingtonians have ever seen anything like it. American Battle Monuments Commission, I thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars for your long support for this tribute to the World War II generation. The VFW's \$6 million donation was the largest financial contribution of any organization, any veterans organization to the memorial fund-raising campaign.

It is not an understatement to say that this memorial could not have been built without the active participation of this proud organization. On behalf of our Chairman, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, General P. X. Kelley, and the Commissioners of the American Battle Monuments Commission, it is my honor to present to you a token of our appreciation for this very generous financial support of the memorial project.

At this time I would like to have all World War II veterans to stand. Please stand and please remain standing, because as I present this painting to your Commander-in-Chief, I am symbolically presenting it to each and every one of you, the greatest generation that ever lived. You did nothing less than save the world.

This painting is a replica of the great memorial that is not for you but is for your children and your children's children to always know what great achievements that you had and that you gave to us. It is in your great memory.

We hope this canvas reproduction of the official World War II portrait tribute to a generation will hang proudly in your headquarters as a vis-

ible reminder of the important role the VFW played in the World War II Memorial. Thank you for your service to this great nation, for your long-standing and generous support to the World War II Memorial, and thank you for the personal honor you have bestowed on me today. God bless our veterans and the nation they serve. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

Your Commander-in-Chief said that I had done so well he wants me to speak for another hour and 30 minutes — not really. (Laughter) He wants me to let you know that we raised \$195 million. Generally speaking, you know, we are like building a house. When you build a house, once you turn it over to the owner, you have to fix up a few things. There are a few more dollars that have to be spent.

But we are going to have about \$20 million in our pocket when this is over, thanks to you. Although the monument will belong to the Park Service, as we are the guardian of the war dead, we will be the guardian of this World War II Memorial and we will make sure it is in fantastic shape. It is thanks to you that we can do this. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I believe, comrades, that beautiful picture will more than likely be displayed in Ketcham Hall at your Washington Headquarters. I encourage each and every one of you, when you come to the Legislative Committee meetings this coming spring, that you stop by and view it.

INTRODUCTION OF ARMED FORCES AWARD RECIPIENTS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: This morning, we have the privilege of recognizing our nation's citizen soldiers. Throughout our nation's history, generations of Reserve and National Guard members have demonstrated their unique courage and devotion to country in time of peace and during time of war.

Please join me in welcoming the representatives of our Reserve and National Guard services. Unfortunately, because of a last-minute mission change, a representative of the Air Force is not able to attend. However, please join me in welcoming Rear Admiral Charles Williams from the Naval Reserve; Major General David E. Kratzer, from the Army Reserve; Colonel Michael R. Pannell, Marine Reserve; Rear Admiral John Atkins, United States Coast Guard Reserve; and Brigadier General Gregory Wayt, National Guard Bureau. (Applause)

Before the Admiral speaks, I want to just relay one message on behalf of the body to you gentlemen, that we know that the Guard and Reserve have been taxed immensely in supporting the mission of the United States Government, and we know very, very fairly that 99.41 percent of the people support our armed forces simply because of the injection of the Guard and Reserve.

Every time someone turns around, their doctor is gone, their nurse is gone, the man that fixes their car is no longer there. All of a sudden the

military are no longer of people in some distant port, they are people who have left their neighborhood. I can tell you that the Veterans of Foreign Wars supports each and every member of your respective services. Thank you very much. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads, "Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to the Reserve Forces," and they will all get the same citation and medal, "For outstanding service to our nation through their dedication and commitment, to furthering America's ideals.

"Since the birth of our nation, Americans have taken up arms to protect and preserve the American dream. These modern day minutemen continue to defend freedom and democracy at home and around the globe, reflecting the integrity, stellar character and American Spirit of true citizen soldiers.

"Presented Tuesday, August 17th, 2004.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Approved by the National Council of Administration, Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General."

RESPONSE - REAR ADMIRAL JOHN ATKINS

REAR ADMIRAL ATKINS: On behalf of the 2,900 Naval Reservists currently deployed in Iraq and the over 10,000 Naval Reservists that have been mobilized since 9-11, I thank you for the award. The Chief of Naval Operations likes to refer to our uniform as a nation's cloth and I know no group who probably better knows what it means to wear the nation's cloth than the folks in this room. Thank you very much. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MAJOR GENERAL DAVID KRATZER

MAJOR GENERAL KRATZER: Ladies and gentlemen, you have already heard from me. This is a proud moment. I accept this award on behalf of the 202,000 men and women serving in the United States Army Reserve today, and that plaque will reside proudly in the Chief of the Army Reservist's office in the Pentagon as a reminder of you and your service to your country. We will continue to fight. Thank you. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COLONEL MICHAEL PANNELL

COLONEL PANNELL: On behalf of Lieutenant General Dennis McCarthy and as a proud lifetime member of the Whitehall, Ohio, VFW Post, along with my father, it is my pleasure and deep honor to accept this award. Thank you. (Applause)

RESPONSE - CAPTAIN MICHAEL PRICE

CAPTAIN PRICE: Good morning. Any Coast Guard Operational Commander can tell you that they could not accomplish their missions and perform the heavy lift necessary without the support of the Coast Guard Reserve since 9-11. In fact, we have recalled 75 percent of our Reserve force, and many multiple times, many still on active duty.

On behalf of those men and women of the United States Coast Guard I accept this award and thank you very much. (Applause)

RESPONSE - BRIGADIER GENERAL GREGORY WAYT

BRIGADIER GENERAL WAYT: Ladies and gentlemen, I am here representing Lieutenant General Blum, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and on his behalf and the 350,000 Army National Guard men and women, and the 107,000 Air National Guard men and women, so I am representing the Air Guard and I am representing the Air Force, and I just want to say thank you.

There are 84,000 Army National Guard soldiers that are now mobilized in Iraq, Kosovo and many other places around the world. So, we are deeply honored to accept this award today. Thank you. (Applause)

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We will now have the report of the Veterans Service Committee by its Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief James N. Goldsmith.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLDSMITH (Post 4139- Michigan): Good morning. Commander Banas, I report that your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 o'clock p.m., Sunday, August 15, 2004. Roll call was taken and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate each of the 106 resolutions that were assigned.

The Subcommittees were established as follows:

Subcommittee 1 on Medical Programs, chaired by Ken Tee from Florida, and Vice-Chairman Frank Lightower from Rhode Island. The Staff Advisors were Michael O'Rourke, Assistant, Veterans Health Policies, and Fred Burns, National Veterans Service Field Representative, and Chris Needham from the National Legislative Service.

Subcommittee No. 2, Employment, chaired by Don Porter from Illinois, and Rollin' Joe from California as Vice-Chairman. The Staff Advisor was Jim Magill, Veterans Employment.

Subcommittee No. 3 was Veterans Benefits and Entitlements, chaired by Tom Hansen from Minnesota, and Vice-Chairman George Langford from Georgia. The Staff Advisor was Sid Daniels, of Benefit Policies, Larry Berman, Assistant Director of Field Service, and Theresa Moore, Manager of the Action Corps.

Before proceeding to the report, I wish to take a moment to express appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Director of National Veterans Service, Jim Magill, Director of Employment, and Dennis Cullinan, Director of National Legislation for their valuable technical guidance which they and their staff provided to the Committee.

I also want to thank Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier from the great state of Texas for serving as Vice-Chairman of this very important Convention Committee.

Commander, with your permission I will begin the Committee report by presenting those resolutions the Committee recommends to be approved as written. Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier will then proceed with the report of those resolutions that were approved, as amended. Finally, I will conclude by presenting the resolutions that the Committee recommends for rejection.

If for any reason you or the delegates to this convention would like a resolution set aside for further discussion, please so indicate after we have completed each segment of the report.

I will now proceed by reading the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval as written.

No. 601, Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget.

No. 602, Concurrent Receipt of Retirement Pay and Veterans' Disability Compensation.

No. 603, Timely Access to Quality Health Care.

No. 604, Federal Employees Health Benefit Program as an Option for Military Retirees.

No. 605, Entitlement to Nursing Home Care.

No. 607, Effective Veterans Employment and Training System.

No. 608, VA Health Care for Women Veterans.

No. 609, No Increase and Repeal of VA Home Loan Funding Fees.

No. 610, Mandatory Funding for Veterans Health Care.

No. 611, VA Medicare Subvention.

No. 612, Small Business Administration Veterans Programs.

No. 613, Veterans Undiagnosed Illnesses.

No. 614, Exempt VA Disability Compensation in Determination of Eligibility for HUD's Assisted Senior Housing Program.

No. 615, Support for the Guard and Reserve.

No. 616, Specially Adapted Housing Allowance.

No. 617, Presumptive Service Connection for Tinnitus and Hearing Loss.

No. 618, Licensure and Certification.

No. 619, Adequate Funding for State Veterans Homes Programs.

No. 620, Congressional Funding for the VA National Rehabilitative Special Events.

No. 621, Veterans Preference.

No. 622, Workforce Investment Act.

No. 623, Presumption of Service Connection for Veterans Suffering

from Hepatitis "C".

No. 624, Increased Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to Surviving Spouses of Service Members Who Die While on Active Duty.

No. 625, A GI Bill for the 21st Century.

No. 626, Homeless Veterans.

No. 627, Reinstatement of VA Priority Group Category 8.

No. 628, Require that Certain Veterans Employment and Training Service Positions be Staffed by Veterans.

No. 629, Include Dental Care as part of the Veterans Uniform Benefits Package.

No. 630, Improve Veterans Prescription Drug Access.

No. 631, Change Disability Pension Eligibility Requirements.

No. 632, Repeal of the Montgomery GI Bill Pay Reduction Provision.

No. 633, Place World War II Veterans in Enrollment Priority Category 6 for VA Health Care Purposes.

No. 634, Attorney Fee-Based Representation at VA Regional Offices.

No. 635, Refund of Montgomery GI Bill Contributions.

No. 636, Additional Benefits and Services to Veterans Children with Spina Bifida.

No. 637, VA to Pay for Nursing Home Care in State Homes.

No. 638, Military Retiree Survivor Benefit Plan Reduction.

No. 639, Exempt Priority Group Category 5 from Paying VA Medication Co-Payments.

No. 640, Provide Sufficient Funding for the Local Veterans Employment Representative and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists.

No. 641, Support for Veteran and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business Ventures.

No. 642, Increase Service Members Group Life Insurance.

No. 643, Emergency Care Services for All VA Enrolled Veterans.

No. 644, Increase in Special Monthly Compensation.

No. 645, Women Veterans Health Care.

No. 646, Uniformed Services Divorce Equity Act.

No. 647, Minimum Compensation for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus for Combat Veterans.

No. 648, Honor Promises to Temporary Early Retirement Authority Retirees.

No. 649, Extend Presumption of Service Connection for Korean Agent Orange Veterans.

No. 650, Provide Grave Liners for All Eligible Beneficiaries Who Desire Burial in a National Cemetery.

No. 684, Reaffirm Support for the Transitional Assistance Program for All Separating and Retiring Military Personnel.

No. 685, Reaffirm Support for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act.

No. 696, Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service Connected Illnesses Caused by Asbestos Exposure.

No. 699, Government Headstones.

No. 701, Amend Internal Revenue Code for the State Veterans Home Mortgage Bond Program.

No. 702, Furnish Headstones or Markers for the Marked Graves of Certain Individuals.

No. 705, Support for Memorial Commemorating the Sacrifices of America's Disabled Veterans.

No. 706, Sexual Trauma Treatment for all Veterans.

Commander-in-Chief, I request that you entertain a motion to accept the Committee's recommendation for the approval of the resolutions, and I make that motion.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER (Post 8919-Texas): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion? Any discussion? Any discussion? There is no discussion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed "nay". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES NIER (Post 8919-Texas): Commander-in-Chief, I will now read the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended.

No. 606, Establish Presumption of Service Connection for Radiation Related Disabilities.

No. 654, National Guard and Reserves.

No. 659, Petition the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense to Establish a Breast Cancer Screening Program.

No. 665, Definition for Service-Connection for VA Benefits Purposes.

No. 667, Resolution Concerning Burial Plot Allowance.

No. 675, Veterans' Preference in Federal Employment.

No. 689, Respect Obligations to Survivor Benefit Plan Beneficiaries.

No. 690, Commissary and Exchange Privileges for Purple Heart Recipients, Disabled Veterans, and their Dependents, as a Way for America to Say Thank You.

No. 692, Discounted Drug Prices. Service Connection for Melanoma with Related Disabilities.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee recommends and I move to accept the Committee's recommendations to approve these resolutions, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? There is no discussion and we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): I will read the title of the resolutions that the Committee rec-

ommends for rejection. Once again, if you want any of those set aside, if you would be so kind as to wait until we get them all read and then tell us your wishes.

No. 651, Rejected, to Provide Funding Support for Post Service Officers.

No. 652, Establish an Award to Recognize Outstanding VA Employees.

No. 653, State Veterans Home Loan Programs.

No. 655, Presumption of Service-Connection for Gulf War Veterans.

No. 656, Burial Plot Allowance.

No. 657, State Veterans Homes.

No. 658, Requesting Military Records.

No. 660, Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service Connected Illnesses Caused by Asbestos Exposure.

No. 661, Require that TWC Veteran be Veterans and Disabled Outreach Staff be Disabled Veterans.

No. 662, Retain the Position of DVOP and LVER with the Department of Labor.

No. 663, Require that Vets Positions be Veterans.

No. 664, Require LVER & DVOP Program Staff to Serve Only Veterans.

No. 666, State Veterans Nursing Home Care.

No. 668, State Veterans Home Loan Programs.

No. 669, National Guard and Reserves.

No. 670, Presumption of Service-Connection for Gulf War Veterans.

No. 671, Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service-Connected Illnesses Cased by Asbestos Exposure.

No. 672, Veterans' Preference in Employment Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist, Local Veterans' Employment Representative, Assistant Secretary Veterans Employment and Training, Regional Administrator Veterans, Director Vets and Other Vets Staff.

No. 673, Veterans Employment & Training Service.

No. 674, Department of Veterans Affairs Employment.

No. 676, Licensing and Certification for Military Training.

No. 677, Civilian Credentials for Military Training and Experience.

No. 678, Veterans Preference in Employment.

No. 679, Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation.

No. 680, Employee Protection in Employment for Treatment at VA Facilities.

No. 681, Require that States make Veterans Service Organizations as Mandatory Partners in any State, County or Local Board Organized to Provide in Federally Funded Employment and Training Programs.

No. 682, Support Job Protection for Service Connected Disabled Veterans Requiring Visits at VA Facilities.

No. 683, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Eligibility.

No. 686, Support Improvements of Veterans Employment and Training

Service Performance Standards.

No. 687, State Veterans Nursing Homes.

No. 688, Increase the Federal Burial Plot Allowance.

No. 691, Service Officer Support for Concurrent Recipients.

No. 694, Definition for Service Connection for VA Benefits Purposes.

No. 695, No Contracting of Twin Ports VA Outpatient Clinic.

No. 697, Memorial Burial Flag.

No. 700, United States Flag for Burial Purpose.

No. 703, Support for VA Paying its Fair Share of the Cost of Caring for Veterans Residing in State Veterans Home Programs.

No. 704, Veterans Employment Preference with the U.S. Government Overseas.

If you want any of those to be set aside, do it at this time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CLINTON BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): Commander-in-Chief, I am Clint Bucher, Post 7, Commander of Minnesota. I have a question, please. Is No. 678 recommended for rejection?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): You are asking No. 678 be set aside?

COMRADE CLINTON BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): Yes, sir.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): It is done.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Any other set asides?

COMRADE CLINTON BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): I move adoption of No. 678.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We need a second.

COMRADE JOE SCHIRMERS (Post 4847 - Minnesota): I will second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Any discussion? Microphone No. 2, do you have discussion?

COMRADE CLINTON BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): Yes. I believe that Resolution 678, Veterans' Preference in Employment, should, in fact, be something that the VFW stands for, and all agencies be required to give veterans preference in employment.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): I would like to have Jim Magill, our Employment Director, to speak on that. Our notes that we have on this is that it has already been accomplished.

COMRADE JIM MAGILL: Comrades, when we reviewed this resolution, we determined that it is already required by law. Also, in the "Be It Resolved" they called for preference based on promotion. That should be based on your ability to do the job and not with respect to your status as a veteran.

COMRADE CLINTON BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): I wish to rebut that, that a veteran should not be considered in promotion. I most certainly believe that a veteran's status should be considered in promotion

on a federal job.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Is there any other discussion on the floor? If not, we will vote on the question for adoption of No. 678. An “aye” vote is to accept and a “nay” vote is to reject. All those in favor will signify by saying “aye”; all those opposed “nay”. It has failed.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): Commander-in-Chief, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for assigning me to this Committee. It has been my pleasure to work with you. That concludes our report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Your Committee is now dismissed, Past Commander-in-Chief Goldsmith.

INTRODUCTION OF SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: A trip to almost any VA Hospital would reveal the importance of the work of the Military Order of the Cootie. Each year the Cooties spend thousands of hours bringing a moment of pleasure to our hospitalized veterans. Their commitment to “Keep ‘Em Smiling in Beds of White” is a grand tribute to the service and sacrifice of all veterans.

Our next guest was elected Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie at that organization’s 84th Supreme Scratch in San Antonio, Texas, in August of 2003.

Please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Rollin’ Joe Velasquez. (Applause)

REMARKS - SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE, JOE VELASQUEZ

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER VELASQUEZ: Good morning, comrades. We can do better than that. Good morning, comrades. Yes, you are alive. Chief, first, I would like to say it has been an honor to serve with you, sir. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It is reciprocal.

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER VELASQUEZ: What are the Cooties? In my travels, I hear that extensively: “What are the Cooties?” A group of individuals, Spanish-American and World War I veterans in the early 1920s, got together with the intent of forming a fun organization, an honor organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and in those days these warriors of the Spanish-American and World War I knew of the troubles and the hardships they were having in their federal hospitals.

VA Hospitals did not exist in those days. They were federal hospitals. They were not great places to be. They wanted to add some life to them. They wanted to come up with a name that would inspire frivolity. That is a pretty good word. That is fun, p-h-u-n.

Thinking back to World War I, we found that was a horrible war. No war is good, not trench warfare, or hand-to-hand combat. What was one thing they could reflect back on that might be funny? Well, living in those trenches for days and days and months, pretty much everybody had body lice.

At the time it was not very funny, but in retrospect, speaking now, all those combat soldiers were lousy, it is kind of funny. They had different names for these louses, blanket bumps, sea worlds, high dimlits. So, he thought we will call ourselves the Military Order of the Cootie.

They formed with the intent of supporting the Veterans of Foreign Wars and supporting hospitalized veterans. That is what we do in conjunction with our Ladies Auxiliary. I am proud to say we are doing a fantastic job. This last year the Military Order of the Cootie recruited 11,915 new VFW members, which exceeded last year's total by 2,500.

The Military Order of the Cootie ladies donated \$801,387.22 to the VFW Post projects, quadrupling last year's donations. We participated in 56,599 projects within our Posts. We earned nearly \$7 million in Veterans Administration volunteer service hours of credit.

Only 1.7 percent of the Veterans of Foreign Wars are Cooties. That is less than 24,000. We did \$7 million worth of hospital work. We donated to our National Home cash money of \$108,702.97. That is equal to almost \$5 per member that we have. We recruited 994 new Military Order of the Cootie members, reinstated 341, and converted 328 to Life Membership.

Comrades, the Cooties are doing their job. Could I have all the Cooties in the room to please rise? That is 1.7 room. We are doing our work. We are indeed the honor degree of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. God bless you all and God bless the United States of America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Rollin' Joe, the privilege has been all mine. Thank you very much for your service. Comrades, we are going along very smoothly this morning and probably will finish much sooner than you anticipated. So, your continued support for the rest of the morning is essential.

INTRODUCTION OF COMRADE JAN SCRUGGS - FOUNDER, VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Our next guest is well known to most of us. Jan Scruggs is the Founder and President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. He conceived the idea of building the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the most visited monument in Washington, D.C., with more than 40 million people visiting the Memorial since its dedication in 1982.

Serving as President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc., the non-profit organization responsible for building and maintaining the Memorial, Jan spearheaded the fund-raising efforts that raised \$8.4 million for that Memorial.

His on-going efforts are a great reflection of his love for his country and for all of those who served in Vietnam. Please join me in welcom-

ing Jan Scruggs. (Applause)

REMARKS - THE HONORABLE JAN SCRUGGS

COMRADE SCRUGGS: Thank you, Commander, for the very kind introduction. Distinguished Guests and Fellow Veterans, I am very honored to be here with you today. The relationship between the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Memorial Fund actually goes back quite a while to the early days in 1980 when we worked together to build the Memorial to honor those who served and sacrificed in the Vietnam War, and together we really made history when in 1982 the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated.

Did you know that the Veterans of Foreign Wars was actually the first veterans organization to contribute to our efforts in building the wall? Yet, the VFW was part of history again. In 1994, when the Korean War Veterans Memorial was built, it was through the contributions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars that this project was done, and this year, on this Memorial Day, the World War II Memorial was dedicated on the nation's mall. That is thanks to the people of this great organization.

Although people have told me, isn't it interesting that things were sort of done in reverse? Logically, you would think they would actually build a World War II Memorial first and then a Korean Memorial, and then a Vietnam Veterans Memorial. For some reason, we may have started the effort to build more monuments on the mall, but I think that is a good thing.

I want to personally thank you today as well for your tried and true support of the three-year grassroots effort to win authorization for an Education Center near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. It really seems like yesterday, and it has been two years since I stood before you in Nashville, telling you about how one U.S. Senator was stopping the hopes and dreams for a Education Center that would teach current and future generations about the Vietnam War.

The impact of the wall is another part that will be taught at this Visitors Center, how the wall commemorates service, sacrifice and patriotism. Yet, for three and a half years, one United States Senator stopped this entire effort. The VFW tried its best, but could not prevail against the efforts of this man who is now retired.

He is a man that actually received five draft deferments to avoid serving in the Vietnam War. Isn't it great that people like this do finally retire from the United States Senate? But now it is going to happen. I think most of you know that last November we emerged victorious when President Bush signed the legislation into law authorizing the Visitors Center.

When I say "we", I mean the collective "we". This never could have happened without participation from Veterans of Foreign Wars or hard work, your letters, your support. We sincerely thank you. Being able to build an Education Center near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a victory for all of us, for those who gave their lives and for those who served and

those who serve today, a gift as well to everyone who grows up in America for the years to come, learn service, sacrifice, patriotism, duty, honor and country.

Now, let me tell you some of the things we have done since this bill passed. In January, we launched a National Design Competition to attract the nation's top architectural firms to build the center. The response was impressive as were the qualifications of the 39 firms that entered this competition.

From that original group, we narrowed the field down to four finalists, compose of architects and exhibit designers, engineers. In September, Maya Ying Lin, who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, will join a jury of prominent leaders in the nation's capitol and will select the winning firm. The team we choose will be inspired and capable of creating an extraordinary work of architecture to match the excellence and emotional power of the wall itself. Earlier this year a group of experts began helping us determine the ideal site for the Education Center.

We are committed to preserving the contemplative nature of the Memorial and creating a design harmonious with the mall. To that end, we are in partnership with the Federal Government and the National Parks Service. For this we have created an Advisory Board, chaired by General Barry McCaffrey, which had its first meeting on July 9th.

This group is composed of veterans, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars' own Mike Gormalley, as well as military historians and educators. All are experts on the Vietnam War. While it is still early to make all of the definitive decisions, the major highlights of this Visitors Center will include photographs of some of those who gave their lives in Vietnam and who are engraved on the wall; remembrances from some of the more than 70,000 items left at the Memorial in their memory.

While the Education Center has been the focus of our efforts for the past couple of years, we have marked a couple of milestones. Most importantly, the In Memory plaque was unveiled at the Memorial at long last on July 9th. This gives families and friends across the United States a tangible symbol to honor loved ones who died prematurely due to the Vietnam War. It is right there near the Free Servicemen's statue.

We are very proud that we basically provided most of the funding to complete this project, donating more than \$135,000 to the Battle Monuments Commission and actually hiring the architects to design the plaque.

Lest we forget another highlight, no pun intended, the next time you come to Washington, D.C., visit the mall at night, you will really enjoy a dramatic new lighting system on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, funded by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. It is costing over \$1 million. Unfortunately, the construction is going on now, but it will be completed in November, 2004.

In closing, I would like to return to the Education Center for just a

minute. While Congress passed legislation authorizing the structure, the Memorial Fund is responsible for raising the money to get this built. We will need more than \$30 million and in all probability ground breakin is planned for November, 2007. So, we have to raise this money to meet this goal.

We will need to rally the troops as we have done for the wall. We will be calling on corporations, individuals and veterans to help us get this thing done. When we launch our campaign, I hope I can count on the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I know that I can, because we have to build this. We have to again make history together.

I want to thank you all for your help in the past, thank you for making history 20 years ago, and thank you in advance for helping us complete the final project on the mall, the Visitors Center at the Vietnam Memorial. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP"
CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, Jan. The new lighting system should be beautiful. They have been talking about it and it should just perk that park right up.

Now, comrades, for 37 years, the members of the Department of Arizona have worked together as a team to increase VFW membership throughout the state. Each member of the Department of Arizona can take pride in their many years of dedication and hard work that went into reaching this significant milestone.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on Commander Frank Page, the Immediate Past Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" citation, and offer public congratulations to the Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LARRY LeFEBVRE: The citation reads, "Certificate of Commendation awarded to the Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of thirty-seven consecutive years of membership growth evidencing the attainment of over three decades of continuous membership gain by a Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 17th day of August, 2004."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

COMRADE FRANK PAGE (Department of Arizona): Thank you, comrades. I want to thank the entire State of Arizona sitting down there, and I want to advise John Furgess, who will be our new Commander-in-Chief, that No. 38 is already being worked on.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I am going to take a point of

personal privilege here, because our next guest is the Honorable Commissioner John A. Keys from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, and I couldn't find a better person to read this introduction than the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the State of Tennessee.

INTRODUCTION OF COMMISSIONER JOHN KEYS,
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, STATE OF TENNESSEE

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, thank you very much, Chief. This is a pleasure.

Our next guest has dedicated his life to public service and volunteer efforts of behalf of veterans and minorities.

John Keys has served the people of Tennessee as a Regional Veterans Employment Representative and as Manager of Veterans Services for Shelby County in Memphis for 20 years. In 2003, he was appointed Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs.

John served in the Army with the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam, working in the Tactical Operations Center in Military Operations and Intelligence while stationed at Cu-Chi, where he was awarded the Bronze Star.

John Keys is a Life Member of VFW Post 11333 in Memphis, Tennessee. Please join me in welcoming a fellow VFW member and a great veterans' advocate, Commissioner John Keys. (Applause)

REMARKS - COMMISSIONER JOHN KEYS

COMRADE JOHN KEYS (Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs): Thank you, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Furgess, for that kind introduction. You know, as I began to think about what I would talk about this morning to the membership, fellow comrades of the VFW, first of all, I am honored to be here this morning to represent our Governor of the great State of Tennessee, Governor Phil Bredesen, who sends his greetings to you this morning.

He wanted me to be here to demonstrate our appreciation to this gathering of great Americans. To the Tennessee delegation led by our State Commander Jim Edmond, to our former Executive Director from the great State of Tennessee, Cooper T. Holt, and all of the fellow Veterans of Foreign Wars from the State of Tennessee, we greet you this morning.

It is my honor to greet the leadership and delegates to this 105th Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It is my privilege to just say thank you for your service to our nation, for the sacrifices you have made for our freedom, freedom for those who fall for it has a special meaning that the protected will never know.

Your accomplishments are many. With over 2.6 million members, the Auxiliary, and some 9,000 Posts worldwide, the many programs for the youth, the volunteerism in the community, your lobbying for the 21st

Century G.I. Bill. I know in Washington the VFW is working day in and day out to promote reasonable legislation to assist our veterans, their families, their widows, spouses, and their eligible dependent children.

You are providing free phone call cards to our nation's active duty military personnel. You know, when I think about that, I think about last night when I left the banquet, my son called me. He is over in Afghanistan. He was probably using one of those cards; you never know. It made me feel good.

I told him I was here in Cincinnati at the VFW National Convention. It really didn't register a bell with him too much at this point, but he is going to be a member of the VFW. (Applause) The reason I know he is going to be a member is because I am going to pay his membership.

He has paid the price to be a member of the VFW. You know, you have a vital tradition, a great tradition, honoring the dead by helping the living. Today at this 105th Convention, that is convened here in the State of Ohio, which was one of the sites for your first three Posts formed. I believe the other two states were Colorado and Pennsylvania.

Equally important to me is the fact that at this National Convention, Tennessee, the Volunteer State, rises again to the top as it takes its place when you will be swearing in my good friend John Furgess later on this week as the Commander-in-Chief of this great organization.

Tennessee, from the banks of the mighty Mississippi River in Memphis to the capitol in Nashville, to the majestic Smoky Mountains in East Tennessee, the great Volunteer State and the great volunteer spirit is ever present. The VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary are ever present diligently working hard to ensure our veterans, dependents, our survivors receive the benefits that they are entitled to.

I want to thank the leadership of this organization, Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, Sr., Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller. You know, John Furgess and I go back quite a few years. Back when I met John, I had black hair. I was about 25 pounds lighter, I was lean and I was mean. Now, I am neither. That is how far we go back.

As I get ready to close, I just want to share with you a poem from Tennessee. It is called "The Pride of Tennessee." John Furgess embodies that.

It says, "From the Smoky Mountain mornings to the Mississippi shores, let's take the time to remember those who went before.

"Whose lives made a difference in the world for you and me, that courage, faith and vision are the pride of Tennessee.

"Sequoia was a Cherokee, the chief of all his tribe, his people learned to read and write with alphabet he scribed.

"When Tennessee became a state this Governor was clear, there was no better leader than the gallant John Severe. From the backwoods to the Congress, to the stand at the Alamo, David Crockett gave his life for the country he loved so.

“Three Presidents from Tennessee made impressions on this land. Jackson, Polk and Johnson were men who took a stand.

“Ida Wells Barnett fought bravely for the rights of men when they were killed by prejudice for the color of their skin. He was drafted in the First World War and even though he did not want to go, his shooting skills made Alvin York a national hero.

“When women of Tennessee believed they had the right to vote and Dallas Dudley led the fight and gave them hope.

“Cordell Hull had a vision for peace around the world, United Nations where all countries’ flags unfurled.

“From Bill Street down in Memphis to New York front page news, W. C. Handy’s music made him father of the blues.”

Yes, courage, faith and vision, that’s what John Furgess has as he is part of the pride of Tennessee.

I know you will continue to have a successful convention as it has been up to this point. Once again, just let me say on behalf of the State of Tennessee, the Governor and his Cabinet, and all of us and all the VFW members here and the Ladies Auxiliary, thank you again for your service to this country and God bless you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Don’t forget this afternoon we have the Patriotic Rally. In a sense of justice to one of our recipients who will be performing this afternoon, Mr. Tony Orlando, I have decided to put aside his presentation until this afternoon when we have the full complement of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary here. It should be a very, very festive afternoon. I would hope that you would all participate.

INTRODUCTION OF MICHAEL QUINN FROM UNIBIC

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I would like to take a moment and introduce Mr. Michael Quinn from UNIBIC. UNIBIC has been a manufacturer of fine specialty biscuits, cakes and pastries for over a half a century in Australia. Today UNIBIC is Australia’s fastest-growing, specialty biscuit company delivering innovative quality products to national and international markets.

The Returned Services League ANZAC Biscuit is officially endorsed by the RSL and profits from sales go directly to support the charitable works of the RSL.

The ANZAC Biscuit directly supports veterans in Australia and New Zealand. Some of the projects that benefit from the fundraising include activities such as Veterans’ Homes Trust of Victoria and the RSL Widows and Widowed Mothers’ Trust Patriotic Fund.

Many veterans attending the World War II dedication had the opportunity to sample the ANZAC biscuit courtesy of UNIBIC.

UNIBIC has recently entered into a partnership with the VFW. A portion of the sales from the ANZAC Biscuit in the United States will go to benefit veterans.

Here to join us this morning is the Managing Director of UNIBIC. Please give a warm VFW welcome to Mr. Michael Quinn.

RESPONSE - MR. MICHAEL QUINN

MR. MICHAEL QUINN: Good morning, everybody. For the sake of the stenographer down in front here, I just want to say I am from Australia and I would like to comment on this wonderful event. In Australia we would say something like "dog'n it" is fairly unbelievable, and I don't know how he will type that in and write that down.

My company has been absolutely blessed with the opportunity to work with veteran organizations, primarily in Australia, but expanding into New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and now obviously into the United States before moving into Canada.

What I have witnessed around the world is the various veterans organizations. The veterans' interests phenomenally are well represented, and the community they serve should be very proud of the organizations. But I think there is an opportunity for veteran interests to be expanded further, and my company is marketing cookies, as we call them here, to people who really don't have much to do with veterans or veterans organizations.

Over the next few months and years in this country, the ANZAC cookie, carrying the logo of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, will be visible in up to 50,000 supermarkets and outlets throughout the country. The objective is not so much to raise money for veterans, although that is very important, but it is to spread a message, spread the word.

I have been personally very fortunate to interact with veterans in many countries. They all serve the same character. They all have the same memories and the same character and ethics and honor. I believe that ethics has to be distributed. One way to do it is through a simple little cookie packet.

In years to come and months to come, we hope we can educate children about some of the experiences that all of you have been through and we hope that will make a difference and have the mass communication in this country and around the world to recognize how fortunate they are and stop complaining about what they don't have.

I don't know how successful this project will be, how much money it can raise for the VFW and the veterans. I don't know how many kids we can touch with a message, but what I can guarantee is that all the people involved in bringing a cookie to the market from the factories, the wheat fields to the factories, to the trucking drivers, the marketing people, supermarket staff, even bankers and lawyers will all fully understand what the honor and integrity of the veterans community is about.

I look forward to having our products in the market and I look forward to serving you as you have done for our country. Australia and the United States, we go back a long time in our history in the military. As we

were saying a second before, as I see it, Australia and the United States are great mates and we want to make sure that we do help you-all so you can benefit from it in coming to us, and we hope you continue to do your job in serving veterans in this country.

I thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to speaking to all of you back in the display area, and I wish you a successful conference from here on out. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Obviously, the stars are shedding on us because we are just about done, comrades. I would like to call the Representatives of the Department of California up for a very special presentation, if you are prepared.

Once this presentation is done, we will recess until tomorrow morning and prepare for the Patriotic Rally this afternoon.

COMRADE HENRY WADAHARA (Department of California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Post 1679, Ventura, California, and the Department of California would like to present you with a check for Operation Uplink in the amount of \$13,000. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: That is one of the few times the check is not in the mail.

COMRADE HENRY WADAHARA: (Post 9970 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, if I may, while I am giving you money, I would like to present this check for the National Home to be split between the California cottages in the amount of \$4,000. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much. (Applause) Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the closing ceremonies.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain David Norris gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual, followed by the salute to the Colors.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you, sir. We will see you all this afternoon at the Patriotic Rally. We are recessed at this time.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:15 a.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 18, 2004

(The Second Business Session of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good morning, comrades. I will call the meeting to order and call on the Sergeant-at-Arms for the opening ceremonies.

(The National Sergeant-at-Arms led the convention in the Salute to the Colors, followed by the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain David Norris. The Sergeant-at-Arms then led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you. At this time I call on Mr. David Butters for a report of the Credentials Committee.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - New Jersey): As of the close of business yesterday, August 17, 2004, the total delegates registering their credentials is 10,911. Added to that is the total Department Commanders of 54. The total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 25; the total National Officers, 37. That is for a grand total of 11,027 delegates. A majority is 5,514. A two-thirds majority is 7,352.

INTRODUCTION OF BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN M. KOPER,
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Well, good morning, comrades. I think that everyone had a wonderful time at the Patriotic Rally yesterday, and I have to tell you that the program was put together by the Adjutant General and his staff. Tony Orlando donated his presentation to us. I think everyone had a wonderful time and the spirit of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Applause)

Now, I would like to introduce Retired Air National Guard Brigadier General Steve Koper, the new Chief Executive Officer of an organization whose heritage dates back to the Citizen-Soldiers of the American Revolution, the 45,000-member National Guard Association of the United States. The General's arrival in Washington, D.C. last month ended a span of four decades of service to the Ohio National Guard, including more than

32 years in uniform.

He enlisted in the Ohio Guard in 1964, received a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1968, and retired in 1996 as the Ohio Air National Guard's Deputy Chief of Staff.

He has since coordinated legislative and public relations for the Ohio National Guard, and in 2003 was a member of a nationwide effort that gained temporary tri-care coverage for guardsmen and reservists.

The General also has 30 years experience in the printing business and is currently the President of S-K Graphics, a print consulting and brokerage firm based here in Cincinnati.

Please give a warm VFW welcome to a fellow veteran from Cincinnati, Ohio, Brigadier General Steve Koper. (Applause)

REMARKS - BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN KOPER

BRIGADIER GENERAL KOPER: Good morning. I was worried for a few minutes this morning as I stood out in the screening line that I was going to miss my own speech. I just wondered where in the heck everybody went. It is a very special pleasure to be with you this morning, and I want to thank your Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas and the VFW leadership, and I would share with you I arrived on the job in Washington on July 1st and among my first week's visitors was good old Bob Wallace giving me a warm welcome to that unfriendly place.

I appreciate you allowing me to share some brief remarks about the National Guard, its missions, its performance and some of the issues faced by guardsmen and their families and employers as we fight this global war on terrorism. I am especially pleased to be here in Cincinnati, because this is my hometown.

Just to the south of us, a couple of blocks, going over the river, is one of the early pieces of infrastructure in the famous interstate highway system. It is called the Brent Spence Bridge. It is a local legend. It is a double-deck bridge.

It sits astride I-75, the main route between the rural South and the industrial North. A double deck bridge, the top deck runs south and the lower deck runs north, and the legend has it that shoes were dropped from those headed south to those headed north. I have never seen it, but I think there must be some merit.

Cincinnati is a German town as a result of the great immigrations of the mid-1800s. It was from this German community and others across the land that Americans answered President Lincoln's call, including Hickenlooper's Brigade, and among Hickenlooper's Brigade was my great-grandfather.

Before the Civil War ended, Ohio had raised two regiments of heavy artillery, 13 regiments of cavalry and 196 infantry regiments. In the war with Spain, Ohio volunteers stepped to the fore, and in 1918 the famous 37th Buckeye Division fought the first of two world wars, the first in

France and the second in the Pacific.

Before the victory was won, the greatest armed force the world had ever seen was raised, trained, equipped and committed. My own recollections of Americans going to war began with an army nurse, serving state-side, but as proud as any daughter of Indiana could ever be.

My sister tells me that she keeps our mother's discharge papers under very special care. It was at the knee of friends and relatives that stories of service life and sacrifices were made a part of my boyhood education. The VFW Post, Armistice Day, Buddy Poppies and the G.I. Bill were a part of growing up in middle America. For all that you have done for this country, I thank you.

On September 11, 2001, each and every one of us was changed forever. Our enemies brought war to our cities and towns. Those attacks were a declaration of war just as surely as Pearl Harbor. Our nation has responded with a singular purpose to rid our world of those who seek to impose their will by terror.

A new generation has taken up the defense of freedom. The National Guard has been in the fight from the beginning. In New York, on September 11, some 8,000 National Guard volunteers magically appeared before any official call The Guard, with its unique dual status, immediately became a matter of the nation's fight on a broad front.

Under the control of the Governors, they blanketed the nation's airports in their respective states. They went to the borders to assist the Border Patrol and the Customs Service in preventing unlawful access to the country. Air and Army units have been an integral part of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

The International Guard has been a major part of the air occupation of Iraq known as Northern and Southern Watch for many months. In April 2002, 24,500 International Guard members were on active duty for Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and 22,000 were serving in support of Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Today that number has been reduced to 6,600. The tide has turned to the Army. The Army National Guard, more than 200,000 soldiers have been employed since September 11th. That is 57 percent of the total Army National Guard. As we sit here today, 56,000 Army National Guard soldiers are serving in support of Iraqi Freedom, and another 18,000 are supporting Enduring Freedom, and 9,000 more are supporting Noble Eagle, and an additional 31,000 soldiers have been alerted that mobilization is imminent.

The costs to the Guard have been high. More than 100 Army and Air Force Guard members have given their lives. More than 800 have been wounded in action. While these soldiers and airmen were carrying out their missions with courage, determination and professionalism, here at home the stress on families and employers continues to wear heavily on the Reserve components. In the absence of regular disruptions faced by their active component comrades as part-timers, National Guard members are experiencing the impact of long separation from spouses and children, and

in many cases multiple or extended periods of mobilization.

Family issues range from family financial management problems, lost business opportunities, child behavior problems, full-time employer misunderstandings, estrangement, divorce and family readjustment. Most of you are totally familiar with those problems. While the National Guard and the Services have been working diligently to meet the needs of families and deployed members through Family Assistance Programs, it especially heart-warming to see private industry, elected officials, service organizations and good neighbors trying to answer the needs of these families in a variety of ways.

The VFW has led the way with its Operation Uplink, bringing the sounds of home to troops in the field. The distribution of phone cards has assisted in reducing the cost of families maintaining contact with each other, a cost which they would otherwise have included in their already over-taxed personal budgets.

In the State of Georgia, Family Assistance Centers have relied on the VFW to assist families with challenges that appear small, but are tough. The VFW sent an escort to help a spouse find an auto mechanic, and they provided assistance in seeing that lawn mowing chores were covered.

In thousands of small ways concerned people are helping. In every state, Family Assistance Centers seek your support. If you would like to offer your support to a Family Assistance Center when you return home, call your State's Adjutant General and your call can be directed to one of them.

We expect that the Guard will be continuing to serve alongside the active component at a very significant level for the foreseeable future. Of equal importance is that their role in the emerging mission of homeland security. It will require them to provide rapid-response forces and to provide weapons of mass destruction teams and to continue to build, train and certify larger regional chemical biological response forces.

At the same time, they will continue to serve as their Governor's response team for national disasters and other state emergencies. One only needs to look to Florida today to see the Guard in action in that mission. These traditional emerging missions will demand that the Guard transform, change and adapt.

Today's Guard is no longer a force in strategic reserve, rather we are an operational force serving anywhere, any time with little or no notice. The National Guard will help more than ever. We will need your help more than ever. Tri-Care for the Guard and Reserve is an issue near and dear to my heart.

Health care for soldiers and their families on a contributory basis under the Tri-Care system must be made available to all of our soldiers and airmen. It is not only an issue of fairness but more importantly readiness. A healthy soldier will be ready to respond.

It would end the turmoil and frustration of families as they are forced to move from private health care to government care and back again each time a soldier is called. Please keep up your strong support of Tri-Care for the Guard and Reserve.

On Monday, President Bush shared with you his plan of repositioning American forces. Later today, Senator Kerry will share some of his plans. My second request for your support calls for your vigilance and action in the months and years ahead as the Guard and active forces transform and rebalance.

Forces returning from current combat missions are leaving much of their equipment for follow on forces. They will need replacement equipment or face loss of readiness. New missions will require new equipment facilities, and training. Some of that equipment will be new, sophisticated, high-level weapons systems, and very, very expensive.

Other items, such as individual soldier equipment, will be less expensive but required in increasing amounts.

This nation's leaders will be making decisions about our capacity to defend America. If our national policy is to win this war on terrorism, those decisions must not be driven by an arbitrary budget percentage, but by what it takes to win.

You are the voice of military experience. Follow the debate on national defense, exercise your right to choose elected officials. Communicate with them on a regular basis, criticizing them when necessary and thanking them for their good work. America's men and women in uniform deserve the best we can provide. The enemy is on our turf. A new generation of veterans will fight here at home. They are counting on us.

In his tribute to the British soldier, poet Rudyard Kipling closed with these lines. "For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'chuck him out, the brute! "But it's 'savior of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot.

"Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, and anything you please, and Tommy ain't a blooming fool, you bet that Tommy sees."

Keep your eyes open, folks. Thanks again. I appreciate your kind invitation and the honor that you bring to America. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, General Koper. The General is brand new in his position in Washington in the National Guard Association; it is very important position. I want him to hear this. Are we proud of the National Guard? (Applause) Do we welcome those eligible among our ranks? (Applause)

Comrades, the Commander-in-Chief is doing a network television interview at this moment for telecast at this evening's news. So, it is an honor for me to proceed with our business.

PRESENTATION OF 2004 AVIATION AND SPACE AWARD TO NASA - MARS EXPLORATION ROVER MISSION

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: America's determined effort to conquer the mystery and wonder of space has spawned a new age of technology and science. And like countless generations of explorers who came before, exploration of space, and especially the Mars

Rover Mission has captivated and sparked the imagination of mankind.

The Mars Rover Mission personifies the human endeavor; to discover, to learn and to advance.

Here to receive the VFW 2004 Aviation Space Award from NASA is Matthew Wallace. Let's make him welcome. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented, reads, "Aviation and Space Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Mars Exploration Rover Mission, NASA.

"In special recognition of the unique opportunities created by the Mars Exploration Rover Mission. The two Rovers of this mission will provide invaluable information to the human race, furthering perhaps our understanding of both the origins of life and the future of our own planet. The continued success of the Rover Mission, currently returning important data at a point more than double the expected mission life, exemplifies the tenacity of the human spirit and the commitment of the Rover Mission planners and scientists. This tenacity and spirit, coupled with the request for understanding that will benefit all mankind, is truly in keeping with the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2004. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MATTHEW WALLACE

MR. MATTHEW WALLACE: Thank you. In January of this year, NASA landed two Mars Exploration Rovers, first Spirit and then Opportunity, on the surface of Mars. Opportunity landed on January 24th at a spectacular location called Meridiani Planum, the plains of Meridiani.

Using a suite of science instruments and imagers, Opportunity went to work and has provided our science community with definitive evidence that Mars was once warmer, once wetter, and that the site where she landed was, in fact, once a salty, marshy sea.

The vehicle today continues to daringly traverse slopes up to 30 degrees, exploring a stadium size crater called Endurance, extracting more data about the unique geological and chemical stratigraphy of our sister planet, Mars. Our other Rover, Spirit, landed three weeks earlier on the other side of the planet at a place called Gusev crater.

Gusev is an ancient crater bed about the size of Connecticut in the Southern Highlands of Mars, still operating on our 220th Mars day. She has survived more than two and one-half times longer than her 90-day primary mission and has traveled more than four times farther than her designers expected her to go.

Still fighting the declining solar power and colder temperatures as she faces the martian winter, as well as a rather gippy right frontal field

motor, Spirit is more scientific productive now after reaching and starting a descent up the Columbia hills than she has been in her mission to date.

These hills, which Spirit is currently exploring, are named after the seven brave crew members that lost their lives in February, 2003, during re-entry of the Columbia Shuttle Mission FTS-107. Both vehicles, in fact, are carrying a plaque designed and built by the Rover engineers and affixed to the Rover's high gain antenna during final pre-launch processing at Kennedy Space Center.

The plaque is a memorial to the Columbia astronauts who lost their lives in an effort to explore space, to further our understanding of the universe of life, its origin and inspire our youth. This crowd here today knows all about sacrifice.

For this reason, NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe has asked that this very generous award be designated for the NASA Family Assistance Fund. This fund provides need-based financial assistance and educational assistance to the families of the seven Columbia astronauts, as well as other families of NASA personnel who died as a result of personal injuries suffered in the performance of their official duties.

On behalf of the Mars Exploration Rover team and the men and women of NASA, I want to thank the members of the VFW for both their service and for this very, very generous award. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Wallace. As a token of our appreciation for this wonderful mission, here is the Veterans of Foreign Wars honorarium for your visit today. Thank you. (Applause)

MR. MATTHEW WALLACE: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF 2004 AMERICANISM AWARD TO FEDEX

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, our next award is one given in recognition of outstanding contributions to American principles.

As veterans, we try to provide our military service members with personal necessities they need, especially those stationed today in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere in the Middle East who are fighting the war against terrorism.

When the Veterans of Foreign Wars discovered that our war-wounded were being evacuated to medical facilities in Germany with little more than the uniform they were wearing, they were determined to do something about it. The Veterans of Foreign Wars needed a way to deliver clean clothes and personal hygiene items to these soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen.

And a call to FedEx Freight brought an immediate response to our call for assistance. In what has become a typical and unselfish manner for FedEx, the company stepped up to the plate and offered to ship the materials almost immediately and free of charge.

Working together, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and FedEx were able to help thousands of service members receive just a little piece of home. This is truly a reflection of the American spirit, people working together for the benefit of others.

We are pleased to present the 2004 Americanism Award to FedEx Freight.

Douglas Duncan, President and Chief Executive Officer, will accept. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Furgess reads, "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to FedEx.

"In special recognition and sincere appreciation of FedEx corporate commitment to supporting the service members and citizens of this nation. This commitment consistently demonstrated through philanthropy, and donated services, has directly benefitted our service members and their families.

"Through the shipment of thousands of tons of much-needed materials and comfort items on behalf of both the VFW Foundation and the VFW Military Assistance Program, FedEx has served its nation and citizens around the world with compassion, charity and responsibility.

"This service stands as a shining example to others in the corporate world and is the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2004. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. DOUGLAS DUNCAN

MR. DOUGLAS DUNCAN: Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here at this special event. We are very proud to support the great work of the VFW. Many of our employees come to us from the armed forces and many remain active in the Reserve and National Guard, and many are on active duty today.

We are very, very appreciative of the work that the VFW does serving these people and all Americans. FedEx operates a worldwide network engaged in global transportation. The fact is not lost on us, that our veterans and our active armed forces today play a great role in laying the groundwork to enable us to run that network.

FedEx has always had a special commitment as a corporate citizen. Our Chairman and our founder, Fred Smith, is a Marine, a veteran, and he set very clear priorities for this corporation, people first, people, service, profit. In that endeavor to support our people first philosophy, we work hard to support the communities where our people work and live all around the

world. We take that obligation very sincerely. We support the VFW by doing what we do best, by shipping things in the air and on the ground, both domestically and all around the world. We have had the honor to move things like toys to Iraqi children, phone cards to American troops deployed all around the world, and we get a special treat now and then, we get to deliver the Liberty Bell for various functions in the VFW. It is here somewhere today. I have not seen it yet, but I did make sure it arrived before I got here.

The FedEx promise is to deliver service quality to every customer every day. That dedication has created a strong company for us, and we get to serve some very special customers, like the men and women in our U.S. armed forces.

I am honored to accept this gift, this award, on behalf of our Chairman, Fred Smith, who would be proud to be here but couldn't, and the more than 200,000 people that make our company strong every day. We wish the VFW much success and we look forward to a long and supportive relationship with your great organization. Thank you very much. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you very much. Please give Mr. Smith our regards. On behalf of our Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, Mr. Duncan, please receive this beautiful medallion, 2003-2004 year, Courage and Conviction. We are honored to present this to you.

Secondly, it is a token of our appreciation and an honor to present to Federal Express this honorarium for the purpose of your visit. Thank you, sir.

MR. DOUGLAS DUNCAN: Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2004 VFW EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: My comrades, annually the Veterans of Foreign Wars presents its Emergency Services Award to an individual with outstanding contributions to the community in the field of emergency services. We are pleased to present this year's award to an individual who has dedicated her life to serving the community.

Captain Noelle's dedication to the Emergency Medical Service is certainly exemplary. In addition to training the first responders with whom she works with tact and thoroughness, she is compassionate and understanding when attending to patients' physical and emotional needs at the time of the incident.

Her responsibilities as shift commander are demanding, but she finds time to volunteer as a peer counselor on the critical incident stress management team in her community. This team helps emergency workers cope with the stress of working major trauma incidents.

Captain Noelle is also the public information officer for Williamson

County EMS and coordinates the public education and media relations program. In this capacity, she has been directly involved in the DWI Awareness Program and Child Safety Seat Program.

Captain Noelle's commitment to the community is great. Though she wears many hats while on the job, the hat she wears best is compassionate, caring citizen.

Sponsored by VFW Post 8587 in Georgetown, Texas, please welcome the 2004 recipient of the VFW Emergency Services Award, Captain Angela Noelle. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads, "Emergency Medical Technician Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Angela V. Noelle in recognition of her exemplary service as an Emergency Medical Technician in Williamson County, Texas.

"Her involvement and association with other community-oriented organizations, and her high regard for emergency response teams, has significantly strengthened her own CISM Team and provided educational opportunities for other teams in Central Texas, thus earning her the respect of her peers and the public she serves.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2004. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MS. ANGELA NOELLE

MS. NOELLE: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. What an honor this is. I would like to say what an honor it is to be in the company of these heroes, the men and women of the VFW. On behalf of Williamson County EMS, we thank you for what you do for this nation. It is a great honor to be honored by you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Angela, as a token of our appreciation and our congratulations, here is an honorarium in honor of this award. (Applause)

MS. NOELLE: Thank you so much, sir. I appreciate it.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2004 VFW FIREFIGHTER AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, I am very pleased to present the VFW Firefighter Award to an outstanding firefighter from Aberdeen, South Dakota, sponsored by VFW Post 17 in Aberdeen.

Roger Bortnem has 28 years of firefighter experience. He is currently a shift commander, the coordinator of the Aberdeen Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Team and a member of the South Dakota WMD/Terrorism Task Force Planning Committee.

He was instrumental in organizing Hazmat training exercises within his department and coordinating emergency response to Hazmat incidents between the city and county. Mr. Bortnem has considerable knowledge on methods and techniques of fire prevention, suppression and emergency medical services.

He has attended many workshops and conferences on emergency management, homeland security assessment training and all types of hazardous materials.

His dedication to his work and the safety of the community is exceptional. Please join me in welcoming our 2004 Firefighter of the Year, Roger Bortnem. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented by the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief reads, "Firefighter Award Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Roger Bortnem in recognition of almost three decades of distinguished service in the fields of fire rescue and emergency response, as evidenced by his heroic action in the saving of a toddler from a burning building.

"His extensive skills and knowledge of the many facets of homeland security, coupled with his professionalism as an instructor, makes him a tremendous asset to his peers and the public he serves, earning him the respect and admiration of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2004. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief, Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. ROGER BORTNEM

MR. ROGER BORTNEM: I would like to thank VFW Post 17, Aberdeen, South Dakota, for nominating me for this award, and my wife, Gail, and my two children for being here today. I have been with the Aberdeen Fire Department for 29 years. I have never considered myself anything special.

People came up to me recently and said you are a hero. All the time I wanted to be like my heroes. They are important, my dad, Raymond Bortnem, who served as a Corporal in Okinawa in 1947 through 1950. My older brother, John, served as a platoon rifleman, the Charley Company, from '66-'68 in Vietnam. My younger brother, Jerry, served from 1971 to '75 as a Sergeant in the Air Force.

My brother, Colonel David Bortnem, served his Army career in Special Forces, 1970 to 1972 in Vietnam, and served with the National Guard Unit Theater of Special Operations Detachment in Korea. This year he is deployed in Iraq. He e-mailed me and said that his career had gone from Southeast Asia in 34 years to finishing up in Southeast Asia.

I am honored by this award and I feel humbled by the heroes of

today, the people in this arena, and the men and women, past and present, who have served and are serving our country in the U.S. military. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you know this is such an accomplishment and such a personal endeavor on his part for many years. This is a mere token of our appreciation. Congratulations. This is an honorarium on the occasion of your visit. Thank you so much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF JOHN A. BRIEDEN, III, NATIONAL COMMANDER, THE AMERICAN LEGION

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: My comrades, we are especially pleased today to have with us the National Commander of the American Legion, Mr. John Brieden. He has served as an Infantry Officer in the United States Army from 1972 to 1977. He attended the Ranger School, the Airborne School, Jungle Warfare School and the Arctic Warfare School.

He also was selected to serve in the First Battalion, 75th Infantry, when the Army returned to the concept of Ranger Battalions. He joined the American Legion in 1979 and for 25 years has held leadership positions at his Post, District, his Department and National levels, with the chairmanship of four different commissions.

In 1998, he was appointed by then Governor George W. Bush to the Texas Veterans Commission, and from 2000-2001 he served as Secretary of that Commission. He is an acknowledged business and community leader, and since last August he has been the National Commander of the 2.8 million member American Legion. Please help me to give a warm VFW welcome to a fellow veteran from Brenham, Texas, Commander John Brieden. (Applause)

REMARKS - COMMANDER JOHN BRIEDEN

COMMANDER BRIEDEN: Thank you. Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John, thank you for that kind introduction. Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim, it is wonderful to see you again. We have crossed paths several times this year, and it is a pleasure to see all the other distinguished members on the dais, and, ladies and gentlemen, it is great to be with you.

I want to acknowledge Jim Nier, a Past Commander-in-Chief, that is from the State of Texas. He is the Executive Director of the Texas Veterans Commission. As I look back on my tenure as a Commissioner, if I have a legacy it is the fact that we hired Jim Nier, who does an excellent job for the veterans of Texas. Thank you, Jim. (Applause)

Where is the Texas delegation? They are back there. Boy, they put you behind the cameras didn't they? Glen Gardner is out there and he is someone we have worked with for ten or more years doing legislative things

within the State of Texas. He is the Chairman of our Texas Veterans Coalition, and it would probably be unscrupulous of me to talk about him being a candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, wouldn't it? Since it would, I wouldn't do anything unethical so I will not mention that.

Thank you very much for the invitation. Let me tell you, I think it is important for the veterans of this organization to work together, and so often there are petty things that stand in the way, but I think there are some bridges that have been built. I think this year with the brochure that is out with nine National Commanders' signatures saying we want mandatory funding was a great step. (Applause)

I think our appearance here today and the invitation is a great step, and in a week and a half John Furgess will be at my convention, and that will be a big step. We need to continue these steps and build the bridges, because if we work together we will be stronger. If we work together, we will be more effective.

You know, this has been a great year. I think that there has been some great things accomplished. There are a couple of things that have happened this year on my watch, which was the 60th Anniversary of D-Day. We were there for the ceremonies, and it was a wonderful experience.

The dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., we were there. Let me tell you what stood out to me as the most important thing that happened, and it is probably going to catch you off guard. The morning of the ceremony, I woke up and decided to take a look at TV because I wanted to know the weather that day and what I needed to carry, whether an umbrella, sun screen or whatever.

The TV interview had been from yesterday, from the prior day, and they were interviewing a veteran who was over at the World War II monument. He was talking about his experience. The reporter said, "What was the most important thing about your service in World War II?"

He looked at the camera and he said, "There was never a day that I doubted that the American public was with us." He said, "We have young men and women serving today and they deserve the same thing." We have got great young men and women serving this country today and they have earned our respect and support and that is our major job right now is to make sure that we support our troops."

Let me tell you, this has been a fantastic year in a number of ways. Legislatively, we have taken a great step forward on the disabled veterans tax, increased funding for the VA, pay raises, quality of life for troops. We have accomplished a great deal this year.

You know, I would like to take credit for it and say it was because I was Commander, but I know that is not true. You know, the reason that that happened this year is because this is an election year and, in fact, this is not just any election year, this is a presidential election year.

In fact, this is not just any presidential election year, this is the one that comes after the last one was real close. In fact, most people don't even understand how close. There were some 12 to 14 states that could have

gone either way. That is 12 to 14 states that any one of them, with a few votes difference, would have changed the presidential election.

Believe me, they paid attention. They have gone back and done research and looked at what happened and who voted which way. One of the things they found is the constant in each one of these states was veteran and military votes, and if that, in fact, is the case, veterans and military issues need to be a predominant thing. They are listening to us for a change.

Let me give an illustration. When I was first elected National Commander of the American Legion, two weeks later I was in front of Congress to testify. I am sure you-all have seen the type of thing on C-Span. You go before a Committee, and this was a Joint Senate and House Committee of Veterans Affairs.

They all make opening comments and we do our testimony, and then there is a question and answer period. I have been there a number of times, and normally there are three or four questions asked and that is it. This time there was an hour and 20 minutes of questions and answers. They weren't softballs, by the way.

I want you to know that as we faced those questions, there were a couple of things that came to mind I knew, but I was reinforced. First of all, the chairman asked a question, because they have a pecking order. The second question was passed off to the subcommittee chair, which happened to be Robert Simmons, which was Commander-in-Chief Banas' Congressman.

He asked a very intelligent question. I thought I gave a brilliant answer. So it works down the line. But they switched back and forth between parties. So, the most senior person of the other party asks next and the most senior guy of this party, and down the line, and one of them couldn't resist to throw a little partisanship. It goes over here and this guy says, well, I have heard that and so he throws something in.

It goes back over here, and I will show you, I will put a little more in, and it just spirals downhill from there. It finally got down to the point where there was a guy and I wish I could imitate his accent, but I can't. He is from the part of the country that talks funny. But he had a high-pitch voice and he talked real fast.

It went something like this: "Commander, I want you to know you are naive, sir. I want you to know the way the House works is there is a House Majority Leader. He just sums up everything and has it all bottled up. If you are going to get anything accomplished in this House of Representatives, you are going to have to go to the House Majority because he controls everything that goes on here. Do you understand me?"

And I looked at him and said, "Yes, sir, that is the reason I have an appointment with him at 6:30 this evening." You could hear his jaw hit the floor, boom. After testimony, it is customary to make a courtesy call on the Speaker of the House.

We walked into the Speaker's office, opened the door, and as we stepped in, there is a little aide all the way in the back of the room, jumped

up and ran to the door to meet us. He said, "Do you really have an appointment with Tom DeLay tonight? Nobody gets an appointment with Tom DeLay. He is the hardest appointment of all in Washington, D.C. How did you get it?"

Now, I had to be cool, right? I just stood there and smiled. I didn't bother to tell them that we had worked for months to get that appointment. I didn't bother to tell him that I had pulled in every political favor to put pressure to get that appointment. I didn't bother to tell him I went to high school with him. But we had the appointment.

I want you to know that DeLay is not a veteran. As a result, he doesn't understand. In fact, it was obvious that a lot of his aides do not understand, and in the conversations there were a lot of things that were not correct, that we had to emphasize and say, "You don't have good information. Let me tell you the facts."

Finally, he said, "Brieden, let's just cut to the chase." He said, "Your problem is veterans don't vote." I said, "Mr. Leader, your problem is you don't know how to read the statistics. You think we do everything in a block and lock step. That is not the way it works."

I said, "Let me explain this to you." Now, how many people go in and lecture the House Majority Leader?

"Here is how it works. We are no different than anybody else in America. You have heard the term this group looks like America. That's us. We come from every part of America. We have all served. We are every race, creed, religion. You name it, we are that, every social stature, every economic stature. We look like America more than any other group."

I told him one of the things I have learned is if you just go out into America, in round numbers there are 30 percent of Americans that are Democrats and they are going to vote Democrat. I don't care who is running. What is happening, they are going to vote that way.

There are 30 percent of Americans that are Republicans, and they are going to vote Republican. I don't care who is running, what the issue is or what is happening. You see, there is the other 40 percent that will go this way or that way, depending on who is running or what the issue is.

I said, "Veterans are the same way. There are 30 percent of the veterans that are Democrats and they are going to vote that way, and 30 percent of the veterans are Republicans and they are going to vote that way. But, you see, the 40 percent will go this way or that way based on veterans and military issues, and if you want their vote you will have to pay attention. (Applause) That's why this election is so important. What happens in this election, not only the President but also the Congress will drive veterans' issues, veterans' funding, military issues, for years and years to come.

It is not just enough to go out and cast a vote. You need to cast it in the form of a vote. You must make sure you understand the issues. You will have to wade through all of the rhetoric and all the other, I can't say it, manure. You need to wade through that to make sure you get down to the issues and how a person stands and what they are going to do, and cast an

informed vote, because there is a lot at stake. Thank you very much for the invitation to be with you. I think it is an important bridge that we need to continue. I look forward to continue working with you.

I want to close with something I put together as a Post Commander for a flag ceremony. When you next see the flag of our country, take a moment to really look at Old Glory waving in the breeze. It is not the flag of the king, it is the flag of you and me and our neighbors.

It stands for equal opportunity for all. It is more blue because the sky signifies justice. It is red as the blood of those who died to protect it to show the prize of freedom. It is white, as pure as snow, to signify liberty for all. Look at what this country has enjoyed and look at what it has endured over the past 228 years.

Look at the good and look at the bad, because we are certainly not without fault. But then ask yourself to what flag other than this one would I want to pledge my allegiance? Thank you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well said, Commander. I do look forward to bringing greetings from our organization to your organization in just a few days in that beautiful Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee.

I do want to run a quick survey. How many members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars this morning are also members of the American Legion? Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2004 LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: My comrades, the Veterans of Foreign Wars presents the Law Enforcement Award to an individual for outstanding service in the field of law enforcement. The purpose of this award is to recognize the contributions to the preservation of the ideals of law and justice by the individual in accomplishing the loyalty and active performance in the security of the nation, and dedication of their responsibilities.

This year's recipient is Theresa Adams-Hydar, a member of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. She is sponsored by VFW Post 1924 in Fallbrook, California.

Comrades and ladies, this is a special award presentation. Deputy Adams-Hydar is assigned to three community-oriented police, with problem-solving offices where she institutes the model to long-term solutions and community areas. She is an expert in the investigation and successful prosecution of vandalism.

During her off hours, Deputy Adams-Hydar is involved in several community service organizations, including the Oprah Project, the multi-faceted drug treatment program and Girls, Incorporated, the program to encourage and inspire females to be strong and start to explore careers that may be nontraditional for women.

Deputy Adams-Hydar believes that a law enforcement officer must be actively involved with the community to make a difference. She lives by that philosophy. Please make welcome this morning Deputy Sheriff Theresa Adams-Hydar from the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads, presented by the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, "Law Enforcement Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Theresa Adams-Hydar.

"In grateful recognition for her outstanding service to the people of Vista, California, as a dedicated police officer, concerned and involved citizen, and role model and mentor for young women. Her participation in numerous community-oriented programs, and the exemplary professional conduct she displays in her daily duties, is a credit to the San Diego Sheriff's Department, and is the finest tradition of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 18th day of August, 2004. Approved by the Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MS. THERESA ADAMS-HYDAR

MS. THERESA ADAMS-HYDAR: Good morning. I am very happy to be here and thank you very much for the award. Not to be corny, when I learned I was receiving this award, my husband and I thought this would be a great time to have a vacation. We flew to Myrtle Beach where we were soon evacuated from Hurricane Charley.

We thought that would be the hardest part, but we found out the hardest part of our vacation has been driving with our two-year-old in the back seat. In the past eleven days we have gone through eight states, we have seen beautiful sites, met people, unique, inviting people, kind people. We have seen things we have never seen before and parts of America that we had never known since we are from San Diego.

During that time, I have got a deeper appreciation for this country of ours. I always considered myself a true patriot, I have tried to follow in the footsteps of my grandfathers who were vets, and my father and uncles who served in Vietnam, who have shared their stories, their encounters, their experiences with me during that time. So, I decided to join law enforcement.

During this trip, walking around and seeing the American flag flying in every city and meeting the people and seeing these awesome, wonderful things in our country, I realized I love this country, I am proud to be an American, and I realized it is so apropos that I am seeing this before I receive this award, because I know I wouldn't be walking those streets in this country seeing the things I am seeing, meeting the people if it wasn't for you, for the men and women who are in this room, for the men who have died for our country, the women who have died for our country, the

ones who have sacrificed, bled and die over the last few years to give me what I have today, to give us all what we have.

It really strikes hard when you are walking around there. It is almost ironic that you are giving me an award when in actuality it was your sacrifices that is even letting me wear this uniform to do the job that I do. I truly, truly appreciate that and I respect that. My gratitude and my thanks are not enough, but I want to thank my Post in San Diego, California, the Ladies Auxiliary who has been great to me, the National Headquarters, which has guided me through this award. I want to thank you very much.

I hope that I can continue to do a good job, only a fraction of what I know that you men and women have sacrificed for me. I would like to thank my husband who has supported and been there for me in this job for the last ten years and who is watching our two-year-old right now to make sure she doesn't scream. Thank you very much. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is a wonderful comment. I thank you for your service. As an honorarium on the occasion of your visit to our National Convention, please accept this honorarium on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Congratulations. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2004 YOUTH HERO AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: What an exciting morning, comrades. The National Youth Hero Award is given to recognize the heroic acts of young people throughout our nation. The program centers on recognizing one young person each year for an unselfish life-saving act. Michael Graham is a remarkable young man from Camas Prairie, Montana. Michael was 14 years old when he saved a friend's younger brother. While on his midday break, he joined his friends to cool off in a nearby irrigation ditch. One of his friends had a younger brother tagging along.

The ditch was about nine feet deep, thirty feet wide, and the water was very cold. When all of the boys jumped in, so did the younger brother, who was not a good swimmer. He was without a life jacket, and suddenly the older brother shouted, "He is drowning."

Michael immediately jumped back in the water, and because it was so cold his muscles quickly cramped. Keeping a level head, Michael let himself sink. Coming up, he grabbed the younger boy and hurled him to the edge of the ditch where his brother and others could reach him.

Michael's unselfish actions are certainly deserving of recognition, and it is appropriate that he receives this year's National Youth Hero Award Trophy and a \$2,000 Savings Bond to a young American hero. I would ask you to welcome Michael who is sponsored by VFW Post 5159, in Hot Springs, Montana. Michael Graham. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. MICHAEL GRAHAM

MR. MICHAEL GRAHAM: I would like to thank the people of the VFW for giving me this award. I feel very honored and privileged, and I would like to thank my mom and my family for being here today. They have been really good support for me. Anyway, most of all, I would like to thank God for giving me this wonderful opportunity. Thank you all. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2004 EAGLE SCOUT AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Eagle Scout Year Award is given to an Eagle Scout who has demonstrated citizenship in school, scouting and the community. Eagle Scout Benjamin Banwart of Shakopee, Minnesota, sponsored by the VFW Department of Minnesota, has been selected winner of the VFW National Eagle Scout of the Year Award for 2004.

Benjamin is a young man, who has attained success, both academically and in extracurricular activities. He has a proven record of service to his community, outstanding leadership abilities, and cares deeply for the environment. He has attained the pinnacle in every area of scouting.

As the recipient of the Eagle the Year, he receives an Eagle Trophy and a \$5,000 scholarship. Please welcome a truly unique young man, the winner of the National Eagle Scout of the Year Award, Benjamin Banwart.

RESPONSE - MR. BENJAMIN BANWART

MR. BENJAMIN BANWART: I would like, on behalf of myself, to thank you for this great award. Coming here, I arrived yesterday and I was able to attend the Patriotic Rally, and it really meant a lot to me because, myself, I know a lot of people who are entering the military now out of high school.

I have friends in scouting that are actually in Iraq now. We know that we are in a very important part of history. But coming here and looking at the veterans, I really have been able to learn that you as veterans have taught us what it means to be an American and you have given America's views of pride and patriotism. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, may I have your attention for just a few moments. It will be just a few minutes before we start this next part of our program. That is from the Senator of Massachusetts. He is in the building and he is on his way here.

I would like to do this in the interim. We certainly can't wait for this. There is so much enthusiasm for this 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We want to send a loud and clear message to veterans who one day will sit in these seats where we now occupy, those young men and women of Iraq, of our armed forces serving so proudly there, and in Afghanistan and some of the other countries of the world.

We know that one day they will be right here where we are today. We welcome them into the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I want to hear it right

now. Where are you seated, members of the Eastern Conference? (Applause) Where are you seated, members of the Southern Conference? (Applause) Where are you seated, members of the Big Ten Conference? (Applause) And where are you seated, members of the Western Conference? (Applause) That is a loud and clear message, my comrades.

How about the wonderful Ladies Auxiliary, where are you, the ladies of the Eastern Conference? (Applause) Where are the Ladies Auxiliary members of the Eastern Conference? Where are the ladies of the Western Conference? (Applause) Where are the ladies of the Big Ten? (Applause) And where are the Ladies Auxiliary of the Southern Conference? (Applause)

Now, altogether we are all here. Thank you, my comrades. This is a wonderful convention and there is so much more important business yet to do. Many of you people that have families and some will be leaving to go back home all across the country and around the world even today, so thank you for being with us.

Tomorrow is a very important day in our business where we will have nominations for national officers for the ensuing year. We would love to have you present for those nominations. Then on Friday morning, we will have the opportunity to elect and to install national officers for the 2004-2005 VFW membership year.

We have a great challenge ahead, but I know we are up to the challenge. The VFW is ever present, ever onward and ever upward. Thank you, comrades. Please be with us in just a few minutes for a very important presentation by Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts. Please remain seated and we will be right back with the rest of the program in just a few minutes.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Comrades and sisters, ladies and gentlemen: please join me in welcoming to the dais Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JOHN F. KERRY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Good morning. It is now my honor to introduce our next guest speaker, Senator John F. Kerry, from the State of Massachusetts. Senator Kerry served two tours of duty in Vietnam, and he has been a lawyer, Lieutenant Governor and currently on his fourth term as the U.S. Senator from Massachusetts.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary, I present to you a fellow VFW member and the Democratic candidate for President of the United States of America, Senator John F. Kerry. The Honorable John F. Kerry. (Applause)

REMARKS - THE HONORABLE JOHN F. KERRY

SENATOR KERRY: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief Banas. What an honor to be here. I am very grateful to have the opportuni-

ty to be able to be here. I think all of us should stand and thank the Commander-in-Chief of the VFW for his leadership of this tremendous organization.

He has a proud job, and the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief from Tennessee knows how much time it takes, how difficult it is to make family and dedication to this effort. We applaud that. As a Vietnam veteran and police officer, I think every one of you know he is one tough cookie, and we are fortunate to have him slugging away for all veterans in Washington, D.C.

Thank you also for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, thank you for serving as National President of the Ladies Auxiliary for what the Ladies Auxiliary does for all of us, and I also want to thank Bob Wallace, who I have worked with, the Executive Director of the VFW, and John Furgess, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and the incoming Commander-in-Chief of the VFW and his wife, Alma. Thank you for your service to the country and to veterans.

Also I want to thank John Brieden, the National Commander of the American Legion, who was here earlier and spoke with you. I want to recognize especially, if you will join me and permit me, Robert Turk, the Massachusetts VFW State Commander. We thank him for his service and his leadership.

I am proud to be here with all of you. I am proud to be a Lifetime Member of this organization, and I am grateful for your continued deep commitment to each and every one of you veterans and to the defense and security of our nation.

For more than 100 years now, you have had many distinguished veterans come before you, some Republican, some Democrat, some Presidents. But as a fellow veteran, I can proudly say that there is one title that is more important than all, and that is patriot. You have all earned that title and I am proud to stand with you here today. (Applause)

A few weeks ago, at the Democratic National Convention, I told the American people that I was reporting for duty. I did not say that lightly. I said it paying homage to and drawing strength from my crew mates who would stand with me on the stage, the men who actually served on my boat, and the more than 500 delegates who were veterans in the Fleet Center, and especially all of you, every man and woman who has ever worn the uniform of the United States Armed Forces.

We understand that the duty to serve goes on throughout our lives. That is what really brings all of us here today: our continued resolve to defend America so that all can share in the blessings of freedom. And let there be no doubt, when I am President, you will have a true brother in arms in the White House who understands that those who fought for their country abroad should never have to fight for what they were promised here at home.

In the spirit of all the men and women in uniform who we honor here, let me offer this pledge: As President, I will always remember that

America's security begins and ends with the soldier, sailor, airman, Marine and Coast Guardsman, with every man and every woman in our armed forces who has ever stood guard at the gates of freedom.

Today, I salute each and every one of you for your commitment, your strength and your extraordinary courage. America says thank you, and we all join today in a special salute to the greatest generation veterans whose memorial finally stands proudly in a place of honor on the Mall in Washington. Thank you for your extraordinary example as citizen soldiers.

I also want to speak directly for a moment to those currently risking their lives as far away as Iraq and Afghanistan. America's prayers are with you. We honor your service, thank you for your sacrifice and pledge to stand with your families as you stand for ours.

Like veterans of all wars past, today's fighting men and women, deserve our prayers and support and then, when they come home, they deserve the respect and welcome of a grateful nation. After all, the first definition of patriotism is to keep faith with those who have worn the uniform of the United States of America.

One of the best ways to do that is to make sure that those who have served us on the front lines return to an America that gives them the tools to build strong families and strong communities here at home. This means transitional assistance to help all those returning from war, struggling to readjust to civilian life, and coping with the scars of battle, those both seen and unseen. This is about keeping a sacred promise. This is about love of country, and it is about protecting those who have risked their lives to protect ours.

In recent days, you have heard from some who have claimed that the job is getting done for veterans. Well, just saying the job is getting done doesn't make it so. My friends, let me tell you when this job will be done. The job will be done when 500,000 veterans are not excluded from the VA health-care system.

The job will be done when we are not closing VA hospitals, so that veterans can't reach the care they need. The job will be done when veterans are not asked for increasing co-payments, enrollment fees, and other charges to shift the burden of care to other veterans and drive more than a million veterans out of the system.

The job will be done when 400,000 military retirees get real concurrent receipt. The job will be done when there are no homeless veterans on the streets of America. The job will be done when more than 320,000 no longer are waiting for decisions on disability claims and another 100,000 are not awaiting appeals decisions.

The job will be done when the VA Secretary does not have to complain that he needs more than the White House wanted to give him. And the job will be done when the family of 21-year-old Jay Briseno, a veteran facing a lifetime of disability, doesn't have to sleep at his bedside because the VA can't afford to give him round-the-clock nursing care he needs.

It is clear: When it comes to protecting America's 26 million veter-

ans and their families we are far from being able to claim “mission accomplished.”

As President, I will stand with you to complete that mission. The sacrifices that you have made on the battlefield are well known. But what is not as well known is how hard we have fought after we returned from service to keep faith with our fellow soldiers.

How we fought to get additional funds for VA Hospitals that can't provide adequate care. How we put together the first outreach group to help deal with post-traumatic stress disorder. How we pushed to get the G.I. Bill extended so that no vet lost their chance for a better future. And how we won increases for veterans' allowances and living expenses.

We kept faith. Together, with the help from the leadership of the VFW we can be proud that we put in place the most thorough, the most exhaustive, the most extensive effort to account for the missing, captured or dead in all the history of human warfare. We made that happen, we veterans, and we should all be proud of keeping faith.

I am especially proud that together with Bob Smith and John McCain we led and won this fight.

When I got involved in this issue, there were hundreds of individuals whose fates were unknown. Today that number has been reduced to 35. That means that families now have the peace of mind and the comfort of knowing that their loved ones are resting in peace.

I went back to Vietnam to search for our POWs and missing because I believe, as you do, that a soldier never leaves anyone behind. (Applause)

That is why I fought for the legislation that allowed veterans to be treated in VA Hospitals for devastating Agent Orange conditions like cancer and neurological disorders. Again, we kept faith.

I will continue to stand with you as President, leading the fight for a Military Family Bill of Rights and leading the fight for full, mandatory funding for veterans' health care.

Military families are going through difficult times these days. Many of their loved ones are in far away places, leaving them to care for their families alone. The last thing our servicemen and women need on their minds is the stress of wondering if their loved ones back home will be okay.

What they need is a President who protects their families while they are putting their lives on the line protecting the American family. That means making sure families have competitive pay, good housing, decent health care and quality education for their children.

Keeping faith with our veterans also means making sure they get full concurrent receipt. Today, we have only partially met this obligation. I am not going to come to the VFW to tell you the job is done when it is not done. If you earned a pension, it is yours, just like in the private sector. If you get a disability payment, it is because you have suffered. I don't believe you subtract what you suffered from what you earned. As President, I won't stop fighting until our veterans get the full disability payments they deserve.

(Applause)

You and I who once left our families and our shores to defend the principles that make America great, understand more than most the cost of keeping our country free. When you hear that more than 940 American troops have been lost on the battlefield of Iraq and that more than 6,200 of our troops have been wounded, some disabled for a lifetime, these are more than numbers to you and me. These are brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, America's heroes.

They testified to the truth that we will never back down in defense of freedom. We will use superior military force to overcome any enemy. Let me be clear: Like you, I defended this country as a young man, and I will defend it as President. I will never hesitate to use force when it is required.

Any attack will be met with a swift and certain response. Any eminent threat to our society will be dealt with swiftly and severely. I will never give any nation or international situation a veto over our national security. And I will build a stronger American military.

But, in these dangerous times, there is a right way and a wrong way to be strong. Strength is more than tough words.

After September 11th, I am proud that all our people rallied to the President's call for unity to meet the danger. There were no Democrats, there were no Republicans, there were only Americans.

How we wish it had stayed that way. But since then, we have become a country divided over Iraq, and it didn't have to be that way.

As veterans, we know what kids go through when they are carrying an M-16 in a dangerous place and they can't tell friend from foe. We know what they go through when they are out on patrol at night and they don't know what is coming around the next bend. We know what it is like to write letters home telling your family that everything is all right when you are not sure that's true.

I know what we have to do in Iraq. We need a President who has the credibility to bring our allies to our side because that's the right way to get the job done in Iraq and bring our troops home.

We need to bring in NATO and other nations to share the cost and burdens. Right now, the United States is shouldering the lion's share of this effort. Ninety percent of all coalition forces and nearly 90 percent of coalition coffins are draped with American flags. The American taxpayers are also paying the vast share of the cost of this war.

We also need to massively improve and accelerate our training of Iraqi police and security forces so they can defend their own country; and we need to ensure that there is far greater security to provide the credible elections in 2005 critical to advance Iraq's transition to stable, representative democracy.

As President, I will always ask hard questions and I will demand hard evidence. I will immediately reform the intelligence system, so policy is guided by facts, and facts are never distorted by politics.

As President, I will wage war with the lessons I learned in war. Before you go to battle, you have to be able to look a parent or family member in the eye and truthfully say: "We tried everything possible to avoid sending your son or daughter into harm's way, but we had no choice."

And now, with so much at stake in the struggle against al-Qaeda the American people want to hear, in plain words the answer to a simple question. How are we going to get the terrorists before they get us? Just what is our strategy — not just for striking back against the terrorists, but for defeating their aims, destroying their movement, discrediting their cause, and bringing old and new friends to our side? What is our long-term strategy for making America safer?

Over the course of this campaign, I have laid out my plans to reshape and rebuild the American military so that it is ready to fight tomorrow's wars, not yesterday's. As a combat veteran who has walked in your shoes, I know that the first duty of a Commander-in-Chief is to make sure that our troops are the best trained, best equipped fighting force in the world, and to never send them into battle without a plan to win the peace. That is essential.(Applause)

That's why I have called for adding 40,000 new troops, not in Iraq, let me emphasize, but to relieve the pressure on our overstretched forces. The fact is, the war in Iraq has taken a real toll on our armed services. Ninety in Iraq, have been to Iraq, and are recovering or they are on their way. I will also double our Army Special Forces so we can find and get the terrorists before they get us. And we must end the stop-loss and involuntary recall of troops that amounts to nothing more than a back-door draft. To fight this war, we have called up our Guard and Reserves at historic levels. And many of these units are being pushed to the limit.

The administration has extended tours of duty, delayed retirements, and prevented enlisted personnel from leaving the service. And when these troops come home, many have lost the job they left. We are going to see to it that everyone who fought for this country has a good job when they come back to this country, the United States of America.

At the same time, we must strengthen our homeland security and do everything we can to prevent another 9/11. We shouldn't be letting 95 percent of container ships come into our ports without even being physically inspected. We shouldn't be leaving our nuclear and chemical plants without enough protection. And we must make sure first responders have the training and equipment they need.

But, as you know, winning the war on terror demands a team effort. We all know that the best intelligence comes from working cooperatively with other nations, through real intelligence sharing and joint operations. That's why for months now I have been calling for the creation of a National Director of Intelligence with the authority to oversee all of our intelligence agencies.

Last month, the 9/11 Commission embraced many of these ideas. I have urged the President and the Congress to act, and act now, to imple-

ment them. But if we are going to end this war, we will have to listen to another profoundly important recommendation made by the Commission. "Long-term success demands the use of all elements of national power: Diplomacy, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, public diplomacy and homeland defense."

As President, I will fight a smarter, more effective war on terror. We will deploy every tool in our arsenal; our economic as well as our military might; our principles as well as our fire power. Only then will we be able to tell the terrorists: "You will lose and we will win."

Finally, I want to say something about the plan that the President announced on Monday to withdraw 70,000 troops from Asia and Europe. Nobody wants to bring troops home more than those of us who have fought in foreign wars. But it needs to be done at the right time and in a sensible way. That is not the time or the way.

Let's be clear: The President's vaguely stand does not strengthen our hand in the war against terror, and in no way relieves the strain on our over-extended military personnel. And this hastily-announced plan raises more doubts about our intentions and our commitments than it provides real answers.

For example, why are we unilaterally withdrawing 12,000 troops from the Korean Peninsula at the very time we are negotiating with North Korea, a country that really has nuclear weapons? As Senator John McCain said, "I'm particularly concerned about moving troops out of South Korea when North Korea has probably never been more dangerous than any time since the end of the Korean War." This is clearly the wrong signal to send at the wrong time.

With al-Qaeda operating in 60 countries, we need closer alliances in every part of the world to fight and win the war on terrorism. So, as President, I will be a Commander-in-Chief who renews our alliances based on shared interests and a common vision for a safer world. For more than 50 years, our allies have joined with us to say: "The future doesn't belong to fear; it belongs to freedom."

As veterans, we know we can win the war on terror. As men and women who have worn the uniform of our country, you know better than most that we can make our nation stronger at home and respected in the world.

And so, whether the issue is standing by our vets and their families or standing up for our principles, our values and our freedom, the big question before us is not just who will lead America. It is whether America will continue to lead in the world.

I am running for President because I believe that if we honor our highest values and do right by our men and women in uniform, America will continue to be a beacon of hope and freedom for all the world.

Thank you for your service to our country and God bless you and God bless the United States of America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: For those of you that stayed, I want to thank you. We are going to recess this session and reconvene at 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the salute to the Colors was had at this time.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade, your final order has been obeyed, sir.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 12:30 o'clock p.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY MORNING, AUGUST 19, 2004

(The Third Business Session of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Furgess presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, we will open the session of the 105th Annual National Convention. Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the room.

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the convention in the Salute to the Color followed with the Opening Prayer by National Chaplain David Norris.)

(Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman then led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Please be seated. Thank you. Good morning and welcome.

For the report of the Credentials Committee, I would like to call to the podium our Chairman, David Butters from Delaware.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 18, 2004, the convention delegate strength is as follows: 11,183 delegates.

Added to that are 54 Department Commanders; 25 Past Commanders-in-Chief, 37 National Officers. That is for a grand total of 11,299. A majority is 5,650. Two-thirds is 7,533.

VFW OUTSTANDING POST SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The Veterans of Foreign Wars National Veterans Service Committee established an award to recognize the Outstanding Post Service Officer of the Year.

This award is presented to one individual who provides exemplary and noble service and who continues to take those extra steps to ensure veterans and their families obtain the VA entitlements they deserve.

This year's award is presented to Mr. David "Skip" Griffin of VFW Post 1503 in Dale City, Virginia.

"Skip" is a retired Navy Master Chief and a Vietnam veteran. He

was also a VFW National Employee from 1995-2001 as the Assistant Department Service Officer at the VFW's Washington Regional Office.

"Skip" has demonstrated an uncanny ability in his current position to positively, and in some cases, dramatically influence the lives of many of his Post's 1,750 members.

His professionalism and dedication have earned him many outstanding awards, but none are as precious to him as the thank you's he receives daily from veterans and their family members.

It is with great pride that I present to you the recipient of this year's Outstanding Post Service Officer of the Year Award, "Skip" Griffin from the VFW Department of Virginia. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The award being presented reads: "VFW Post Service Officer of the Year Award, 2003-2004, presented to David "Skip" Griffin.

"In special recognition of your exemplary achievements in support of the veterans' service mission and programs of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Post Service Officer of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars this 19th day of August, 2004." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - COMRADE DAVID GRIFFIN

COMRADE DAVID GRIFFIN: Thank you and good morning. First of all, I would like to thank my beautiful wife standing next to me, because she puts up with the time that I spend away from the house down at the Post doing what service officers do when I should be home cutting the grass or painting the kitchen. That is okay. She saves that for the next day.

I would also like to thank the National Veterans Service, the Department Service Officers throughout the nation and, of course, all the Post Service Officers throughout the nation. The Post Service Officer does what I feel is one of the most important jobs that this organization has, and that is making sure that veterans are aware of their benefits.

The Post Service Officer, along with the State and the National Veterans Service, truly, very truly live up to the VFW motto of honoring our dead by helping the living. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, we are going to interrupt our schedule briefly. For more than 50, and really more than 60 years, our World War II veterans have been the backbone of this organization. From Post, District, Department and National levels, the World War II veterans have shown great dedication and courage.

This morning in somewhat of a surprise acknowledgement, I have asked Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt from Tennessee to join me on the podium. He recently turned 80 years young, and I can't think of a better way to salute them than to wish them happy birthday on behalf of

this 105th National Convention. We have a little cake that goes along with that salute.

So, if Cooper Holt would join us at the podium, and everyone will please rise, we will have a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday” to all the World War II veterans.

(Whereupon, the assembly sang “Happy Birthday” to Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper Holt.)

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF COOPER HOLT: I had no idea what was going on here. He just told me to be here, that he had a surprise. I am very happy to be 80 years old of age. Now, you don’t have to count it. That is August 3rd I was 80, and September 2nd I will have been married to the same woman 60 years. So I have been doing pretty good. I thank you for the happy birthday. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF JAMES C. GATES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my honor to present the prestigious James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award to Mr. James A. Haggerty, the Assistant Director of the State of New York Department of Labor, Division of Employment Services Veterans Program.

As an Assistant Director for Veterans Program, Mr. Haggerty is a primary adviser on the Veterans Program and how it can better meet the needs of New York State veterans. Mr. Haggerty has served the veteran community for more than 50 years, and his knowledge and experience have propelled him to the forefront of veterans issues with local businesses and veterans’ service organizations throughout the state. He is also very active in providing services to homeless veterans.

He is the recipient of numerous awards and citations and is a member of several Veterans Advisory Committees.

I now present to you an individual whose efforts have made a significant and positive impact on improving the lives of New York State veterans, a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War and Life Member of VFW Post 309 in Peru, New York.

Let’s make welcome Mr. Jim Haggerty. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads: “James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award presented to James A. Haggerty, Assistant Director, Division of Employment Service Veterans Program, New York State Department of Labor.

“In recognition of extraordinary achievement and exceptional leadership in advancing employment opportunities for our nation’s veterans and distinguished service in promoting the goals and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

“In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2004.”

This has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief

and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE JAMES HAGGERTY

COMRADE JAMES HAGGERTY (Post 309 - New York): If you look at this room, it is hard to believe that I am standing up here. Senior Vice-Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, fellow members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I am honored to be here this morning to receive the coveted James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award.

As he mentioned, I am a Life Member of VFW Post 309, Peru, New York. I became a member in 1953. I am a Life Member. I joined right after my tour in Korea with the Marines. Over the years, I have been involved in recommending many veterans for awards, as well as having the privilege of presenting the awards.

Little did I ever expect to be here accepting this VFW award in the name of all the veterans in New York State who I have worked with daily over these many, many years. I am happy to tell you many of them are VFW members.

I would like to thank my Congressman, John Sweeney, who is a great supporter of the VFW, and our men and women in the military. I would just like to say, fellow members, as you know, we have many, many veterans who need our help getting jobs. They need counseling, training that leads to good jobs. They need housing for themselves and their families. They need clothing, tools, transportation, so they are ready to accept the job offer.

Every day new, young veterans join our ranks and need our help. Many veterans are just a paycheck away from being homeless. As we say in the business, they are at the risk of becoming homeless. Everyone in this room can help in some small way. Maybe you know someone who will consider hiring them, and maybe training him or her for that particular job.

You and your Posts can donate to a local veterans shelter or have a special fund to help purchase work clothes, tools, or passes for transportation to a job. This is a more serious problem than many of us realize. If any of you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to call me. Our great National Director, Jim Magill, will be delighted to give you my e-mail address or my telephone number. I would love to speak to you and help in any way that I can.

I would like at this time to thank my son, Carl, down here for coming. I really appreciate him being here. Thank you, Carl. Also my wife, Nora, who is more than a wife. She is my best friend, my consultant, my adviser, my confidante, my co-pilot when driving, and the mother of our four children. Yes, she is the boss also, to say the least.

Once again, I would like to thank all of you for this great honor. God bless the VFW and God bless the USA. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL LARGE EMPLOYER
OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, it is now my honor to present what I sincerely believe to be among the most important awards that this organization presents each year. It is my honor to present the VFW Large Employer of the Year Award to Lear-Siegler Services, located at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Since 1961, Lear-Siegler has provided aircraft flight training and other related services at the U.S. Army aviation facility on Fort Rucker, Alabama.

Lear-Siegler is a veteran-friendly workplace and an exemplary model for government contractors in the hiring and retention of veterans.

More than 96 percent of its total work force of 460 employees are veterans, many with service-connected disabilities.

Lear-Siegler lists all new employment vacancies with the State Employment Service Office and considers all qualified veterans first for every job opening.

Lear-Siegler's hiring record is an inspiring example of a company that was founded on recognizing the skills and abilities that veterans acquired in the military.

Accepting the Large Employer of the Year Award is the President of Lear-Siegler's parent company, EG&G, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Army from 1968 to 1979, Mr. George Melton. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads: "National Large Employer of the Year Award presented to Lear-Siegler Services, Inc., Fort Rucker, Fort Rucker, Alabama.

"In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 19th day of August, 2004."

This has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. GEORGE MELTON

MR. GEORGE MELTON: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, and especially fellow veterans, it is with pleasure that I accept this award on behalf of all Lear-Siegler employees. Your recognition is a source of great pride for all of us. Our Lear-Siegler Services, Fort Rucker, Alabama, site is comprised of 460 employees with almost 90 percent of them proud veterans of the Army, Air Force, Navy or Marines.

These same veterans who serve our country so faithfully in uniform continue to serve today by sharing their skill, energy and experience as they

train tomorrow's Army, Air Force and allied helicopter pilots. In fact, 29 of our employees are currently back in uniform and serving on extended active duty.

Lear-Siegler Services has and will always recruit the most highly-skilled dedicated and trustworthy employees. We have learned that these qualities are more often than not found in those men and women who have served their country, the American veteran.

The business success or failure rests in large part on the shoulders of its employees. Veterans have proven themselves to be a mission-oriented team player, who are always willing to shoulder responsibility to get the job done. We at Lear-Siegler Services have found that pride and quality are not just words for most veterans.

When I learned that the Lear-Siegler Services selection as your Large Employer of the Year also brought with it a \$1,000 cash award, I wondered how best to make use of your generosity. One option identified to me was Operation Uplink. Through this program, our servicemen and women are presented prepaid telephone calling cards.

In this way, it is reassurance of family, friends that current events are just a telephone call away from our men and women in service. Therefore, Lear-Siegler Services is pleased to match your award and donate the combined total to this very worthwhile program. (Applause)

Again, let me thank you, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, for the great honor you have bestowed on Lear-Siegler Services' family by selecting us as your Large Employer of the Year. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Melton, and thanks again for that generous donation. This honorarium will be transferred to Operation Uplink.

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL SMALL EMPLOYER OF YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Now, comrades, it is my great honor to present the VFW Small Employer of the Year Award to L-3 Communications Integrated Systems Vertex Aerospace.

L-3 Vertex Aerospace provides aircraft maintenance support for the United States Air Force at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Of its 145 employees, 84 percent are veterans; 10 percent of them are disabled veterans. 100 percent of the managers at L-3 Vertex Aerospace are veterans who recognize the work ethic and expertise veterans bring to the work place.

We are proud to be presenting them this award because they clearly support the hiring and career advancement of our nation's veterans.

Accepting the Small Employer of the Year Award is a fellow veteran and L-3 Vertex Aerospace Program Manager, Mr. Bernard Jorda. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads, "National Small Employer of the Year Award presented to L-3 Communications Integrated

Systems, Vertex Aerospace, Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, Bernard Jorda accepting. "In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a very comprehensive policy toward the recruitment, employment and promotion of veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 19th day of August, 2004."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Ed S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. BERNARD JORDA

MR. BERNARD JORDA: On behalf of L-3, my entire work force and myself, I would like to thank the VFW and all its members for this very distinguished award. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICE AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, it is now my honor to announce that this year's National Employment Service Office Award goes to the Worksource Career Center of Lubbock, Texas.

The Lubbock Center excels in providing both quality and quantity of services to veterans from Lubbock and 14 surrounding countries. They provide veterans a higher level of service in all categories over non-veterans in the area, with disabled veterans receiving the highest level of service.

Last year they served more than 2,000 veterans and placed more than half of them into employment. The Lubbock Center joins forces with numerous other agencies and service organizations to provide true one-stop service for veterans.

The Center at Lubbock sponsors two annual job fairs and numerous individual employer job fairs with the emphasis on finding and placing veterans into good jobs.

The Center strives to place veterans at their highest earnings potential and assist them with short and long-term goals that lead to rewarding careers.

Here to accept the National Employment Service Office Award is a 33-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, a member of VFW Post 2466 in Lubbock, and the Veterans Employment Service Manager from the Worksource Career Center in Lubbock, Texas, Mr. Coy Martin.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation reads: "National Employment Service Office Award presented to Worksource Career Center of Lubbock, Lubbock, Texas, Coy Martin accepting.

"In recognition and appreciation for meritorious professional employment services rendered to veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the offi-

cial seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 19th day of August, 2004.”

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE COY MARTIN

COMRADE COY MARTIN (Post 2466 - Texas): Well, the first thing I want to say is I thank everybody, especially the VFW, for the great work they do. I am going to reach back a few years and thank the Air Force for letting me serve for 33 years. I kind of like veterans.

In the State of Texas, they let me go to work for them and continued to serve veterans. So, I guess you can say I have been serving veterans for 43 years. I have got some great folks with me. They, along with myself, want to say greetings from the great State of Texas. Will you folks stand up, please, specifically Lubbock, Texas. (Applause) They have followed me here to see this happen today. We are proud of it. We are proud of the work we do.

I want to extend a personal thanks to Lear-Siegler and L-3. It is folks like them that help me make my job the finest thing in the world to do. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: This next award is a special award, comrades, to Ray Sisk, Past Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation.

His theme was Service, Honor, Pride. These words describe his attitude about veterans to a tee. Ray Sisk knew the importance of setting the example for others to follow, not asking anyone to do what he wasn't willing to do himself.

Ray Sisk reasserted the Veterans of Foreign Wars' mandate of service, and today we recognize his many years as an outspoken advocate on behalf of his fellow veterans and their families.

Here to receive the VFW Distinguished Service Medal and Citation, please welcome Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads, "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Ray Sisk, Commander-in-Chief, 2002-2003.

"In sincere appreciation and special recognition of his total commitment and dedication to the highest ideals of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, and his continuing efforts in support of its programs and purposes. His commitment to 'Service, Honor and Pride' during the 2002-2003 administrative year enabled the Veterans of Foreign Wars to

remain a strong advocate for our nation's veterans.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2004."

It has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SISK: Thank you very much, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. To all the line officers, to all of the wonderful comrades in this room, you know, no one person can ever justify an award to wear around their neck. No one person can do that. It has everybody working together.

I am so very happy I had a great bunch of line officers and staff. I am so wonderfully pleased that we had 54 of the best Department Commanders that I will ever get to look at. We have had some of the greatest help from our Ladies Auxiliary. That is how this organization stays viable. I am so pleased to see those same faces this year doing the same work that we tried to do last year and that we have had for 104 years before this.

To my great Department of California, thank you so much for all the help and support you have given me throughout every endeavor I have tried to achieve. Let me tell you this, this is an achievement for all of us, and I want to thank every comrade in this room from the very bottom of my heart for the award and the honor that you have bestowed upon me today. Thank you so very much. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, even though he has got a very important role to play later this morning, toward the end of this session, when we nominate officers for the ensuing year, I want to pause just for a moment and recognize the presence on the platform, and I will say it this way, one of the most popular Past Commanders-in-Chief, the first Vietnam veteran ever to be Commander-in-Chief, Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

Thank you, comrades. The old Tar Heel is up and at them early this morning.

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO WILLIAM SMITH

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, one characteristic of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has always been the support and assistance provided by the national staff to the various Departments and Posts. The entire organization takes pride in the ability we have to successfully deliver the VFW message whenever and wherever needed.

For 18 years, one person has played an integral part in delivering

the VFW message of service. He has a deep understanding of what our organization is supposed to be about. He also possesses a keen perception of the military and a phenomenal knowledge of public relations strategies.

Bill Smith's many years of active duty service in the United States Army and his subsequent years as an employee of the VFW is a testament to his commitment and dedication.

Bill worked for many years in the VFW Washington office. Please join me in honoring William G. "Bill" Smith.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The award being presented reads, "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to William G. Smith.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of 18 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a dedicated employee, fulfilling the position of Director, Public Affairs, Washington, D.C., office. His commitment to the goals and objectives of the VFW, along with the professionalism in which he performed his duties, is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2004."

It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE WILLIAM SMITH

COMRADE WILLIAM SMITH: Thank you. Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and Sisters:

First off, my wife has warned me not to be emotional. That is the very first thing. I am very honored this morning to be here to receive this award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. In 1986, when I came to the VFW, I was hired by then Executive Director Cooper T. Holt, and I came with a great respect and understanding of what the VFW was about, and today, 18 years later, those feelings and respect have not diminished. It is quite the contrary. If anything, they have increased.

The history of the VFW is one of action and involvement, and today with more and more veterans seeking care from the VA, and greater demands being placed on that system, there is still, more than ever in the past, a need for the VFW. Today, there are well over 100,000 servicemen and women serving in Iraq overseas and other locations. We salute their service, but with the understanding and dedication that you, the members of the VFW and the work that you are doing here at the 105th National Convention have exhibited their service, their sacrifice will not be forgotten. The VFW is working there for them and will remember them.

In closing, I want to say a personal note and thank the staffs of the Kansas City office and the Washington office for their hard work. I have

always admired their dedication and professionalism, and I have always been proud to represent the VFW to the media and to the American people. My wife, Loretta, who is with me here, is also a member of the great VFW family, joins me in thanking you for this tribute. Thank you. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO THEODORE SYPKO

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, the Veterans of Foreign Wars was founded by veterans to help veterans in their quest for medical care and pensions. Over the past 105 years, this determination has never wavered.

Today, the system of Veterans Service Officers stretches around the world. The dedication and devotion shown by Service Officers of the VFW is unequalled.

Ted Sypko began his career at the VFW as an appeals consultant. He quickly moved to Field Representative and then as National Veterans Service Officer located at Headquarters in Kansas City.

Ted's compassion for his fellow veterans and his commitment to their well-being was evidenced time after time through the years. His dogged determination made it possible for many veterans and their dependents to receive the benefits they were entitled to.

Please join me in honoring Retired National Veterans Service Officer Theodore "Ted" Sypko.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads, "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Theodore P. Sypko.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of 24 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a dedicated employee, fulfilling the positions of Appeals Consultant, Field Representative, and Service Officer. His commitment to the goals and objectives of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, along with his compassion for his comrades in arms, and the professionalism in which he performed his duties is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 19th day of August, 2004."

It has been signed by Edward S. Banas, Sr., the Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE TED SYPKO

COMRADE TED SYPKO: Well, first, I would like to say it has been a pleasure serving the greatest organization in this country, as far as I am

concerned. There have been a number of people who supported me over the years, and I would like to recognize them at this time.

The late Past Commander-in-Chief Howard Vander Clute, Past Commander-in-Chief Bob Wallace and Executive Director of the Washington office, Fred Juarbe, the former Director of National Veterans Service, for bringing me into Washington from the Department of New Jersey, Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt, Past Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers, Ed Burnham, a former Assistant Adjutant General, Bill Bradshaw, the Director of National Veterans Service and a good friend, and all my co-workers in both Washington and the Kansas City offices, and, most of all, all the Department Service Officers and their staffs throughout the country. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, this year we are honored to present the VFW Outstanding Community Health-Care Employee of the Year to Mrs. Debra Reston of Golden Valley, Arizona. Mrs. Reston is a Registered Nurse at the Kingman Regional Medical Center in Kingman, Arizona, and the Commander of VFW Post 3516 in Kingman.

Mrs. Reston works 12-hour shifts at the medical center and on her days off she visits veterans in local hospitals and VA facilities in Prescott, Arizona, and Las Vegas.

Mrs. Reston's love for her patients goes beyond the normal scope of her duties. She has never turned away a veteran who needed her compassionate understanding or assistance. Reston has personally supplied water, electricity and propane gas to indigent veterans in her area without any fanfare or recognition. She has also arranged for transport distant VA hospitals to keep their medical appointments. I am pleased to present this year's VFW Outstanding Community Health-Care Employee of the Year award to Mrs. Debra Reston of Kingman, Arizona.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented reads, "Outstanding Community Health-Care Provider Award, 2003-2004, presented to Debra A. Reston.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veteran Foreign War the United States as the Outstanding Community Health-Care Provider of the Year."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr. Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MRS. DEBRA RESTON

SISTER DEBRA RESTON (Post 3516 - Arizona): I would like to thank, first of all, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Furgess and all the offi-

cers of the National Convention. Comrades and sisters, I started in the VFW after coming back from Desert Storm, and I started in the great Department of Michigan, where the State of Michigan gave me a lot of help, support and care over the years.

When I transferred to the Department of Nevada, they allowed me to be their Department surgeon in the great State of Nevada so I could continue my work on behalf of veterans. When I moved to Arizona, I was amazed at the continued support that every Post in the Department of Arizona has given me. They have allowed me to pursue what I need to do, not only as Commander but as a nurse. Any time I have called for help from any of my fellow comrades they have been there to assist me to help my beloved veterans.

I will continue to help my beloved veterans until you bury me in my nursing shoes. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING VA HEALTH-CARE EMPLOYEE AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, each year the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognizes a VA Health-Care employee for exemplary service to veterans and their families.

This year's recipient is Mrs. Diane Hall, a Speech and Language Pathologist at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Eastern Kansas Health-Care System in Topeka. Mrs. Hall works with veterans suffering from strokes, Parkinson's disease, head trauma, ALS, multiple sclerosis, and any other conditions that interfere with communication skills.

However, her value is not in her title, but in the services she has provided veterans for more than 20 years. Her care and compassion for veterans and their families have made her an exemplary employee as well as a dear friend.

Her dedication goes well beyond her normal working hours. Inspired by a veteran with Parkinson's disease, she started a support group just last year in August, 2003. This is only one of many ways in which Mrs. Hall cares for veterans.

Her professionalism and dedication to the field of speech pathology has earned her many outstanding awards, but none are as meaningful as those she receives from her patients and their family members.

It is with great pride that I present to you this year's Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee of the Year, from the Eastern Kansas Health-Care System in Topeka, Kansas, Mrs. Diane Hall. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The citation being presented by the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief reads, "Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee Award, 2003-2004, presented to Diane B. Hall.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of United State as the Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee of the Year."

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief, Edward S. Banas, Sr., and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MRS. DIANE B. HALL

MRS. DIANE HALL: As a speech pathologist, no one has ever accused me of not having words to say, but this time I am truly honored for the awesome ability to be able to be here with you today, to be honored in this way for doing something that I love so much for 20 years, with people that are not patients in your life, but they are your family, the people that you live with every day, all day. It is just more than I can comprehend.

I sincerely appreciate Post 1650 in Topeka, Kansas, for having the faith to nominate me, the State of Kansas for all their support, and especially for Jack and Larry being here with me. Especially to my husband, Dick Hall, for all of his love and support. I cannot tell you how much veterans and the VFW means to me. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING HEALTH-CARE VOLUNTEER AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Outstanding Health-Care Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to a volunteer, who is nominated by a VFW Post for providing exemplary service to veterans and their families, Claude Owens, of VFW Post 9430 in Seattle. Mr. Owens is a VFW volunteer at the Puget Sound VA Health-Care System in Seattle.

Many of his 87 years have been devoted to helping others. Each person he meets appreciates his sincere efforts and they become friends for life. Claude's day routinely begins with a memorial service at the Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent, where he is always on-call.

His time volunteering at the VA Hospital is usually after hours. He spends about 40 hours a week at the VA and has accumulated over 17,000 hours of voluntary service.

On his birthday, Claude makes his rounds through the VA Hospital on roller skates. This is his way of celebrating his good health and energy that God has blessed him with.

I am proud to present this year's Veterans of Foreign Wars Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award to Mr. Claude Owens from Seattle, Washington. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Outstanding Health-Care Volunteer Award, 2003-2004, presented to Claude Owens.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year."

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas,

Sr., and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more round of applause, comrades. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE CLAUDE OWENS

COMRADE CLAUDE OWENS (Post 9430 - Washington): Thank you, thank you. First, let me give thanks to my Savior, Lord, Jesus Christ. This is unbelievable. I thought I had a wild, wild dream, but now it is real. I can't tell you what is in my heart, but please read it. I love you all very much.

National Commander, my buddy Bill Dozier in Washington, D.C., and my State Commander Gary Hulsey, when you get to be 88, you know, this isn't easy, believe me.

My dear buddy, Chuck Vattery, his lovely wife, Pam, Lady Pam, and her daughter, Connie, my dead buddy, Mr. Edward Rasmussen and his lovely lady, Pat, and to all of Post 9430, the greatest Post in the world, and to my family, to all my family up in the VA Hospital in Seattle, Washington, to everyone everywhere, I can't thank you enough for this unbelievable honor that God has poured on me from our organization.

My prayers are with you and all of your families. We pray you get home safely. We pray for our troops overseas, God bless them and their families, and we pray for those high in military authority in times like these. We send up prayers for everyone. God bless you, God keep you. I love you all. God bless America.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: How about that, Mr. Owens, a standing ovation. That is for you. It is well-deserved. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT EVELYN McCUNE

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Sergeant-at-Arms, we have a special guest in the hall.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: As the Chief goes over to make welcome to the National President of the VFW Ladies Auxiliary, he asked me to read this message from our Commander-in-Chief.

"I just came from visiting the Ladies Auxiliary, and it was apparent how successful their convention has been. I am extremely pleased that here to visit our convention today is a lady that I was proud to serve with for the past year. She has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars for many years and has left a successful legacy for others to follow for many years to come. I admire her deeply."

Please welcome a great lady from the great State of Kansas, Evelyn

McCune, National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Comrades, our National President.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's hear it, comrades. What do you say? (Applause)

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief Banas assumed the chair at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, John Furgess, for introducing Madam President. I can tell you, comrades, that I have just left the Ladies Auxiliary meeting a very short while ago and was treated very, very graciously by them.

I am very happy that you had time to interrupt your meeting, Madam President, to come and basically with me to say goodbye to these good comrades after three years. Evelyn and I have had a very good dialogue over the three years, and we have helped each other in many, many ways, and for you good comrades who don't know it, the Ladies Auxiliary, which has been donating \$3 million every year for at least the last 15 years, I believe, to cancer aid and research, fell a little short this year to the tune of \$17,000.

They came to us, the good men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, for assistance could make that amount of money. We were able to respond and present the Auxiliary with that check for \$17,000 so they could make their \$3 million mark. (Applause)

Evelyn, this is just a small token for you. I was obviously supposed to have presented it in front of the ladies, but it was misplaced. I thank you for everything. I want you to address our body. And one thing, in all of the three years, I don't believe that Evelyn and I were ever assigned to three events collectively together.

So, whenever we were together at something like a convention, if Evelyn and I were together, her husband, Don, and my wife, Sandra, were together. My wife will miss him. I would like to present to you the President of the Ladies Auxiliary, a good friend of ours, Evelyn McCune. (Applause)

REMARKS - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT EVELYN McCUNE

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT McCUNE: Thank you. Commander-in-Chief Banas, National Officers and VFW Members:

It is certainly an honor and a privilege for me to be here with you this morning and to have this opportunity to greet you one more time as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. What a great honor it has been.

I would also like to thank you again and say a special thank you to the VFW Foundation for the \$17,000 that was given to us to help honor cancer aid and research. With your help, we reached our \$3 million goal for the sixteenth consecutive year. We certainly appreciate that. That's cooperation. Thank you. (Applause) I would also like to thank you for the items

that you have donated during this convention, as well as last year, so we were able to ship all of the care packages to our troops. We certainly appreciate all that you have done and that we have done together jointly with the Auxiliary members to help us so adequately respond to this need.

Because of your participation, along with that of the Auxiliary members, the Junior Girls Units and all of the members for their donations from the communities, our efforts to ship all of those packages have been completely self-supporting. We appreciate all of your donations for that, also.

I am also proud to report that the Ladies Auxiliary donated \$552,041 to Operation Uplink. As a result, our active duty military and hospitalized veterans will be able to call their loved ones. Thanks to all of you and the efforts of the Ladies Auxiliary.

Once again, these projects demonstrate that we have discovered year after year working together we can accomplish great things. Thank you for your cooperation on all the projects that we conduct together each year. We have achieved victories for veterans in our communities. I am nervous and I don't know why.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: There is no reason.

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT McCUNE: I also want to thank those who have signed up new members for the Ladies Auxiliary, and I hope that you received the gift that was from me that was offered for that. We certainly do appreciate it. The members of our Auxiliary are very proud of our legacy of service and look forward to many more years working together with our veterans and for America.

I particularly want to thank Ed. It has been an honor, my honor to serve with you this year. As a token of my appreciation, I would like to present you with this flag set.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: It doesn't get any better than this, comrades. Thank you. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT McCUNE: I again just want to say thank you to each and every one of you for all the kindness you have shown me this year. Just being married four years, I did miss my husband very much when I traveled this year, and I missed the hugs and kisses from him. But believe me, you-all filled his shoes while I was on the road. (Applause)

I appreciate this. I told him, you know, "I miss you, dear, and I know I can't be there with you, but I know that my VFW comrades will supply me with the hugs and kisses that I need." I am not too sure he went for that.

As we were talking, Sandra said she would miss Don, because they talked gardens, trees and shrubs while Ed and I were doing business. Again, thank you so very much, and again my wish for each one of you is that you may have kindness, love and peace. Thank you, and God bless each and every one of you.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT McCUNE: I would like to introduce my Chief of Staff Janice Criswell from Kansas. (Applause)

Sandra, thank you so much for sharing Ed with me this year. As I

told her in the meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary, a year ago I thanked her for sharing Ed with me this year. She said this was okay as long as you bring him back. So, I did return him to her this morning. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Comrades, at this time I am going to take the opportunity to introduce all of the Past Commanders who are present at our 105th National Convention. I would ask them to stand and for you to hold your applause until I have completed this list.

- 1956-'57, Cooper T. Holt from Tennessee.
- 1958-'59, John W. Mahan from Montana.
- 1968-'69, Richard A. Homan, West Virginia.
- 1973-'74, Ray Soden, Illinois.
- 1974-'75, John J. Stang, Kansas.
- 1977-'78, Dr. John Wasyluk, Ohio.
- 1980-'82, Arthur J. Fellwock, Indiana.
- 1982-'83, James R. "Bob" Currieo, Arizona.
- 1983-'84, Clifford G. Olson, Massachusetts.
- 1984-'85, Billy Ray Cameron, North Carolina.
- 1988-'89, Larry W. Rivers, Louisiana.
- 1989-'90, Walter G. "Wally" Hogan, Wisconsin.
- 1991-'92, Robert E. Wallace, New Jersey.
- 1992-'93, John M. Carney, Florida.
- 1993-'94, George R. Cramer, Illinois.
- 1994-'95, Allen "Gunner" Kent, Arizona.
- 1995-'96, Paul A. Spera, Massachusetts.
- 1996-'97, James E. Nier, Texas.
- 1997-'98, John Moon, Ohio.
- 1998-'99, Thomas A. Pouliot, Montana.
- 1999-2000, John W. Smart, New Hampshire
- 2000-2001, John F. Gwizdak, Georgia.
- 2001-2002, James N. Goldsmith, Michigan.
- 2002-2003, Ray Sisk, California. (Applause)

At this time I am going to call on the Adjutant General to introduce the Sergeants. I would ask the cameraman if you could focus on Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron for a moment. Billy Ray, the last time I saw you, we were in Vietnam. I think you have some of my ties, comrade.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We went to Vietnam and he took care of all of us. It is nice to see you, Billy Ray. (Applause)

Past Commander-in-Chief Goldsmith, would you come up here, please. You have to remember, comrades, that Jim Goldsmith was my Chief, and he would always get the bigger basket of fruit, the bigger this, so I

couldn't afford it in my budget, because we are doing what we are doing, Jim, to send you fruit, so I did get you this Danish. (Laughter)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: My comrades, at this time you see standing behind me our Sergeants-at-Arms. Let me take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to a group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and the Washington Conference. They come to this convention and they are up early in the morning and the first ones in the hall.

They arrange for the seating on special occasions, and they keep order in the hall. They try to seat everybody and maintain order that is necessary during the meeting itself. These folks don't get a lot of money to do this. It is obviously a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes that they do an outstanding job.

It is my privilege to introduce the National Sergeant-at-Arms from Post 6240, Department of Kansas, Barry Hoffman. Barry has been a Sergeant for 16 years. He is a retired Colonel with the Kansas National Guard, and is currently unemployed. I hope that the Employer of the Year person is still available. So, if you are looking for a dynamic individual who is capable of both giving and taking orders, Barry is your man.

Keith McDonald has been a Sergeant for ten years and is a member of Post 2275 in California. He is retired from the United States Navy and is a Past All American Post Commander. Keith McDonald.

Gary Barringer, Post 9134, has been a Sergeant for nine years. He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina. He works as a technician for the North Carolina National Guard. Gary Barringer.

Joe Schirmers has been a Sergeant for 42 years and is a member of Post 4847 in Minnesota. He has retired from the Great Northern Railroad and has over 47,000 hours of volunteer service at VA Hospitals.

The next Sergeant to be introduced is a Vietnam veteran who served with the United States Navy. He is from the Department of Florida where he retired from the St. Petersburg Police Department after 25 years. That is Ed Villuame.

Another member of the Sergeants is a former Air Force Sergeant from Massachusetts, a Past District Commander, five-time All-State Post Quartermaster, and in 1982 was selected by the National Organization as a Young Veteran of the Year, Byran O'Brien.

The newest member of the team, Jim Galen from Michigan, is a Past All-State Commander, a Post Quartermaster for 17 years, and is employed as an assembly technician for General Motors.

In my humble opinion, and I think you will all agree with me, the prettiest Sergeant-at-Arms we have is Joy Collins-Baxter from the great State of Minnesota. She has been a Sergeant for six years, a member of Post 1720, and is currently the Eighth District Quartermaster. Joy is also a member of

Ladies Auxiliary Post 4012 in Northville, Michigan. She is an Occupational Health and Safety Manager for Forest Products in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. I know you want to join with me in wishing her success on her recent engagement. (Applause)

These are the comrades that every time something goes wrong, we start screaming at them. If something goes right, sometimes we forget to say "thank you." At this time I want to publicly say "thank you" to each and every one of you. Each member of this team does a great job.

I am so proud of each and every one of them. Comrades, you handle yourselves as professionals. I am honored to have the opportunity to serve with each and everyone of you. Thanks so much on behalf of all of us for what you do for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Let's show them our appreciation.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL HONOR GUARD

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: This next group of individuals is immediately recognizable. They are, of course, the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Honor Guard. You see them at every convention, and we are always impressed by their sharpness and integrity with their performance at the opening and closing ceremonies.

They also perform for the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration and other government agencies when requested, oftentimes without remuneration.

They are the only non-military Honor Guard authorized to perform at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Let me introduce to you the members that are here today.

David F. Wood, 55 years with the Honor Guard. He was a Charter member.

Bob Harkins - 53 years.

Joseph Nassar - 46 years.

Tom Ryan - 28 years.

William Magruder - 26 years.

Neil Koski - 20 years.

Kenneth Britter - 18 years.

Michael McGuire - 17 years.

Alfred Simmons - 10 years.

Serving as Captain of the team this year, Richard Udoff, 8 years.

Tom Kimball, Jr. - 7 years.

Phillip Medlin - 7 years.

Henry Servary - 4 years.

Carroll Smith - 3 years.

Eugene Daisey - 3 years.

Ray Glock - 2 years.

Gary Lee - 2 years.

We must have a brother team serving here, Ronald Servary, 2 years. Let's show them collectively our appreciation for the job they do. (Applause)

While the Honor Guard is retiring to the back of the room, it is a genuine pleasure for me to announce the results of this year's silent auction. We are grateful to the VFW Departments that donated some very appealing and high-value items.

We are grateful to those who bid, for their generosity and commitment to the effort. Because of this combine generosity, the Southern Ohio Veterans Home will receive a total of \$5,047. Thanks to all who participated. (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE WINNERS OF THE INSURANCE DRAWING

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Allow me to announce the winners of the insurance cash prize drawing. They are Alex Rilki, Pennsylvania; Walter Lewis, Nevada; Arthur Vlrich, Ohio; Archie Gupton, North Carolina.

Robert Marks of Oklahoma is the grand prize winner of \$1,000. Please stop by the insurance booth in Aisle 100, no later than noon today, to collect your winnings.

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Let me tell you about the nominees for National Home Trustees.

Representing the Third National Home District, Delaware, D.C., Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, Ronald G. Stensland, VFW Post 23, Pennsylvania, and Francine Cornish, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post No. 9755, District of Columbia.

The Sixth National Home District, representing Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee, Dianne Brown, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post No. 4490, Mississippi, and Dorothy Verrill, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post No. 4409, Missouri.

The Seventh National Home District, representing Wisconsin, Michigan and Iowa, this will be an easy one because there is only one, Shirley Tellis, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 9127, Iowa.

The Tenth National Home District, comprising Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas, Roy Ator, VFW Post No. 6873, Texas.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 105th CONVENTION

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 105th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law No. 620, Ninetieth Congress, approved October

2, 1968, Title 44, United States Code, Section 1332.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL JOE RIDGLEY (Department of Missouri): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a motion and a second to submit the records of the convention to Congress. Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? Is there any discussion? If not, we will move the motion. All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. Thank you very much, comrades. The motion passed.

VISIT OF NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time I would like to bring up the people who came to visit us from the National Home. We have the Executive Director, Patrice Greene. We have the Public Relations Director, Barry Walter, and soon to be introduced to you the 2004 Buddy Poppy Child, Brielle Sylvain.

REMARKS BY NATIONAL HOME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREENE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: We have our Board member, Lewie Cooper, out of Kansas, and he is going to speak to you first.

COMRADE LEWIS COOPER (National Home President): Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Furgess, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, Past Commanders-in-Chief, National Officers, my Comrades:

It is certainly an honor and pleasure to address the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars today at our 105th National Convention. As President of the Board of Trustees of the VFW National Home for Children, I bring to you the greetings and gratitude of my fellow trustees.

You-all may not know our Commander-in-Chief during his term of office serves as a Trustee of the VFW National Home. We want to thank him for the support he has shown for the Home during his term. This year Commander-in-Chief Banas joined in partnership with our Ladies Auxiliary President, Evelyn McCune, to provide support to the National Home Awareness Programs and fund-raising efforts.

His insights and challenges we may face in today's social, political and economic environment have been an inspiration. During his years in the chairs, the Commander-in-Chief has visited the National Home to attend Board meetings. He did also on his official visits to the Department of Michigan.

Now, these visits demonstrate the solid support of the VFW, and we thank you, Commander, for your personal commitment to the National Home, the home that clearly fulfills the VFW motto, "To honor the dead by helping the living." Adjutant General Senk and Quartermaster General Ridgley are also Trustees of the National Home Board. John and Joe faith-

fully serve the Home, regularly attending quarterly Board meetings or sending representatives when their VFW duties prevent them from traveling to Michigan. Both provide valuable counsel and Joe currently serves as chair of my Finance Committee. Joe and John, we thank you for everything you do. Thank you.

I want to tell you-all how proud I am to have so many dedicated members serving on the Board. The Trustees take their responsibilities very seriously and they work hard attending the Board meetings four times a year in Michigan. They take care of the business matters at hand traveling, speaking and fund-raising in their Departments in support of this great cause that is our National Home.

Also, the directors and staff of the Home are the most dedicated and caring individuals that I have ever been associated with. This morning I am delighted to bring to you the greetings of the children, families and staff of the VFW National Home, so generously supported by you, the members of the greatest organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Since 1925, the VFW has donated money, time and talent in support of the National Home, and incidentally the VFW National Home will be 80 years old in January, 2005, and the National Home staff is planning appropriate celebrations for that.

You have been faithful to your promise in your work and it has made a great deal of difference in this world of ours. Children raised at the National Home live in every state in America. They are doctors, they are teachers, they are auto mechanics, and they are factory workers and soldiers. We certainly salute those men and women on active duty today, who are alumni of the National Home. One of the youth that you saw in the choir at the Patriotic Rally has joined the United States Navy. He cannot wait to get into uniform and serve his country. That is an example of the youth that pass through the National Home. Through your commitment to the National Home, you have literally raised thousands of solid patriotic citizens who live all across our great land.

In today's world, the National Home is needed more than ever. I know that because we have a waiting list of families. They are your families and your children and your grandchildren. They are looking to come to the Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan. These families are in need of our help. They are not strangers to you. They are yours. Because they are, they are ours.

Nearly 80 years ago, members of this organization joined together and they made a promise to each other and to the future that they would provide a haven for children and families of their fellow veterans. You have kept that promise to yourselves, to our members, and to the children and families you helped at the VFW National Home.

One of the Ladies Auxiliary members, Deborah Spader, the Western Conference National Home Chairman for the great Department of Utah, recently wrote of her renewed support for the mission of the National Home. She and her husband had become custodian of their two small granddaughters, ages five and three.

It was then they faced the reality that many others must also face. What will happen to these little ones? Where will they go? Who will care for them as they would if something happened to she and her husband? The answer that came to her was a promise made by her sisters in 1925.

The VFW National Home for Children stands ready to assist the Spader family and to your family if the need should arise. It is not a hollow promise, it is a promise that we together have kept for over 79 years.

On behalf of every child who has come to the National Home since 1925, and every child that will come in the next 80 years, thank you for keeping that promise.

The National Home, of course, is a valuable resource to the VFW. Comments made by visitors to the National Home consistently reflect the theme, "Well, I didn't know the VFW did this wonderful thing." Just last week, a Vietnam veteran from California was passing through the area and he saw our sign out on the highway. He and his family stopped to see what we were all about.

After seeing our video and taking a campus tour, the Department of California now has a new VFW member and a Ladies Auxiliary member. Comrades, the story of your National Home is one of the best recruiting tools that you could ever have. The Home is a wonderful and living memorial to all veterans, and especially during these troubled times for our nation, a shining star for the VFW.

I would like to say come visit the National Home and you will wonder why you stayed away so long. This year individual members of Posts, County Councils, Districts and Departments have demonstrated their support through their participation in the National Home's Annual Awareness Week, spreading community awareness to both the Home and the VFW.

They have made generous donations and they have participated in our Campbell's label program, sending over 1.5 million labels to the Home, earning for us a brand new mini van, and your generosity resulted in a much-improved year in the bottom line than anticipated. It wasn't a completely balanced budget, but it was a giant step in the right direction for the future. Thank you for keeping your promise.

Even as I thank you today for all you have done this past year, and for the past 79 years, I must ask you to do just a little bit more. I ask you to remember the commitment you made as an organization and as individual members, and to honor it. There are still families and children who need our help and veterans we have pledged to honor and serve by caring for their children and families when they need us.

Comrades, there is no promise more sacred than that made to a fellow comrade. I ask when you return to your Posts and Departments, take a day or two and do just one more fund-raiser, and send your donations to the National Home. If you are not a Life Member of the National Home, then become one today.

Support the National Home in every way you can, because you

will be investing in our future and helping to make America strong as you have done for nearly 105 years as the greatest veterans organization ever formed, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

On January 1st, 2004, the National Home launched a new donor recognition program, the Star Donor Program, which recognizes individual supporters for their total donations, and each year, calendar year, beginning January 1st, 2004. Now, the Star Donor pin recognizes those dedicated individuals for their support from the \$50 level to the \$5,000 level. As of today, thousands of distinctive Star Donor recognition pins have been distributed to members all over the country. Wear them with pride.

On July 1st, 2004, the National Home also introduced a donor recognition program to acknowledge devoted units of our organization for their support. This segment of the Star Donor Program established four levels of recognition for total annual giving for each fiscal year beginning July 1st, 2004.

Now, the Bronze Star is for \$500. The Silver Star is for \$1,000, the Gold Star is for \$2,000 and the Platinum Star is for \$5,000 and above.

Now, as soon as this program was announced, one Post rose to meet the challenge of support. VFW Post 8175, from the Department of Maryland, who made an outstanding contribution to the Home and became the first Post to qualify for the highest award, the Platinum Star Donor.

Commander-in-Chief, if you would, please, join us at this time and help us present the first Platinum Star Donor plaque to the District 10 Commander, Bob Patterson, from the Department of Maryland. He will accept the award on behalf of the members of Post 8175.

"The VFW National Home for Children gratefully acknowledges VFW Post 8175, Commander Charles E. McCoy, as Platinum Star Donor, 2004-2005." This has been signed by Lewis B. Cooper, Board of Trustees President, and Patrice Greene, Executive Director. (Applause)

The VFW Ladies Auxiliary jointly supports the National Home in many ways. It demonstrates your devotion to our mission. Your devotion is shared by a dedicated staff that is led by an Executive Director equally devoted to our National Home.

Since assuming the position of Executive Director, she has inspired her team. She has challenged them to be innovative and problem-solving and do more with less, which is demand excellence in the care of our children and families. Her dignity and grace are an inspiration to us all on the Board of Trustees.

At this time, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you the Executive Director of the VFW National Home for Children, Patrice Greene. (Applause)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Thank you, Lewie. Commander-in-Chief Banas, you have given the National Home wonderful support and encouragement during your year. For that we thank you. It is truly an honor to be here today representing the National Home at this, your 105th National Convention.

I bring to you the greetings and the thanks of your National Home children, families and staff. As you can see by the caliber of the young people that you met this week, the National Home Chorus, you know that you are making a difference at your VFW National Home for Children.

As a member of the National Home staff for over 15 years, I can tell you this from my personal experience, I have seen children come to the National Home with very difficult and sometimes heart-breaking life stories, children who fell through the cracks and were not able to get help from overburdened, severely-stressed government agencies.

I have had the privilege of seeing them get the best of loving care, because of what you and your comrades and sisters have done. I have seen them thrive and to go on to become successful and healthy and happy adults, with new families of their own.

The Home is regularly visited by alumni from all over the country. As Board President Lewie Cooper just told you, they are doctors, they are teachers, they are auto mechanics, they are business owners and they are members of the United States military.

Their moms and their dads, their grandfathers and their grandmothers, they are raising their children to be fine, upstanding, patriotic citizens, too. I wonder if anybody here remembers the alumni that spoke to you last year, Staff Sergeant Matthew Lightner, who is currently working in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Does anyone remember Matt Lightner? I just wanted to give you a little update along that same theme.

Matthew Lightner and his wife, Susan, just recently welcomed into their family a little daughter by the name of Madison. Everybody is doing fine. That is the kind of things that you make possible.

Just this summer, a young alumni, Becky, returned to the National Home and was married in the National Home chapel, and shortly she will be finishing her nursing degree. We all know what a shortage of nurses there is in this country. She is going to become a nurse and she will be a good nurse. Her future is bright.

Through your commitment, your support, your service and your dreams, you have helped all to make this possible. For that, we thank you at the VFW National Home for Children. Come visit us when you can. We would like to see you often. You come from all over the country.

Like Lewie spoke about, we had a visitor from California who because of what you are doing at the National Home decided to become a member of the VFW. His wife became a member of the Ladies Auxiliary. People out there, when they know about the National Home, become so proud of what you veterans have done. Again, we thank you and we applaud you.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce to you your 2004 - 2005 Buddy Poppy Child, Brielle Sylvain. (Applause)

RESPONSE - 2004-2005 BUDDY POPPY CHILD BRIELLE SYLVAIN

BUDDY POPPY CHILD BRIELLE SYLVAIN: My name is Brielle Sylvain. I am five years old. I live in the Iowa House at the VFW National Home for Children. I like living there, because I can play on the playground with my best friends.

I like talking to Robert Smith. He was in the war, and we go to Red Lobster. He lives in Washington, D.C. My daddy was a Marine. I live there with my mom and my sisters. Thank you for your support. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: She is the youngest Poppy Child we have ever had. She just turned five. (Applause) Thank you very much to the people from the National Home.

COMRADE LEWIS COOPER (National Home President): Commander-in-Chief, we have one more presentation we would like to make to the National Headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. As you know, the National Home has commissioned a series of three posters, which have been received very well at this National Convention.

We would like to present a framed group of those three posters for presentation to the National Headquarters with the hope they will display them with pride and acknowledge the awareness that we hope to bring to the National Home. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: This is a very moving picture, comrades. I think that the staff may be able to find an easel to let it be on display in front of this dais for tomorrow during the final nominations and election of officers. This has a tender significance to each and every one of us. Thank you very much, Lewie.

COMRADE LEWIS COOPER (National Home President): Commander-in-Chief, I have one more order of business here. I have a check for \$2,500 I was just handed by Post 6027, North East, Maryland. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you very much, staff of the National Home. Thank you for bringing that little princess here. Here for a quick special presentation, I call upon Jack Burnett from the Whitman, Massachusetts, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post.

COMRADE JACK BURNETT: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Banas. First of all, I would like to say it is really a great pleasure to see Billy Ray Cameron here with us today. I had the pleasure of being one of the Commanders in 1975-'76 with Billy Ray Cameron. Let me tell you he is one hell of a guy. (Applause)

Last year we had our first golf tournament, and we made a presentation of \$8,000 to Operation Uplink. This year we had 154 golfers and we raised \$9,000. So, at this time I would like to present a check for \$9,000 to Operation Uplink. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We are almost done. We will be in nominations very shortly. At this time I will call upon the Adjutant General, who has a special message. He will then call upon Tom Kissell, and we will continue after that.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Chief. Have any of you

seen these being distributed out on the street? These are not authorized by the National Organization. As a matter of fact, we have sent a cease and desist letter, and they continue to do it. If it continues, we are going to be forced to take legal remedies that are necessary to protect the trademark "Buddy Poppy".

What is happening, is they are taking our parts, dismantling them and reassembling them in this fashion and using our sticker. Comrades, if they are offered to you, please don't take them. Tell them that they are not authorized by the National Organization, and there are other ways for them to raise funds.

They have been sent cease and desist letters. They will be sent a very strong cease and desist from me upon return to National Headquarters. Then we will have to seek legal remedies, as I said.

It is now my pleasure to ask Tom Kissell to come to the microphone and announce the winners of the National Poppy Program.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMRADE THOMAS KISSELL: This year's display contest winners for the 105th National Convention held here in Cincinnati are as follows:

CATEGORY 1 - PUBLIC PROMOTION OF POPPY CAMPAIGN

The First Place winner is Joseph L. Norton Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 919, Trenton, Missouri.

Category 1, Second Place winner, Tioga Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 2149, Wood Dale, Illinois.

Category 1, Third Place winner, Wilson Parrish Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 8600, Gadsden, Alabama.

The Honorable Mention Award for Category 1 went to Orange Park Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 5968, Orange Park, Florida.

CATEGORY 2 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS

The First Place winner is Howard M. Black Post and Ladies Auxiliary No.1508, Elsinore, California.

The Second Place winner in Category 2, Chief P. Pontiac Post and Auxiliary No.1699, Cahokia, Illinois.

Third Place winner in Category No. 2, Don Cherry Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 5083, Geneseo, Illinois.

Honorable Mention, Category 2, the Arthur W. Jones Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 7564, West Fargo, North Dakota.

CATEGORY 3 - ARTISTIC OR DECORATIVE USE OF POPPIES

First Place winner in Category 3 is Crawford County Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 4549, Robinson, Illinois.

Second Place winner is Litchfield Post and Ladies Auxiliary No.

3912, Litchfield, Illinois.

The Third Place winner in Category No. 3 is Keith-Holmes Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 402, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania.

Honorable Mention, Category 3, Wes Brazos Post and Ladies Auxiliary No. 8551, Sweeny, Texas.

CATEGORY 4 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS JUNIOR GIRLS UNITS/SONS OF THE VFW

First Place winner is Hawks-Holland Junior Girls Unit No. 6496, Jackson, Tennessee.

The Second Place winner is the Glen A. Warner Junior Girls Unit No. 1371, Owego, New York.

The Third Place winner, Category 4, Champaign County Girls Unit No. 5520, Champaign, Illinois.

Honorable Mention, Category 4, Orville D. Wetzel Junior Girls Unit No. 7521, Tribune, Kansas.

The Department Divisional Winners for 2004 are:

Department of South Dakota, Divisional Competition,

First Place, Division 1, and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 2, Department of Wyoming and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Divisional Competition, Division 3, the Department of New Hampshire and its Ladies Auxiliary, First Place.

Division 4, the Department of Maine and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 5, the Department of Washington and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division 6, the Department of Arizona and its Ladies Auxiliary.

Division No. 7, the Department of Alabama and its Ladies Auxiliary.

First Place in Division 8, the Department of Hawaii and its Ladies Auxiliary.

First Place, Division 9, the Department of Europe.

The Over One Million Club was established several years ago to pay special recognition to those Departments whose poppy distribution equaled or exceeded one million. This year, once again, the lone recipient is California, who led the nation in total distribution of 1,039,000 poppies.

I would ask the 2003-2004 Department Commander, Henry Wadahara to present himself at the station in order that the Commander-in-Chief may present the award to that Department.

COMRADE HENRY WADAHARA (Post 9970 - California): On behalf of the members of the Department of California and the Ladies Auxiliary, we thank you for this award. (Applause)

COMRADE THOMAS KISSELL: Let me express my thanks and appreciation to you, ladies and gentlemen in the audience, for taking part in a divisional contest as well as the Buddy Poppy Display contest at the National Convention each year. I think we had a great display out there with over 88 entries. You folks did a great job. My hat is off to you. Thank you so much for what you do for the program in the year. (Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: In a few moments, comrades, we will go into nominations. However, as a point of privilege, as the Commander-in-Chief for 24 more hours, I would like to have a few words with the delegation.

First of all, in the 37 some years I have been a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I have met some exceptionally wonderful people. I think in fairness, obviously, my mom and dad are no longer alive, but if they were, I hope they would be very proud of me.

I come from a very small community in rural Connecticut. The people in my Post have stood behind me 110 percent, as the people in my District and the people in my Department. Many of the people who have encouraged me initially are no longer with us.

One of the persons who encouraged me and said to me before she passed away was, "If you change, Ed, I am going to come back and kick you in the a-s-s." That was Mary Romano, who we all miss in the Department of Connecticut. Just recently I received some pictures from her husband, Dominic, and she was in them. He put a little note in there and said, "Those were the days."

So, from the bottom of my heart to the delegation from Connecticut who supported me through good times and bad times, I thank you very, very much and say I look forward to coming home. (Applause)

The other thing I can also tell you that I am totally indebted to the Adjutant General and his staff, and the Quartermaster General and his staff, and everyone in the Washington office. I was never forced for one minute to have to micro-manage anything. These people are professionals and they did it.

I am very, very happy to have served with the people before me when I was Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Jim Goldsmith and Ray Sisk. I can tell you it has been an honor for me to serve with John Furgess and Jim Mueller. I can tell you that the Veterans of Foreign Wars' image-projecting ability will continue with these gentlemen, along with Gary Kurpius from Alaska. They will do a wonderful job for you.

I would like to share a little story with you. It is a story of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, because the Veterans of Foreign Wars is really the story of America, and perhaps a Past VFW Post Commander said it best. His name was President John F. Kennedy.

He capsulized the Veterans of Foreign Wars' mission with these words. He said, "By your magnificent wartime service you have defended America's freedom and security. Today as veterans you serve with equal tenacity, devoting brain and heart to the task of keeping our country strong." He continued and said, "I, like you, am proud to claim membership in the nation's premier veterans organization."

You know, this year we functioned under the umbrella of some-

thing called Team VFW. Our theme this year was called Courage and Conviction. I will have to tell you where I found the words for that was on the Vietnam Monument in Nashville, Tennessee.

I captured those words, and I will share them with you because underneath the bottom of those words on our coin it said to never chafe at the burden of our obligations or the agony of our choices, that standing for freedom is a conviction to ourselves and our only commitment to mankind.

I hope each and every one of you cherish the memories and the achievements you have been able to accomplish this week, because you know very well no one shoulders the burden of leadership for veterans or armed forces and their dependents better than you, the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Ladies Auxiliary.

In defending the issues that we stand for, obviously we shall need to compromise in the days ahead to be sure, but these will be or should be compromises of issues only, not ever of the principles or virtues set in place by brave veterans of the Veterans of Foreign Wars who come before us.

So, tomorrow morning as I step back into the ranks, I assure you I will not disappear. I look forward to serving you, John Furgess, Jim Mueller and Gary Kurpius, and I know you will do your job with justice and a firm hand. To all of you who I have met across the country and around the world, thank you very, very much for being so kind to me and to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which obviously you love very, very much.

I hope that in the years to come I have the opportunity to return to visit some of your states on official visits, and I have a very strong feeling that may well happen. So, until that time, I am just one of us and I had this very simple thing, never above you, never beneath you, but always your equal. I hope you will share that attitude with me. I love you and thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

NOMINATIONS OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Now, we are going to go into the Nominations of Officers for the ensuing year. The first office will be for Commander-in-Chief. For the purpose of a nomination, I would like to call on John F. Gwizdak, Past Commander-in-Chief, from the Department of Georgia.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN GWIZDAK (Post 5080-Georgia): Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. I am John Gwizdak, a delegate from Post 5080, Lake City, Georgia. To the comrades and delegates here assembled, officers present, Past Commanders-in-Chief, our candidate was born at Langley Field, Virginia, in 1943 and was raised in Nashville, Tennessee.

He and his wife, Alma, have three daughters and nine grandchildren. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business from Middle Tennessee State University in August, 1965. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Army Military Management School and the Commanding General Staff College.

He was named as the Military Science Distinguished Alumnus of Middle Tennessee University in 1990. He has served for several years as Chairman of the Davidson County Coordinating Council. He is a graduate of the ROTC Program and a Vietnam veteran, and as a Vietnam veteran he was a soldier in the United States Army Americal Division at Chu Lai during 1967-1968.

He served with the Tennessee Army National Guard for 25 additional years, completing 28 years of service, and retiring with the rank of Colonel. He joined West Nashville VFW Post 1970 in 1970. He served through the chairs to Post Commander, serving also in the District with excellent results.

He has served as State Commander of the Department of Tennessee Veterans of Foreign Wars, 1978-1979. He was the first Vietnam veteran to hold that position in the VFW of Tennessee and one of many that held it during those few years as the first Vietnam veteran Commander.

He served on the National Council of Administration, and until today he continues to remain active in his Post. He has served on various and numerous Committees, and Vice-Chairman of many, also. He has served as co-editor of the VFW state newspaper in Tennessee since 1977.

He writes a weekly newspaper column in Nashville called "Vets Point." He has done this for 25 years. He serves as co-editor of that paper, which is also called Westview. He has been host and producer of "Vets Points", a weekly national cable television program.

He has served also in the American Legion as the First Vice-Commander of the largest Post in Tennessee, and served on its Executive Committee for many years. As a neighbor, he has served his community. For that, he was also named Belleview Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce.

He was named Outstanding Young Man in America in 1975, and Young Veteran of the Year in 1979. He has become Chairman of the Belleview Hospital Exchange Bowl, a high school bowl game since its inception in 1985. He has helped organize and coordinated the first stand down in 1993 for veterans in Nashville.

He was appointed Administrative Director of the Tennessee Vietnam Leadership Program. He also served as the Assistant Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs from which he retired just recently. He continues to assist in other programs throughout his community. He has served on the community welfare programs of many organizations.

Our nominee seeks out to better himself and in turn makes it better for others, accepts responsibility for his actions and requires account-

ability from those who make decisions. He continues to sharpen his leadership skills while inspiring others to lead, guide and care for this wonderful most fraternal organization.

Our great organization must continue to be the premier veterans organization, and with service and representation as our mission, who better to be handed the mantle and gavel of leadership for the 2004-2005 year than the individual that has served so well as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars then the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, representing our organization all over this nation.

I now place in nomination for the distinguished and demanding office of Commander-in-Chief, a soldier, a comrade, my friend from Nashville, Tennessee, John Furgess. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call on Ronnie L. Davis, Department of Tennessee Adjutant-Quartermaster of Post 1618.

COMRADE RONNIE DAVIS (Post 1618 - Tennessee): Commander-in-Chief, the head dais comrades and sisters, and most important you, the delegates, of this 105th National Convention: This is a great honor for me to stand before you here this morning to second the nomination of an individual that I have known for 25 plus years.

He has been my friend, he has been my mentor, he has been my leader, and now he will also be your leader. John, I have had the opportunity to listen to him many times as he spoke at various VFW meetings, whether it be Post meetings, District meetings, State meetings, and all Veterans Organization meetings.

I have had the opportunity to listen to him many times, two minutes at a time. You know what I mean, two minutes at a time. But John has proven himself as he served for the Veterans Administration, the Department of Tennessee; he proved he was a veterans veteran.

So without further ado, my good comrades, Past Commander-in-Chief Gwizdak has told you all about him. So, without further ado, on behalf of the entire Tennessee delegation and myself, I am proud to second the nomination of my friend, John Furgess. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Also, for the purpose of a second, I call on Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron.

(Whereupon, Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron held up a plaque which reads, "VFW John Furgess.")

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: That is the best second today, I bet. Now, are there any other further nominations for the office of Commander-in-Chief at this time? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Moving on to Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, James Mueller will be nominated by James N. Goldsmith, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 4139, Lapeer, Michigan.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH (Post 4139-Michigan): Thank you, Commander. Commander-in-Chief and delegates to the 105th National Convention, it is indeed a pleasure for me to stand before you this morning to nominate a great individual and a great American to the high office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He was elected Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 29, 2003, at the 104th Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas. He served with the United States Army from 1966 to '68. He was the senior truck driver in the 446th Transportation Company. His unit played a key role in delivering of central supplies to the combat ground and area units during 1968, as well as assisting the United States forces around the area of Khe Sanh.

He was awarded the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1970 at Post 5077, O'Fallon, Missouri, where he maintains his Life Membership. He has served in various positions at the Post, including Post Quartermaster, and he achieved All-State Post Commander in 1992-'93.

He has also received All American Honors and he has served on various National Committees, including the Voice of Democracy, the Buddy Poppy, Homeless Veterans, National Security and Foreign Affairs, and the POW/MIA Committee. He served a two-year term as the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Council member in 1997-1999, representing the great states of Missouri and Indiana.

In 1999, Jim served as Chairman of the National Convention when the Veterans of Foreign Wars observed their 100th anniversary in Kansas City, Missouri. He was selected by the Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year in O'Fallon. He has been active in his community and his church.

In 2000, he was named O'Fallon's Volunteer of the Year. In 1994, he was presented an award for his outstanding loyalty and support of the O'Fallon Fire Department. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus, the AmVets, the American Legion and the Military Order of the Cootie. He has retired from General Motors Parts Division where he was employed for 34 years. He and his wife, Pat, have been married for 40 years and have two children, and they reside in O'Fallon, Missouri.

My comrades, it is indeed a pleasure for me to nominate your next Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, James Mueller, from the great state of Missouri. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call on the Commander of the Department of Missouri, Eugene L. Hoeltge, Post 5077, O'Fallon, Missouri.

COMRADE EUGENE HOELTGE (Post 5077 - Missouri): Commander-in-Chief, my name is Eugene Hoeltge. I am a member of VFW Post 5077, O'Fallon, Missouri, and serve as the State Commander of the great state of

Missouri. Jim and I go back a long, long ways, at least 30 years. We have been great friends.

Until yesterday, I thought his name was Mueller. I heard that it now is "Miller". I asked his wife. She said call me Pat. So, anyway, it is an honor for me to second the nomination of my great friend and comrade, Jim Mueller, for the high office of National Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS Also for the purpose of a second, I will call on David G. Havelly, Department of Indiana Adjutant-Quartermaster, Post 5864, Greenwood, Indiana.

COMRADE DAVID HAVELY (Post 5864 - Indiana): It is my pleasure, comrades, to second the nomination of a great individual who is going to support the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jim Mueller, from the great Department of Missouri, for Senior Vice Commander for the year 2004-2005. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any other nominations for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief at this time? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Gary Kurpius from Alaska, nominated by Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN KENT: Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Delegates to the 105th National Convention:

I am "Gunner" Kent, a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Today I rise to put in nomination a comrade that has served this organization for over 34 years. He served the United States Army from 1967 to 1969, serving in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, with the 541st Transportation Company. He joined the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in 1970, serving as Post Commander of Post 1539, Babbitt, Minnesota, in 1977, earning the status of All-American in 1983. He served as District 8 Commander of Minnesota, again earning All-American status.

In 2002, he served as the Department Commander of the Department of Alaska, and again earning All-American status. He has served for 19 years as a Service Officer for the Department of Alaska. He has also served as the Adjutant of Alaska for 17 years.

He served as the Finance Chairman for five years to the Stand Down Committee of the City of Anchorage, Alaska, and was appointed to the Alaska Veterans Advisory Committee by the Governor of Alaska. He was selected as St. Louis County Vietnam Veteran of the Year in 1979, and he is a Life Member of the Military Order of the Cootie.

He is also a member of the American Legion, AmVets, and Vietnam Veterans of America. He is also a Past President of the National Veterans

Service Officers Association. It is with a great deal of pleasure I place in nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the year 2004-2005 Gary Kurpius from the great state of Alaska. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call upon Ray Sisk, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 9791, Frazier Park, California.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. To the delegates here at the 105th wonderful convention that we have had in Cincinnati, I want you to know what an honor and pleasure it is to have an opportunity to second the nomination for a comrade such as Gary Kurpius from Alaska.

"Gunner" certainly told you all of his qualifications, and there are many, and they are very good. But I have had an opportunity to go places with the Adjutant of Alaska when we were going to the hospitals. I have seen him at his service desk doing his service work.

We have been to the Air Force Base where our troops were being deployed and incoming. I have seen the look on his face, I have seen the way he feels. His emotions for our veterans can never be denied. I want you to know he impressed me from the day I met him.

He is a comrade who evidently has impressed several people. He is able to be one of the few triple crown winners for All-American as "Gunner" said. But more than that, if you talk to Gary Kurpius, you will know that he cares not only about you as an individual but for this organization. His heart and soul is into it.

I know that when he becomes your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief that you are all going to be just as proud of him as I am and his conference is. So, at this time it give me great pleasure to second the nomination for Gary Kurpius from the great state of Alaska. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any further nominations for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief at this time? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the position of Quartermaster General, I call upon Glen Gardner, speaking on behalf of Dave Havelly, Stan King, Jim Gilbert and John Lowe, who will line up behind him as he places in nomination the name of Joe L. Ridgley for Quartermaster General.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Delegates to the 105th National Convention:

I am Glen Gardner, a delegate from VFW Post 3359, Garland, Texas. On behalf of the comrades that join me representing all the conferences of this great organization, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I stand before the 105th National Convention to place in nomination the

name of Joe L. Ridgley for the position of Quartermaster General for the year 2004-2005.

Joe began his career with the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Headquarters in 1976. In his 28 years, he has served in the Life Membership, Purchasing, Dues Processing, VFW Emblem Supply. He became the Assistant Quartermaster General in April, 1991, and was elected to the position of Quartermaster General in March, 1995. That is a position he has held since that time.

Joe was a Navy veteran, having earned his eligibility in Vietnam. Joe holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Missouri. Joe is a Life Member of VFW Post 8220, Belton, Missouri. Will all the State Adjutant Quartermasters in the room please stand? We have a few left, Joe.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that we, on behalf of all the delegates of this organization, place in nomination the name of Joe L. Ridgley for Quartermaster General for the year 2004-2005. Thank you, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call on Dave Havelly.

COMRADE DAVID HAVELY (Department of Indiana): Comrades and delegates, it is my pleasure and a great honor to second the nomination of Joe L. Ridgley for Quartermaster General for the year 2004-2005.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any further nominations for the office of Quartermaster General at this time? Hearing none, the nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The position of Surgeon General, Stephen J. O'Connor will be nominated by Clint Bucher, Commander of the Department of Minnesota, Post 7, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

COMRADE CLINT BUCHER (Post 7 - Minnesota): Thank you, Chief. Good morning, comrades. My name is Clint Bucher from VFW Post 7, the Minnesota Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I am honored to place in nomination the name of Steve O'Connor for Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2004-2005.

Steve has been endorsed by his home Department of Minnesota and he is the Big Ten Conference endorsed candidate for Surgeon General. Mr. O'Connor has 22 years of dedicated military service. He has the credentials in medicine. He has served the VFW well and he has a worthy record of 13 years of professional health-care service advocacy for veterans.

Mr. O'Connor retired after 22 years of service in the United States Army as Lieutenant Colonel. He earned his VFW eligibility in Vietnam while providing medical services in two evacuation hospitals. In 1982, he earned a Master of Science and Nursing Degree from the University of Minnesota. From 1988 to 2001, he served on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota

Veterans Homes. During that time, the number of veterans homes that provides services for veterans increased from two to five.

Steve is a former VFW Commander from the great state of Minnesota, and he is presently that Department's Surgeon. Minnesota and the Big Ten Conference have proudly endorsed Steve O'Connor for Surgeon General. We ask for your support. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I will call on David Adams, Past National Council of Administration member, Post 1782, White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

COMRADE DAVID ADAMS (Post 1782 - Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and comrades:

It is indeed an honor and a privilege for me to second the nomination for Steve O'Connor. I have known Steve for many years, and I know he will serve the position of Surgeon General in a great capacity. Those that know me, know that I would not be before you asking for support for Steve if I knew he wouldn't be doing a good job. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any further nominations for the office of Surgeon General? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow. Just a paper error, we omitted the Judge Advocate General, and we are going to do that now. The candidate is Wayne J. Thompson, Jr. He will be nominated by Past Commander-in-Chief Thomas Pouliot from Montana.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF THOMAS POULIOT: My name is Thomas Pouliot. I am Post Commander of Post 1116, Helena, Montana. I am proud to stand before you today, Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates of this National Convention, to place into nomination for the office of National Judge Advocate General the name of an outstanding comrade, Wayne J. Thompson, Jr., from Post 5061, Denver, Colorado.

Do you-all know Wayne? Wayne, come up here. Many of you have seen Wayne Thompson over these past 20 years. He has been a very active member, both in his Department and on the National level. He has been his State Judge Advocate for many years and he has extensive legal and administrative experience.

He is a true professional and has been recognized by his peers many times, including being named the Colorado Veteran of the Year in 2002 and the VFW Veterans Volunteer just last year. Wayne has served on many National Committees over these past 20 years, including he was Judge Advocate General and has served on the National Council of Administration.

Wayne is an outstanding member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and I am proud to place his name into nomination for the office of Judge Advocate General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I will call on John R. Lewis, Post 4061, Canon City, Colorado.

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Post 4061 - Colorado): My comrades, I have always felt that it was a part of my duty to serve the Veterans of Foreign Wars to the best of my ability, to honor those veterans and members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and those excellent officers who have perpetuated this organization up through this day.

It is now my honor to stand here at the podium and to second the nomination of Wayne Thompson, a true advocate from Colorado. He earned his eligibility by serving in the Navy during the Korean War aboard an LSD from 1951 through 1954. He has been a tireless worker for our organization in Colorado, and he is also my friend.

Without any mental reservation or any hesitation in any way, I second the nomination of Wayne Thompson for the office of Judge Advocate General for the year 2004-2005 that will be a part of the team of excellent officers that will lead us into the future.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Now, for the purpose of a second, I call on Robert A. Clements, Department of Colorado Past Commander, Post 8661, Bailey, Colorado.

COMRADE ROBERT CLEMENTS (Post 8661 - Colorado): Commander-in-Chief, Past Commanders-in-Chief, and Delegates to this great 105th Convention of the VFW:

I have the proud honor of seconding the nomination of Wayne Thompson for the office of Judge Advocate General for next year. Wayne works nearly full-time for the VFW. He is a skilled attorney, he is an absolute expert on the By-Laws and Manual of Procedure.

He earned his eligibility during the Korean Conflict. His integrity, loyalty, devotion and dedication to service truly reflect great credit upon himself, his Post, his District, his Department, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any further nominations? Hearing none at this time, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

NOMINATION OF NATIONAL CHAPLAIN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Now, for National Chaplain, Theodore Bowers will be nominated by Allen Jones, Past National Council of Administration member, Post 21, Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

COMRADE ALLEN JONES (Post 21 - Pennsylvania): Commander-in-Chief and delegates:

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to place in nomination the name of Theodore "Ted" Bowers for the office of National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a man who believes in God and country, a man who has served as pastor and chaplain to the armed forces of our nation, and also a chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He is a graduate of Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and attended theological seminary in Findlay, Ohio. He was ordained in

1962 and served as pastor to the churches in central Pennsylvania for 27 years. His former congregation, Redeemers United Church of Christ, Littlestown, Pennsylvania, recently honored him by designating him as their pastor emeritus.

Commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade in the United States Navy Chaplains' Corps in 1965, Chaplain Bowers served the United States Navy Reserve for 26 years in various leadership capacities. Chaplain Bowers was recalled to duty during the Persian Gulf War and served as a Senior Chaplain of Fleet Hospital 15, a 500-bed combat zone hospital stationed outside of Al Jabaul, Saudi Arabia.

He received service medals from the Defense Department, the Marine Corps and the Navy, including the Saudi Arabia and Kuwait Service Medals, and the Navy Commendation Medal for exemplary ministry in Saudi Arabia. Chaplain Bowers retired from the Navy as a Commander in 1992.

Chaplain Bowers is a Life Member of Richard J. Gross VFW Post 8896, East Berlin, Pennsylvania, where he is the Post Chaplain. Also, he is presently serving as Chaplain of the 21st District of Pennsylvania and Chaplain for the Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He is a Life Member of the Military Order of the Cootie, a Life Member of Scotland School for Veterans Children, a Life Member of the VFW National Home for Children, a Life Member of the American Legion, a Life Member of the Military Officers Association, and a member of the Military Chaplains Association of the USA.

Chaplain Bowers has been endorsed as National Chaplain for the Veterans of Foreign Wars by the Department of Pennsylvania and the Eastern States Conference. He and his wife LaWanda, have been married for 42 years. They reside at Lake Meade, East Berlin, Pennsylvania. They have four children and five grandchildren. It is indeed an honor for me to nominate Chaplain Bowers for the high office of National Chaplain. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call on John A. Brenner, Department of Pennsylvania Commander, Post 2493, Mount Wolf, Pennsylvania.

COMRADE JOHN BRENNER (Post 2493 - Pennsylvania): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. On behalf of the Eastern States Conference, the Department of Pennsylvania, the 21st District of the Department of Pennsylvania, and Post 8896, in East Berlin, I am really proud and honored to second the nomination of a National Chaplain that will lead and guide us in keeping the faith in our God and our country. It is with great pleasure that I second the nomination of Reverend Ted Bowers.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: For the purpose of a second, I call on Dwight Furman, Post 8896, Pennsylvania.

COMRADE DWIGHT FURMAN (Post 8896 - Pennsylvania): Hello. I am Dwight Furman, Post 8896, East Berlin, Pennsylvania. Our Reverend Ted is the spiritual leader of our Post, District and Department. I proudly second the nomination of a Desert Storm war veteran, the Reverend Theodore

Bowers. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Are there any further nominations for the office of National Chaplain at this time? Hearing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will perform the closing ceremonies.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir. Comrades, please stand at attention and face the flag of our nation and salute.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Norris gave the Benediction according to the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, your order has been obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you, Sergeant. Enjoy the afternoon, comrades. We will be in recess until 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 11:55 a.m.)

FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION
FRIDAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 2004

(The Fourth Business Session of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in the Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, was called to order at 9:00 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Sergeant-at-Arms, will you, please, prepare the room for the Opening Ceremonies?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief.

(Whereupon, the Salute to the Colors, the Opening Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance were had at this time.)

COMPLETION OF CONVENTION BUSINESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I call on the Adjutant General to complete the convention business.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, to my knowledge, there is no further business to be conducted by the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you. I will call on David Butters for the report of the Credentials Committee.

FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 19, 2004, the delegate strength was 11,302. Added to that is the Department Commanders, 54; Past Commanders-in-Chief, 25; National Officers, 37. That is for a grand total of 11,418. A majority vote is 5,709. Two-thirds is 7,602. Commander-in-Chief, this is my final credentials report for the 105th National Convention.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We will now go into the Election of Officers. The nominations are open for Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday, the name of John Furgess from Tennessee was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes Jim Inman, Department Commander of Tennessee, at Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JAMES INMAN (Department of Tennessee): Commander-

in-Chief, I rise and make a motion that nominations cease.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: And the chair recognizes for a second Michael Penney from Kentucky.

COMRADE MICHAEL PENNEY (Department of Kentucky): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I have a motion on the floor. All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: As the Adjutant General, it is my privilege to cast one unanimous ballot for a dynamic leader and one who will lead us well next year, John Furgess, from the great Department of Tennessee. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: Comrades, sisters, families, and everyone in the hall today, thank you so much for that stirring endorsement. We are going to have a great year.

The 2004-2005 membership year has begun. I do have some further remarks here in just a moment on the program, but now thank you so very much. Thank you again. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Nominations are open for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday, the name of James Mueller of Missouri was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GEORGE CRAMER (Department of Illinois): Delegates to the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot electing James Mueller to the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The chair recognizes the Department Adjutant Quartermaster of Indiana, Dave Havelly.

COMRADE DAVID HAVELY (Department of Indiana): Chief and delegates, I second the nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The motion has been made and seconded to close nominations. Seeing no other nominations, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye". Those opposed "nay". The motion carries. I will call upon the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is a privilege as the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of a man that has proven his worth to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Jim Mueller of the Department of Missouri. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: Good morning. Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, the National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, delegates to this 105th National Convention, comrades, sisters and guests:

My fellow comrades, I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this distinct honor you have bestowed upon me to serve as your

National Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of this great organization, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I want to personally thank Ed Banas for his great leadership this past year. The VFW has meant so much to me and you make me very proud to be a part of the Team VFW, the Furgess-Mueller-Kurpius Team VFW. I want to offer my sincere congratulations to John Furgess, your Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

I am proud to have the opportunity to serve with you this coming year. A Year of Celebration and Service, what a great theme. John, to you, I pledge my responsibility for our organization. Your many years of service to the veterans, together with your enthusiasm and leadership, will provide the VFW with the guidance necessary to continue our efforts to fulfill the VFW mandate and mission.

In the months to come, many challenges will present themselves. I have no doubt that with your dynamic energy and a box of ideas and dedication, the VFW will not only achieve these goals but we will surpass them. Once again, congratulations to you on your election as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I would just like to take a personal privilege to, first of all, thank the Department of Missouri, the 9th District, Post 5077, for all the support they have given and take this opportunity to introduce my dear wife, Pat, and thank her for her love and support she has given me in my quest for this high office. This is my wife, Pat Mueller. (Applause) Thank you, Pat.

To show their support today are my brothers. Ken and his wife, Carol, are here. My brothers Ron and John, thank you for being here today. May God continue to guide us, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in our deliberations now and in the future. May he continue to bless our men and women serving in our military, especially those serving in harm's way, and bring them home safely for our loved ones. Thank you for this great honor to serve as your Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Nominations are open for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday, the name of Gary Kurpius nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

At this time the chair recognizes the Department Commander of Alaska, Martin Miller.

COMRADE MARTIN MILLER (Department of Alaska): Commander-in-Chief, I am Martin Miller, Department Commander of Alaska, Post 9785. I make a motion that the nominations for National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief be closed at this time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: And the chair recognizes the State Quartermaster of Alaska, John Minnick, for a second.

COMRADE JOHN MINNICK (Department of Alaska): Commander-in-Chief, I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a motion and a second to close the nominations for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-

Chief. There being no other nominations, all those in favor signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed. Congratulations.

I call upon the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General is pleased to cast one ballot for the unanimous election of a man who brings with him a great deal of well-rounded VFW experience as Service Officer, as a Department Adjutant and many National Committees, Gary Kurpius from Alaska. (Applause)

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT KURPIUS: \$657 for an airplane ticket, \$893 for a hotel room, being elected National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is priceless, I will tell you. (Laughter)

Comrades, I stand before you very, very humble. I will tell you the honor you have bestowed upon me to serve as your National Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is one of the greatest compliments anyone can ever receive in their life.

At this time I would like to introduce my family. I have Nancy Ramsey here. For 34 years she has been behind me and all my endeavors in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I want to thank you, Nancy, for that. Her father, Ken, is here from Duluth, Minnesota. He is a World War II member, and a Lifetime Member of Post 173 in Duluth, Minnesota.

Comrades, I will respond to this trust and confidence and be a proactive Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief by supporting John Furgess and Jim Mueller, and do everything I can to promote the cause of veterans. John Furgess and Jim Mueller, I want to see us take steps to reaffirm the commitments we have made to veterans by holding up the existing realities and see if we accomplish our goals.

Together, with John Furgess and Jim Mueller, I want to renew our promise to make certain that we are moving in the right direction, that direction that benefits veterans. Together, with John Furgess and Jim Mueller, I want to see the demands that were made from our government and not just the promises and the smokers, they say, but I want them to fulfill those promises.

I want them to put the money where their mouth is. We still have hundreds of thousands of veterans out there in need, and the veterans population is growing as more of our young American men and women are standing in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I say veterans for veterans. As I promised, the confidence you have bestowed in me, I will continue that veterans for veterans for the next three years for sure. I must also take and recognize Post 10221, my home Post in Anchor Point, Alaska. They have been standing behind me these past four years. Also, the Department of Alaska, wherever those delegates are.

When we started this venture four years ago, we were advised by some people that the geographics and a small Department, it was a very challenging deal to do. This was the wrong thing for anybody to challenge a group of Alaskans. They are a bunch of can-do people.

I want to thank you people from the bottom of my heart. You have

been there for everything. I would be remiss, there is another Department out there, kind of a second Department out here that I must thank. I got a lot of my education there. That is the Department of Minnesota. I started out my VFW career there. I want to thank you.

I want to thank all you comrades for the support and the trust you have bestowed upon me today. I promise you I will do the very best I can. I look forward to working with each and every one of you for the next three years. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The nominations are open for Quartermaster General. Yesterday, the name of Joe Ridgley from Missouri was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

At this time the chair recognizes Eugene Hoeltge, the Department Commander of Missouri.

COMRADE EUGENE HOELTGE (Department of Missouri): Commander-in-Chief, I am Gene Hoeltge, Commander of the great State of Missouri. I move nominations for the office of Quartermaster General be closed and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Joe Ridgley for the high office of Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Thank you. The chair recognizes Jim Holmes of Missouri.

COMRADE JIM HOLMES (Department of Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Holmes, State Junior Vice Commander. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The motion has been made and seconded to close nominations. Seeing no other nominations, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all those opposed.

I will call upon the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General is pleased to cast one unanimous ballot for a gentleman that I have had an opportunity to work with for years at the National Headquarters, Joe L. Ridgley, for Quartermaster General for the ensuing year from the Department of Missouri. (Applause)

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT RIDGLEY: What a great Navy song. Again, for the tenth year as Quartermaster General, I come before you great comrades and thank you for your support. I want to just tell you again, as I have told you many times, all I have to offer you is my honesty, my integrity in the conduct of the business of this organization. I thank you for everything.

Even though I am proud that Missouri calls me home and I call Missouri home, I thank the entire Veterans of Foreign Wars for their support. Thank you very much once again. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The nominations are open for Judge Advocate General. The name of Wayne Thompson was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

At this time the chair recognizes National Council member John Lewis from Colorado.

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Department of Colorado): Commander-in-Chief, I move that nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Wayne Thompson or the office of Judge Advocate General for the year 2004-2005.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time the chair recognizes the Department Commander of Colorado Robert Clements.

COMRADE ROBERT CLEMENTS (Department of Colorado): Commander-in-Chief and delegates to the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I second the motion to close nominations for Adjutant General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The motion has been made and seconded to close nominations. If there are no other nominations, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye". At this time I will call upon the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General is pleased to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Wayne Thompson from Colorado as the Judge Advocate General for the ensuing year.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT THOMPSON: Good morning, comrades. Why don't I just say, first, they played Anchors Away. I earned my membership by being in the Navy during the Korean War. I was also fortunate to serve in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, but I never got called to active duty.

I would like to say to Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas it has been a pleasure to serve. You have had a great year and I appreciate you. Thank you.

Comrade John Furgess, Senior Vice Commander Jim Mueller and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius it is an honor for me to join the 2004-2005 Team of Celebration of Service. I pledge my continuing personal commitment and loyalty to all veterans, our families and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars is the greatest veterans service organization that has ever existed in this world, and we have got to keep making it that way, comrades. I would like to thank a close comrade, Past Commander-in-Chief Tom Pouliot from Montana for nominating me, and also an outstanding comrade and close friend, John R. Lewis, Past State Commander and a member of the Council this year.

I also would like to deeply thank Bob Clements, the current State Commander of the Department of Colorado. Thank you for the nomination. Delegates to this 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I accept your election to the post of Adjutant General for 2004-2005.

I would like to thank the leaders and members of my home Post, Post 5061, Denver, Colorado, and especially the current Post Commander, Lloyd Howard, and Quartermaster Dale Bowen. The guys are great to work

with and I also enjoy being with you and thanks for helping me.

I also want to thank the All-American team, the Department of Colorado. As I mentioned, the safety manual, we have some great leaders there and we made All American this year. We have got to keep it up. Thank you.

I would like to recognize all of you from Colorado. You are out there somewhere. Thanks, guys. I can't overlook the Western Conference. What a great conference that is. Comrades, I deeply appreciate your endorsement and assistance in my election.

I want to also thank the Eastern, Southern and Big Ten Conferences for your agreement on that. Thank you for giving me the chance to serve. Once again, I would like to say to Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess, I will be there and I will be loyal to you and this great organization.

Anything I can do to assist your team to make this an All-American year for this whole Veterans of Foreign Wars, sir, I stand ready to do that. Thank you very much, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Nominations for Surgeon General are open. Yesterday, the name of Steven O'Connor of Minnesota was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes the Department Commander of Minnesota, Clint Bucher.

COMRADE CLINT BUCHER (Department of Minnesota): I move that the nominations close and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Steve O'Connor for the office of Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time the chair recognizes Past National Council member Dave Adams of Minnesota.

COMRADE DAVID ADAMS (Department of Minnesota): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am David Adams, Past National Council member. I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: We have a motion and a second to close nominations for the high office of Surgeon General. Being there are no other nominations, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye". I will now call upon the Adjutant General to cast one unanimous ballot for Steve O'Connor.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Adjutant General casts one unanimous ballot for the election of Steve O'Connor to the high office of Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the 2004-2005 year.

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT O'CONNOR: Wow, what a ride. Thank you, comrades, for your support and confidence. The only thing I can really do or say is to assure you without a doubt that I will use every resource at my disposal to serve you, the Commander-in-Chief and this organization. So, with that, I want to thank you all for giving me that opportunity to serve this great organization. Thank you, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The nominations are open for National Chaplain. Yesterday, the name of Theodore Bowers of Pennsylvania was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

At this time the chair recognizes the Past Department Commander of Pennsylvania, John Biedrzycki.

COMRADE JOHN BIEDRZYCKI (Post 418 - Pennsylvania): Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am John Biedrzycki, Post 418, Pennsylvania. I move that the nominations for National Chaplain be closed and that the National Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for Theodore "Ted" Bowers from the Keystone State of Pennsylvania.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The chair recognizes the Department Commander from Pennsylvania, John Brenner.

COMRADE JOHN BRENNER (Department of Pennsylvania): Commander-in-Chief Banas, I am proud to second the nomination of Ted Bowers.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: The motion has been made and seconded for the election of Ted Bowers as National Chaplain. There being no further nominations, all those in favor will signify by saying "aye". The "ayes" have it. Adjutant General, please cast one unanimous ballot.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is a privilege for me to cast one unanimous ballot for the unanimous selection of Theodore Bowers from the great Department of Pennsylvania for National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT BOWERS: Comrades and sisters, if you are confused by the two service songs, I spent 26 years in the Navy, but 20 with the Marine Corps. My fellow comrades, I thank you for the great honor and privilege you have bestowed upon me to serve as your National Chaplain.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my Post, Post 896, in East Berlin, Pennsylvania, to my District, District 21, and, of course, to the great Department of Pennsylvania, and the great Eastern States Conference. Most of all, my greatest debtors are my God, my family and my country.

I would like to introduce to you my family. This is my wife LaWanda of 43 years. That is my granddaughter she is holding. My daughter Mary Ann, and her husband, Dr. Robert Myers, and their son, Michael. My daughter, Jennifer, and her husband Sargent, and, of course, their daughter.

My son, Jeffrey, my brother, and my cousin, Bill. I have one son that could not be here, Brian, and his family. He is an editor for some kind of paper called The Stars and Stripes. God bless you, God bless the VFW and God bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: I will call upon the Adjutant General for direction and placement of the caps, pins and badges of the elected officers.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: As they say, adapt and overcome.

The Chief has spoken and I will do it.

Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess, if you will present yourself to the dais, and his lovely wife, Alma, will place his cap on his head. (Applause)

PLACEMENT OF CAPS, PINS AND BADGES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, we are going to continue our beautiful part of this ritual by the presentation of the caps. To the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller of Missouri, Jim, let's do it. His lovely wife is Pat.

The Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Gary Kurpius from Alaska, and Nancy.

The Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr., and his lovely wife, Madelyn.

Capping the Adjutant General is his nephew, a member of the Army National Guard who recently returned from Iraq.

The Quartermaster General, Joe Ridgley, from Missouri, is being capped by Pat Mueller.

The Judge Advocate General, Wayne Thompson, from Colorado, is being capped by John Lewis from Colorado.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT THOMPSON: Thank you, Chief. I just want to comment on my being capped. My wife of 45 years, Betty, is unable to be here. We take care of our ten-year-old granddaughter and family first, and that is the only thing that comes above us is our God and our country, except the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

She knows as much as I do about the VFW and she provides as much or more work than I do to comrades throughout Colorado. God bless her, and I miss her, but John Lewis, a long-time comrade and a very close friend, will put my cap on. Thank you, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: The Surgeon General, Steve O'Connor, his wife, who also is a professional nurse, could not be here. He is from Minnesota. He has asked my wife, Alma, to do the honors.

The National Chaplain from the great Department of Pennsylvania, Ted Bowers. He is capped by his lovely wife. (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS-ELECT

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: It is time to announce the National Council Members-Elect to be installed. Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, you will present yourself at the station and escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect down front to cap the newly-elected National Council members.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Your order has been obeyed, sir.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Representing District No. 2, Vermont and Massachusetts, Walter Gansenberg, Post 834, Massachusetts.

District No. 4, District of Columbia, Delaware and Europe, Clifford

D. Fields, Post 2979, District of Columbia.

District No. 6, Virginia and West Virginia, Randall L. Bare, Post 6669, West Virginia.

District No. 8, representing the Departments of Georgia and Alabama, Rayburn Hill, Post 3016, Alabama.

District No. 10, Oklahoma and Arkansas, A. M. Armstrong, Post 2283, Arkansas.

District No. 12, representing South Dakota, North Dakota and Wyoming, Ted "Frog" Krogen, Post 2328, North Dakota.

District No. 14, representing Montana, Washington and Idaho, Richard Whipple, Post 2886, Washington.

District No. 16, Latin America, Caribbean, Pacific Areas, Alaska and Hawaii, Darryl S. Dalley, Post 3822, Latin America.

District No. 18, Connecticut and Rhode Island, Armondo Azzinaro, Post 8955, Rhode Island.

District D, representing the Department of Ohio, Gregorio Vela, Post 7424, Ohio.

Council District H, representing the Department of Texas, Danny Henry, Post 4372.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT JOHN FURGESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: Comrades, I am honored and pleased at this time to make several appointments.

For Adjutant General, John J. Senk, Jr.

For National Chief of Staff, my long-time friend, and 17 years as State Quartermaster from Tennessee, Ronnie Davis.

Inspector General, a long-time friend from South Carolina, a World War II occupation veteran, William "Bill" Jolin.

As National Sergeant-at-Arms, none other than Barry Hoffman.
(Applause)

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: At this time I would call on Sergeant-at-Arms Barry Hoffman to please escort to my station Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt so we may proceed with the Installation of Officers.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the term for which you and your subordinate officers were elected or appointed has now expired. It is my duty to ascertain the following: Have the officers for the ensuing year been duly elected?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Yes, they have.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: Have the books of the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Yes, they have.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility of all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Yes, he does.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: I would like to remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time, that our by-laws prescribe that you must within 60 days of election or appointment submit the following information to the Adjutant General, a copy of your proof of eligibility.

Commander-in-Chief, are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Yes, they are.

INSTALLING OFFICER SPERA: Do you have the charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Yes, I do.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: You will now surrender the charter to me.

Past Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr., you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this great organization. May I say you have served our VFW and you have served our nation far above and beyond the call of duty. We are a better organization because of your services and we thank you and we love you for it. (Applause)

Commander-in-Chief, it is proper to remind you in assuming the chair of Past Commander-in-Chief it will be your duty and privilege to counsel and otherwise assist your successor through the experiences you have gained during your term of office. You will now station yourself to my right.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now present the officers-elect at the alter as the Adjutant General reads the list of officers to be installed.

NATIONAL SERGEANT AT ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Installing Officer.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: We will start off with the Council Districts.

District No. 1 - Raymond R. Lupo.

District No. 2 - Walter G. Gansenberg.

District No. 3 - Charles A. Duffett, Jr. (Absent. Recuperating from by-pass surgery)

District No. 4 - Clifford D. Fields.

District No. 5 - Roger E. Baker.

District No. 6 - Randall L. Bare.

District No. 7 - James E. O'Neill.

District No. 8 - Rayburn M. Hill.

District No. 9 - Lyn D. Dimery.

District No. 10 - A. M. Armstrong.

District No. 11 - Thomas J. Tradewell, Jr.

District No. 12 - Theodore A. "Frog" Krogen.

District No. 13 - John R. Lewis.

District No. 14 - Richard A. Whipple.
District No. 15 - John I. Halstead, Sr.
District No. 16 - Darryl S. Dalley.
District No. 17 - Walter Lewis.
District No. 18 - Armondo C. Azzinaro.
District No. 19 - Johnnie L. Richard.
District No. 21 - Gary C. Steckelberg.
District A - Ronald G. Tyler, Sr.
District B - William H. Regan.
District C - Anthony M. Ferrarese.
District D - Gregorio J. Vella.
District F - David S. Miller.
District G - John L. Fitzke.
District H - Danny R. Henry.
District J - Harvey F. Eckhoff.
Past Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr.
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect - James R. Mueller.
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect - Gary L. Kurpius.
Quartermaster General - Joe L. Ridgley.
Judge Advocate General - Wayne J. Thompson, Jr.
Surgeon General - Stephen J. O'Connor.
National Chaplain - Theodore E. Bowers.
National Chief of Staff - Ronnie L. Davis.
Inspector General - William J. Jolin.
Adjutant General - John J. Senk, Jr.
Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Commander-in-Chief-Elect John Furgess.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade National Officers and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, all the officers have been installed in their place, sir.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: National Officers-Elect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I will now administer to you the Officers' Obligation. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, the following Officers' Obligation was given at this time: "I do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability the duties of the office to which I have been elected or appointed, according to the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected or appointed, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, all records, money, or other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control. All this I freely promise, upon my honor, as a loyal citizen of our great Republic. So help me God.")

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: As you were. The Installation Prayer

will be given at this time by Past National Chaplain David Norris.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN NORRIS: Almighty God, our God and divine protector, give Thy blessings upon these our comrades who now become fellow officers.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, who are ever present among us. Grant the wisdom unto them so that during their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and the veterans' organization. May Thy strength sustain them, may Thy power preserve them, may Thy hand protect them in the faithful and fruitful performance of their duties. Amen.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: As you were. National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective seats.

National Officers of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, you now occupy the position of honor to which your comrades have elected you. You learn well the responsibilities entrusted so you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you through your election or appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may be seated.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, before administering your Obligation, it is proper to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the Charter of this organization. At the end of your term of office, you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty as Commander-in-Chief to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability. You shall keep yourself informed of all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization, and strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office. You are expected to make a special study of the Constitution, By-Laws and Ritual of this organization so that you may render firm and impartial decisions on important questions referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and by the general public as typifying wise and vigorous leadership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. May all of your efforts and accomplishments bring credit to your administration and to our organization.

Comrade John Furgess, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT FURGESS: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: Everyone rise, please. You will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name as I give mine, and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Furgess received the following Obligation: "In the presence of Almighty God and the Officers and

Delegates of this Order here assembled, I, John Furgess, do hereby solemnly promise that I will faithfully discharge to the best of my ability, the duties of the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, to which I have been elected in accordance with the By-Laws and Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I solemnly promise that at the close of the term to which I have been elected, or sooner if so ordered by proper authority, I will surrender immediately to only the duly authorized person or persons, the National Charter, all records, money and other properties of this organization in my possession or under my control.

"I do further solemnly promise that I will be fair and impartial in my actions towards all comrades, and I will always strive to promote the best interests of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. So help me God.")

INSTALLING OFFICER HOLT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I now place in your possession our Charter. Also, I present you with this gavel, which is the emblem of your authority. Use it firmly but with discretion.

All National Officers, you will stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: "Comrade Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, officers and delegates of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers duly installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year. (Applause)

Before I give up this podium, let me say to you in all sincerity, I think I have known John Furgess as long or longer than anyone in this room. I want you to know that you have elected an individual who is sincere and dedicated to his God, to his country, to his family and to our VFW. Sometimes I put the last first in John's case.

So, all I am asking you to do, you do what John Furgess does for our VFW and I will guarantee you we will be there helping the veterans who can't help themselves. We will support a strong defense for our great nation. Congratulations to you Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF LAPEL PIN AND GOLD LIFE MEMBERSHIP CARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt, thank you so much for that. Let's give Cooper one more hand of applause, my comrades. (Applause)

Past Commander-in-Chief Edward Banas, will you come forward. It is my great honor, Ed, to present you with your Past Commander-in-Chief's Pin and your Gold Life Membership Card. How beautiful that is. Congratulations.

I want to call forward, first, the Chief of Staff, Ronnie Davis and his

wife, Edna, and the Inspector General, Bill Jolin, and his wife, Grace, to give the ladies an opportunity to place those wonderful caps on their very distinguished heads. (Applause)

ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I told several of you I was not going to get emotional. When I last said that, we had a long-range planning meeting in Colorado and within five minutes of the budget meeting I got emotional. If I get emotional over a budget, you know I will get emotional over this. Thank you so very much.

To our Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas, Distinguished National Officers, Guests and my Comrades:

I am profoundly grateful to the delegates of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for electing me as Commander-in-Chief. I am humbled by your faith and by your trust.

First, I want to thank my wonderful Post, West Nashville Post 1970. So many of those wonderful comrades are not here, but they started me down this wonderful trail 34 years ago, and I know that they are here.

Now, District 6, six pack as we say, the great Department of Tennessee, Volunteers all, please stand from the great State of Tennessee. What a great delegation. Thank you for being here. (Applause)

Also, I want to thank the wonderful and lovely hard-working National President, JoAnne Ott, of the great State of Ohio, and all the members of the wonderful Ladies Auxiliary for what you have done and what you are doing, and what you will continue to do for the good of this organization. I look forward to sharing very many future successes that I know our partnership will produce.

And finally, I want to thank my family and most importantly my wife, Alma, of 33 years. Without her understanding, I wouldn't be here. Without her sacrifice, I wouldn't be here, and without her support, I wouldn't be here, not at all. Alma, thanks, and please stand once again. (Applause)

I have some wonderful family members to introduce. First, I want to introduce some very special people who have joined us today. It is an honor to share this day with them. My former boss, former Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, Retired Marine Vietnam veteran, Life Member of the VFW, who drove up this morning from Nashville, Tennessee, just to be with us, and he will leave in just a few minutes to drive back for an important engagement back in Nashville. That is the kind of man he is. That is Fred Tucker and his lovely wife, Deborah. (Applause)

What a wonderful moment it was yesterday when I heard the stirring endorsement and nomination from a dear friend, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak of Georgia, and a wonderful second by my long-time friend Ronnie Davis of Tennessee, and a very emotional second nomination, who 25 years ago I had the honor of seconding his nomination in Dallas, Texas.

He came back from ravages of a stroke and he is doing wonderfully well. He can't speak just yet, but he held a simple sign that said "John Furgess." It was a moment I will remember the rest of my life. Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina, and John Gwizdak from Georgia. (Applause) What spirit and determination Billy Ray has. This is what this is all about.

I am not sure she is in the audience now, and I know she was earlier, the wonderful lady, widow of Richard Branson from Georgia, Mary Branson. Is Mary here? She is right here. This is Mary Branson from Georgia. Thank you for being here. (Applause) Richard is with us. God bless you.

Now, bear with me just a couple of minutes. I want to introduce these folks one at a time and ask them to stand and keep standing until they are all introduced. Please hold your applause until they are all introduced. Amy Brown, and her husband Kenneth, from Lake Wiley, South Carolina, and their five boys, Brandon, Andrew, Will, Zachery and Christopher.

My middle daughter, who is not very old, either, Mary Katherine Conrad of Smyrna, Tennessee. Her husband, Jason, and their first child Sarah Grace, our youngest grandchild. My youngest daughter, who is not very old at all, Melissa Springs and her husband, Raylan, from Chattanooga, Tennessee, and their children Marcus, Kayla, Megan, Cameron and Madeline.

My sister, Dottie Herrington of Nashville. We want to remember our other sister, Julie Conley, who could not be here, but her husband, Bill, works for the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville and he looks forward to accompanying you when you tour that wonderful facility at the homecoming next month.

We have Amy's in-laws, Bill Brown and Pat Brown, from Nolensville, Tennessee, a retired Navy veteran. We have Alma's sister from Clarksville, Tennessee, Susan Moore, and her daughter Kristi Wentz, and her husband Jeremy Wentz of Chicago. Please give them all a wonderful round of applause. (Applause)

Someone asked me when I was Junior Vice what my priorities were going to be when I became the National Commander-in-Chief. My answer today as it was then, my priorities are your priorities. I work for you, and as Cooper said, I will never forget that.

As some of you may know, I am a fan of Teddy Roosevelt, our 26th President of the United States and a VFW member. He took the view that the President of the United States was merely a "steward of the people." And I will remember those words all this next year.

I love the story of Teddy Roosevelt. Some of you have heard it before. When in July, 1898, he and a small band of veterans charged up San Juan Hill in Cuba, got to the top of the hill, lost many lives in the action, but marched into history, he put his arm around his 1st Sergeant, tears in his eyes as he saw the blood of combat.

He said something like, "1st Sergeant, I am not really sure you realize what our men have just done. I am convinced that one of us could even be elected President of the United States."

The old 1st Sergeant looked him in the eyes and said, "Teddy, you

take it. I just want to be Sheriff of Nashville, Tennessee." That is a true story, I think. That spirit of the Rough Riders we carry forward today, and we are calling them the Tough Riders.

Will all the State Commanders stand that are here in the audience, and let's give these Tough Riders a great round of applause, the leadership theme, "Team VFW." They are great individuals one and all. (Applause)

I share that same belief of old Teddy and those Rough Riders and pledge to you I, along with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller of Missouri, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius of Alaska, will do whatever it takes to guide this great organization as we educate, teach and preach to all of America the values of our wonderful United States men and women serving in our uniform today.

I pledge that we as Team VFW will grow in membership. There is no reason that we will not. We will increase our service to others and help more veterans receive the benefits and medical care that they so richly deserve. We will also hold politicians to their promises. I hear that everywhere I go. We will do that. We are one team with one mission, and that mission is to serve veterans, our uniformed personnel and their families. Stay focused on that mission and we cannot fail.

Eighty-seven people have once stood at a podium similar to this as Commander-in-Chief of our great organization. The foundation that you and almost two million just like you, our membership, helped them lay is strong, caring, involving, an organization that really makes a difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

Teddy Roosevelt once said to "do what you can, with what you have, where you are." I think he had in mind his Rough Riders that he talked about until the day he died. I want to talk about the VFW and its modern-day Tough Riders, an all-volunteer group of more than two million strong whose mission it is to make things happen, make things better, and make things last for all veterans, our uniformed personnel and their families.

Right now on this beautiful weekend in August, some 165,000 soldiers, sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen are engaged in Iraq, Afghanistan, so many other countries around the world. Though younger in age than we are right now, they have the same hopes, the same dreams that we once had when we walked in their boots.

They dream of family, they dream of their friends, and, yes, they dream of their automobiles back home, and of returning one day, as I am sure they would say, to the Land of the Big PX. They hope and pray that America appreciates them for who they are and for what they do. We in the Veterans of Foreign Wars thank them and remember them today. What do you say? (Applause)

Comrades, I can simply promise to you that we will never forget their service and their sacrifice, and that we will welcome them home with open arms, a pat on the back and a VFW membership application because they are our future. Let's give them one more round of applause. (Applause) They will one day be where you are.

I would like to share a story from Bangor, Maine. I don't know how many of you have ever been to Bangor. I have been there once for the Golden Age Games. I will never forget the experience. It has been said that you can point in three compass directions and hit Canada, but in 1991, they began greeting every plane load of troops returning from Operation Desert Storm. No matter the hour of the day or night, they were there then and they still are today.

A few weeks ago they met a returning flight of Colorado Army National Guardsmen at 3:00 a.m. That is 3:00 a.m. The Guardsmen were tired, hungry and frustrated, to be honest. After spending 369 days deployed, it took them 36 hours just to get back to the United States.

They expected, I am sure, a deserted airport at Bangor. Instead, they were met by a group of people who were doing their part to welcome them home, every one of them, from war. Here is what one of those Guardsmen, Sergeant Michael Thomas of the 220th Military Police Company, had to say in that August 2nd edition of The New York Times:

"As I walked off the plane, I was taken aback. In the small, dimly-lit airport in Bangor, a group of elderly veterans lined up to shake our hands. Some were standing. Some were confined to wheelchairs. All wore their uniform hats. Their now-feeble right hands stiffened in salutes. Their left hands held coffee, snacks and just cell phones for us.

"As I made my way through the line, each man thanking me for my service, I choked back tears. Here we were, returning from one year in Iraq, where we had portable DVD players, three square meals and telephones, being honored by men who had literally crawled through mud for years with little more than the occasional letter from home.

"These soldiers, many of whom had lost limbs and comrades, shook our hands proudly, as if our service could somehow rival their own. We soon learned that this VFW group had not only waited for more than a day in the airport for our arrival, because of our delay, but they were doing so for all the returning soldiers.

"When the time came to fly to Colorado, we were asked by our Commander if we would like to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Every hand in the unit went up eagerly, including my own.

"Looking back on my years in Iraq," he said to the New York Times, "I can honestly say that my perception of the experience was changed, not so much by the soldiers with whom I served, though I consider them my saving grace, but by the soldiers who welcomed us home. For it is those men and women who reminded me what serving my country is really all about."

How about a round of applause for that wonderful young sergeant, a new VFW member. (Applause)

So, comrades, when your Posts and Auxiliaries start seeing an increase in membership from the current generation of fighting men and women, please remember to give them a hearty thanks to Post 1761 in Bangor, Maine, for doing what they can, with what they have, where they

are.

Thank you, Teddy, for that great challenge that has gone down through the generations. They are not here, comrades, but let's hear it for Post 1761, Bangor, Maine. (Applause)

I know full well and very well there are other stories from other Posts all across the country, but for all the good things that we do, and for all the recognition we may receive, we couldn't do any of this without a strong, vibrant, increasing membership.

Right now we have just less than two million members. The Ladies Auxiliary has about 630,000 members. That is a total strength of 2.5 million. World War II veterans are dying at a rate of, they say, about 1,000 every day. Some of our Posts have consolidated with others and some have merely closed. That's the bad news.

The good news is that the newest generation of military personnel, and God bless them all for continuing to carry the torch of freedom around the world. They are a resource that is available to us that we must tap. Thank you for all of your membership programs. That's the secret to our success.

The Army said that by the end of next year, 2005, half of their total force of active duty, National Guard and Reservists will have served in a combat zone. That's more than a half million people from just the Army who will be or already are eligible for VFW membership. The other services also have significant numbers of eligible members, too.

Since the inception not too long ago of the Military Assistance Program, or as we call it MAP, more than 1,600 units of our military have been adopted, a number that includes 592 units adopted by VFW Posts and Ladies Auxiliaries just this past year. But there are many more units out there, many more services from all services, and they are in our backyards waiting for you to take that first step.

Just the Army National Guard alone, there are 3,200 armories across this land, located in some 2,700 communities of the United States. We must embrace them, we must welcome them into the fold, and we must share our proud past with them and let them lead us into an even nobler future.

We are the largest organization of combat veterans in the United States and we want and we need this newest generation to join us. They are not here this morning, but let me hear it for them, our future. (Applause)

"Celebration of Service", that is the theme for this year. But you must remember that the great things we do for our veterans and our communities cannot be accomplished as much as we would like without an increased and vibrant and involved membership. So, my challenge to all is to continue to reach out to this new generation of eligible veterans.

As some of you may know, I served in the U.S. Army and the Tennessee National Guard for 28 years. In my civilian life, I served as the Assistant Commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs for 20 years. With that background, you know why I am big on military, big

on the Guard and Reserve, big on service to veterans and big on the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

This to you I pledge to continue. That's why "Celebration of Service" is our theme. We need to celebrate our accomplishments of the past as we continue to meet the challenges of the future. I want the chance to tell you how to do it. I will just ask the State Commanders all year long to remember to celebrate our proud military service, our wonderful community service, and our Veterans Service, our wonderful claims officers as we reach out.

Service to others is a natural extension of the bond we once had when we wore the uniform of our country. It is not an option. It has been and always will be an important part of who we are and what we do.

More than 19 million hours you volunteered in our communities last year. That equates to \$325 million in wages alone. That's very significant, but what's more important are the millions of lives you touch every day, every month, every year.

Our service programs are designed for maximum benefit to all veterans and their families; to all veterans and their families. The youth and community services forge unbreakable ties with towns and military communities, big and small across this great land.

From providing scholarships, phone cards and Buddy Poppies to supporting the National Home, the Golden Age Games, military medical centers and our new Unmet Needs Program, our service to others is based on action, not words but deeds. I am extremely committed to the continuing improvement and expansion of these programs with your help.

I am also extremely committed to the National Veterans Service Program. We know them as Service Officers. From Post and Department to the National level, the National Veterans Service Program is a nationwide network of highly-skilled and professional representatives that has handled more than 55,000 VA claims in just the past six months alone.

As we speak this Friday morning in Cincinnati, we are about to open a new "Benefits Delivery at Discharge" located at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, home of the 101st Airborne Division. Many of you have been there. This will be our eighth location as an organization since that was created just a few years ago in 2001.

I have had the great pleasure of meeting the newly-installed Commanding General at Fort Campbell a few weeks ago. He is a new man, a new Commander, had never been at Fort Campbell, was just learning the ropes. Major General Bill Bradshaw from our Washington office and I visited with the new General and asked him for his bottom-line approval of this new VFW position on the Post at Fort Campbell.

He didn't hesitate. He said something like why haven't we done this before as they are going in? Our motto is "To Honor the Dead by Helping the Living." These Service Officers are ensuring that veterans and their families receive all due entitlements in a timely fashion while protecting their rights.

Thanks to the Military Order of the Cootie and the MOCA for all that they do to keep them smiling in beds of white. This program is complemented by our National Legislative Service, whose sole purpose on Capitol Hill is to campaign for veterans rights.

We have come a long way, comrades, but there is still a lot to do, and the National Legislative Service will lead the fight to ensure there is a strong VA, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, for today's veterans, more than 26 million in number, and for those who you are currently fighting this challenging war on terrorism.

They will fight for full concurrent receipt for all eligible retirees. They will fight to eliminate the widow's tax. They will fight for a new G.I. Bill for the 21st Century, and they will fight to improve, last but not least, the quality of life programs for all of our active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel and their families.

As you all know, there is an extraordinary amount of media and public attention being paid to veterans this year. As recent as today's newspaper or telecast, radio broadcasts, the World War II Memorial dedication just a few weeks ago in Washington, the 60th Anniversary of D-Day just this past June, and the current war on terrorism.

I had the unique pleasure of accompanying our Commander-in-Chief to Normandy, and on June 6th heard the President and saw the President of the United States. As I walked through the gravestones, that beautiful national cemetery, this is true, the first tombstone or headstone I came to and looked at somewhat shocked and taken aback was none other than Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., Brigadier General, U.S. Army, Medal of Honor recipient. I was caught up in the magic of that moment. He died in Normandy.

Perhaps more than any election in our nation's history, the 2004 presidential election is focusing on military issues and a lot of promises are being made by both candidates. We will hold the winner of this important race to his promises. We led the fight for the World War II G.I. Bill of Rights, Agent Orange benefits, Jobs for Veterans Act, and the elevation of the VA to cabinet-level position.

Many of you, or most of you were involved in those struggles through the years. We will continue to hold all elected officials accountable because we believe in their actions and not simply their words.

Teddy Roosevelt said that, "A man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards." That is all we ask. I say you fought for the right to vote, so please vote on election day, November 2nd. I know that you will.

This year, on September 29, just a few weeks from now, the Veterans of Foreign Wars will celebrate its 105th birthday. I often wonder if those old Rough Riders envisioned our nation and our organization as it is today.

You see me this morning wearing a second pin in my lapel. If you look closely, you will see the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief wearing that same pin. The Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is wearing that same

pin. We will wear it all this next year in honor of this 105th anniversary.

That pin is the original pin, the American Veterans Foreign Service. It was in the year 1899 that they banded together after the Spanish-American War. They wanted to band together. They enjoyed this comradeship, the fellowship. They wanted to care for each other.

They wanted to care for the sick and hospitalized veterans, so they did. It created this wonderful organization. In 1914, before World War I, they changed the name to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and here we are today. We will be asking and have already asked more than 9,000 VFW Posts to be united on that day, Wednesday, September 29, 2004, doing programs and community service in each of these Posts, whether it be a breakfast, a lunch or a dinner, or an open house, or welcome home 9,000 Posts strong involved in their communities.

Comrades, our nation has changed very much since 1899. Then we had about 76 million citizens. The number today is about 300 million Americans. Then we had only 45 states, and to most Americans, those creature comforts we take for granted today were not even yet invented. The term, World War, was still more than a decade away.

When our founders returned from the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, they had no Bill of Rights. They had no pension for their service. There was no medical care for thousands of returnees. They were left to care for themselves.

Some of them first met in Columbus, Ohio, not far from here. Coach Knute Rockne of Notre Dame was in that locker room that I like to talk about from time to time, not just Teddy Roosevelt but Knute Rockne. I want us to understand those echoes of our proud past, and with your help we will do just that.

Comrades and ladies, this is our locker room, this is our kickoff for our new year, the 2004-2005 VFW membership year. The VFW is on the move. Let me just say that since our country's birth 228 years ago, more than one million Americans have died protecting and defending our nation and others who need our help.

Europe is free because of us. The Pacific is free because of us. Iraq and Afghanistan are free from tyranny because of us. Americans remain free because of us.

Armed Forces Day just a few weeks ago in May, I had the high honor of representing you at Hawthorne, Nevada, the wonderful great Armed Forces Day. The Navy Seals were their Grand Marshals. They were young men who had been training for months.

They came to the Post that evening for celebration, and one of the persons introduced to that large gathering was the Voice of Democracy winner. They invited her to the microphone. I suspect she was about 16 years old. She said, "My parents are here and I want to thank them. My teacher is here and I want to thank her.

"I have learned a lot this past year in studying the script. I know now the five reasons we are free as a nation. Those five reasons have come

to mean an awful lot to me," she said, at age 16. "Because of those five reasons we are free. I will remember them the rest of my life."

She said, "Do you want to know what those five reasons are?" People by that time shouted out, "Yes, what are they?" She said, "I will tell you what those five reasons are that we are free: the United States Army, the United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, the United States Air Force and the United States Coast Guard."

This is coming from a youth 16 years old. I have repeated this story several times. I will ask you to repeat it as you go about your travels. Comrades, our past is honorable, our future is bright, but we, today's VFW Tough Riders, are the ones who have the responsibility to tell our story that freedom is not free. We cannot afford to leave that legacy to the history book writers.

Team VFW is fully engaged. Our commitment to "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living" is being fulfilled every day in every VFW Post around the world. We are making things happen, we are making things better and we are making things last.

I think our founders would have been very proud of us as we embark on our new year of "Celebration of Service". I am certainly proud of each of you. Thank you once again for the honor. I will remember this moment for the rest of my life.

Now, comrades, there is work to be done. Let's go get them, VFW Tough Riders. Thank you, my comrades and sisters, my wonderful family and friends, and may God bless you and may God continue to bless these beautiful, wonderful United States of America. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended a prolonged standing ovation.)

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I recognize the comrade at Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE LARRY LeFEBVRE (Post 552 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry LeFebvre, a delegate from Post 552, Michigan. There being no further business to come before this convention and the officers have been elected and installed for the ensuing year, I move that the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second?

COMRADE GARY PAULIN (Post 565 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Gary Paulin, Department Commander of Michigan, a delegate from Post 565, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there any discussion? Those in favor will say "aye"; those opposed "no". The 105th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is moving to adjourn. The Adjutant General does not like surprises. I am going to surprise him.

I asked the State Judge Advocate and the state bugler from Heber

Springs, Arkansas, Michael Kunkles, to come forward with his bugle and lead us all in the stirring rendition of our National Anthem. Please join us as we salute these beautiful colors before we retire them. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will retire the colors.

(Whereupon, the Honor Guard retired the colors at this time.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: National Chaplain, we will have the Closing Prayer. (Whereupon, National Chaplain Bowers gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremonies for this National Convention have been conducted, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, sir. Comrades, a wonderful round of applause for the beautiful National Guard and the wonderful Sergeants-at-Arms. (Applause) There will be a noon meeting of the newly-installed Council of Administration in Room 200 here in the Convention Center.

Then you are all invited to a 4:00 p.m. casual reception here in the Convention Center. Thank you so much and have a safe trip home. We stand adjourned.

(Whereupon, the convention was duly adjourned at 11:45 a.m., sine die.)

**PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO
NATIONAL BY-LAWS AND MANUAL OF
PROCEDURE AND RITUAL CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL BY-LAWS, MANUAL OF PROCEDURE AND RITUAL**

B-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee)

SECTION 711 – BUDDY POPPY.

Amend Section 711, National By-Laws, by adding the words “for Children” after “National Home” in the second paragraph.

(Approved)

B-2 (Proposed by Department of California)

SECTION 702 – POLITICS.

Amend Section 702, National By-Laws, by deleting the fourth paragraph in its entirety, and inserting in lieu thereof, the following:

“Nothing contained in this Section shall prevent the organization of a lawful political action committee by the National Organization or any of its Departments to further the purposes of the VFW as set forth in Section 3 of the Congressional Charter, nor prevent any discussion of the activities of such a committee.”

(Disapproved)

B-3 (Proposed by Department of Iowa)

SECTION 709 – CONTROL OF UNITS.

Amend Section 709, National By-Laws, by deleting the following words from the second sentence in paragraph two:

“and must name, as additional insureds, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the Department in which such Post is located.”

(Disapproved)

B-4 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

SECTION 716 – TITLE OF DEPARTMENT OFFICERS.

Amend National By-Laws by deleting Section 716 in its entirety.

(Disapproved)

B-5 (Proposed by Department of Maryland)

SECTION 1302 – ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 1302, National By-Laws by adding the following text in the first sentence of the first paragraph, after the word “brothers”:

“, step fathers, step brothers, step sons, “

(Disapproved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

M-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Manual of Procedure by adding the words “for Children” after the words “National Home”, wherever they appear in the Manual of Procedure.

(Approved)

M-2 (Proposed by Department of Virginia)

Amend the Manual of Procedure by deleting Section 716 in its entirety.

(Disapproved)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RITUAL

R-1 (Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee. Proposed by Commander-in-Chief)

Amend the Ritual by adding the words “for Children” after the words “National Home”, wherever they appear in the Ritual.

(Approved)

105th National Convention
RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

No. 201 (Department of Colorado)—Personal Accident Protection Program
Rejected

No. 202 (Department of Colorado & Iowa)—Homeless Veterans Committee
Rejected

No. 203 (Department of Minnesota)—Retention of the Pledge of Allegiance as Is
Rejected

No. 204 (Department of Virginia)—Shorten the Obligation Required of all Persons Joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars
Rejected

No. 205 (Department of Wisconsin)—Modify the Requirements for Use of VFW Trademarks; Service Marks
Rejected

No. 206 (Department of Missouri)—Proposed National By-Law Changes Purpose of Corporation
Rejected

No. 207 (Department of Missouri)—Proposed National By-Law Changes Incorporation; Name
Rejected

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

No. 301 (Department of Texas)—American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial

Resolved, that a fitting memorial to America's disabled veterans, be located in our nations capital; and

Further resolved, that the mission the Disabled Veterans' Life Memorial Foundation is to cause to be constructed an enduring memorial that commemorates the sacrifice and dedication of disabled veterans, ensuring that they are always remembered for having placed their lives and bodies in harm's way, and who spend each day living with a deep and permanent reminder of their willing sacrifice to protect the United States of America; and

Further resolved, that we encourage and urge all VFW members to support the new American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial in Washington, D.C.

No. 302(*Department of Ohio*)—*Veterans Hall of Fame*
Rejected

No. 303(*Department of California*)—*American Museum of Military History*

Resolved, that we endorse and support the development of the American Museum of Military History with no solicitation of VFW Posts, members or non-members supporters to be ever considered.

No. 304(*Department of Minnesota*)—*Retention of the Pledge of Allegiance as Is*

Resolved, that we call on all the members of all our Legislative bodies to: Resist any and all attempts to alter the Pledge of Allegiance; most especially the phrase “one nation under God...”

No. 305(*Department of New York*)—*Amend Public Law 94-344 Pertaining to the Display of the United States Flag*
Rejected

No. 306(*Department of New York*)—*Urge that Performances of the National Anthem be Rendered with Dignity and Respect*
Rejected

No. 307(*Department of New York*)—*Urge a Constitutional Amendment to Prohibit the Desecration of the American Flag*

Resolved, that we will once more defend our beloved American flag. This time not by taking up arms but by supporting in a most public and visible means the passage of a Constitutional amendment to protect this cherished symbol of freedom.

No. 308(*Department of Virginia*)—*Commending Professional 911 Public Safety Dispatchers*
Rejected

No. 309(*Department of Louisiana*)—*Traditional Marriage Must Prevail*
Rejected

No. 310(*Department of Louisiana*)—*Federal Judicial Fiat*
Rejected

No. 311 (*Department of Missouri*)—*Vander Clute Motorcycle Ride*
Resolved, that the Vander Clute Memorial Motorcycle Ride for

charity be a recognized event and agenda item for the first day of each Annual VFW National Convention.

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

*No. 401 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support Public Awareness Projects
Resolved, that we will:*

(a)— Ensure routine distribution to the field of pertinent, credible and responsible information and reports such as those provided on a routine basis by the VFW National Security & Foreign Affairs Department and, as requested, to provide such information about other POW/MIA organizations as may be needed by the Departments.

(b)— Encourage participation in the program by veterans groups of other friendly nations such as our NATO and Far Eastern allies.

(c)— Encourage exchange of information among state POW/MIA chairmen to include publishing up-to-date lists of POW/MIA chairmen; and *Further resolved*, that each Department exercise maximum initiative to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program at Department levels by encouraging such actions as:

(a)— the display of the black POW/MIA flag, subordinate to the U.S. flag, at any function at which it is proper to fly the U.S. flag.

(b)— Encourage support of information exchange at Post levels.

(c)— Appoint an interested member at the Post level to act as the POW/MIA project officer; and

Further resolved, that we support the annual POW/MIA Recognition Day and the annual National Former POW Recognition Day.

No. 402 (Commander-in-Chief)—Assist Vietnam's Recovery of MIAs as a Sign of Good Faith

Resolved, that at each level of the VFW—National, Department, District, and Post—strenuous efforts continue to be made to collect any information, which might be of value in determining the fate of Vietnam's 200,000 MIAs and of assistance in the recovery of their remains; and

Further resolved, that on subsequent trips to the region by VFW national officers, information collected on Vietnamese casualties be turned over to Vietnamese authorities as an expression of our desire to assist them in recovering their MIAs and to encourage their greater effort in helping us reach the fullest possible accounting of our MIAs.

No. 403 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms

Resolved, that we support fair and just compensation for the injuries suffered by all American POWs at the hands of their Japanese captors, and the slave labor they were forced to perform by private Japanese companies during World War II; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Administration to work with all parties involved in this issue to resolve the claims of these former POWs in an expeditious manner.

No. 404(Commander-in-Chief)—A Full Accounting for Commander Speicher

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to continue an aggressive investigation into Commander Speicher's fate until either he is recovered alive, his remains are recovered and identified, or until a full accounting of his fate can be determined.

No. 405(Commander-in-Chief)—Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States

Resolved, that we are firm and united in our demand for legislation establishing the right of every fallen member of the armed forces of the United States to have his casket draped with the flag of the United States immediately upon departure from a foreign country, and that the law restrict the use of flags or symbols of other nations or international organizations upon their caskets.

No. 406(Commander-in-Chief)—No Time Restraints for POW/MIA Accounting

Resolved, that no time constraints be attached to the full accounting of our POW/MIAs.

No. 407(Commander-in-Chief)—Support of H. Res. 103 to Establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs

Resolved, that we urge the House of Representatives to establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs.

No. 408(Commander-in-Chief)—Remain United with Allies to Preserve Freedom and Security

Resolved, that the lessons of the Cold War, Gulf War, wars of the Afghanistan and Iraq and terrorist attacks taught us that our peace, our freedom and our security can best be achieved by remaining united in common purpose with our many allies and friends whereby we share both the danger and security burden by maintaining a national defense and in combination with our allies and friends remain capable of defeating those strong present and future threats.

No. 409(Commander-in-Chief)—Limit Foreign Ownership of U.S. Businesses and Properties

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation to restrict foreign ownership of United States corporations, companies, businesses and property, and industrial technologies and/or processes, which could become vital or sensitive to the national security of the U.S.

and which will protect the economy of the United States.

No. 410 (Commander-in-Chief)—Take Action on the Illegal Immigration Problem

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to enact bipartisan legislation to halt the flow of illegal aliens from entering the United States; and

Further resolved, to enact bipartisan legislation to identify and document all illegal aliens within the United States to determine those who should be deported to their country of origin and those who should be allowed to apply for citizenship under existing laws.

No. 411 (Commander-in-Chief)—Punish and Condemn Terrorists and Support the War on Terrorism

Resolved, that we continue to urge decisive action in the war on terrorism by:

(a) Staying on the offensive in the war on terrorism.

(b) Urging our allies to join the coalition in the war on terrorism and taking offensive action against terrorist groups and support taking positive actions against those “rogue or outlaw states” guilty of inciting, harboring, or aiding and abetting terrorists.

(c) Holding all countries accountable for the security of American citizens traveling within their borders.

No. 412 (Commander-in-Chief)—Ballistic Missile Defense is a National Security Priority

Resolved, that we support the development and deployment of a ballistic missile defense that is effective to protect our country, our deployed military forces, our friends, and our allies as soon as possible as a high priority national security requirement.

No. 413 (Commander-in-Chief)—Oppose Lifting the Defense Department Ban on Homosexuals in the Armed Forces

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Defense to review the current, “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy and replace it with a policy more consistent with the intent of Public Law 103-160.

No. 414 (Commander-in-Chief)—Maintain an Effective U.S. Coast Guard

Resolved, that we urge the Congress and the Administration to provide the funding necessary for modernization, recapitalization, and increased homeland security, and parity of the Coast Guard to carry out its mission and enable the Service to take full advantage of modern information technology, including but not limited to, drug interdiction and enforcement, pollution control, maritime safety, search and rescue missions, and maintaining military readiness as well as its many other duties and responsibilities.

No. 415(Commander-in-Chief)—Strengthen Intelligence Agencies and Capabilities

Resolved, that we reject any further reductions in our national intelligence agencies, and instead support appropriate coordination, expansion and funding to ensure that we will have adequate intelligence capabilities that provide appropriate warnings of future and political, military, economic or technological threats that would increase the risks to our national security and vital national interests abroad and that Congress appropriate necessary funds to strengthen the intelligence agencies and services.

No. 416(Commander-in-Chief)—Support for the Republic of Korea

Resolved, that we urge the government of the United States to increase its military aid and assistance to the Republic of Korea by providing modern state of the art weapons and technology to safeguard its freedom, and promote security in the Asia/Pacific region.

No. 417(Commander-in-Chief)—Support Withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina

Rejected

No. 418(Commander-in-Chief)—Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress of the United States to adhere strictly to the concepts of the Taiwan Relations Act by approving the sale to the Republic of China on Taiwan such state-of-the-art military equipment, weapons and technology as may be necessary to maintain adequate defense capabilities to provide for military balance and stability in the region.

No. 419(Commander-in-Chief)—Retain the Selective Service

Resolved, that the we support the ongoing existence of the Selective Service System and its necessary programs in its stand-by status and urge the United States Congress to provide the funds necessary to retain the Selective Service System; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Congress to shift appropriations oversight for the Selective Service System from the VA-HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees to the Defense Appropriations Subcommittees of the House and Senate.

No. 420(Commander-in-Chief)—Monitor the Panama Canal Carefully

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to closely monitor conditions in the Republic of Panama, and be prepared to take the steps necessary to protect the Panama Canal and to ensure continued safe and efficient freedom of passage through it, and to con-

tinuously evaluate the conditions of Panama and the region with a view toward balancing the concerns and interests of Panama, its neighbors and the United States.

No. 421 (Commander-in-Chief)—NATO Enlargement

Resolved, we support continuing enlargement of the NATO Alliance because it is important to the future security of Europe, and our own military interests in that region.

No. 422 (Commander-in-Chief)—Restore Economic Sanctions Against North Korea

Resolved, to urge the Administration and Congress to retain the present trade embargo against North Korea and to refrain from any form of future compensation to North Korea in order to have that government stop its nuclear weapons activity.

No. 423 (Commander-in-Chief)—Tighten U.S. Policy on High Technology Exports

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to deny future “dual-use” exports to any country that has already refused or delayed America’s ability to verify that this technology is being used at its intended location and for its intended purpose.

No. 424 (Commander-in-Chief)—Protecting Americans from Ballistic Missile Attack

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and the Congress to increase missile defense spending in the Fiscal Year 2005 Budget and Defense Appropriations Act by \$10 to \$12 billion dollars above fiscal year 2004 authorized money for this initial missile defense capability.

No. 425 (Commander-in-Chief)—Increase the Defense Budget

Resolved, that we strongly urge the Congress to quickly authorize the programs in their fiscal year 2005 Defense Authorization Act and then appropriate all the necessary money to ensure a robust defense posture.

No. 426 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support Increased Shipbuilding for the U.S. Navy

Resolved, that we urge the Administration and Congress to continue ship funding in Fiscal Year 2005 to ensure the U.S. Navy is capable of matching any known worldwide military threat, to include new operational concepts to meet potential threats.

No. 427 (Commander-in-Chief)—Improve Military Readiness

Resolved, that we fully support all Congressional action this fiscal year to authorize and appropriate additional defense money to more

quickly improve modernization, munitions, additional tactical air and bomber wings and improve Naval readiness.

No. 428 (Commander-in-Chief)—Strengthen Security at Department of Energy (DOE)—Laboratories

Resolved, that we call upon the Administration and Congress to ensure that the provisions of the Department of Energy Reform Law is fully implemented; and

Further resolved, that we urge Administration and Congress to periodically review the implementation of these improved security measures at Department of Energy nuclear laboratories in order to preserve our national security against the threat of foreign espionage and prevent any further loss of the nation's nuclear secrets to other countries or groups.

No. 429 (Commander-in-Chief)—Increase Military Base Pay

Resolved, that we appreciate and have supported past Congressional efforts with the goal to restore military base to pay to full comparability with the private sector by 2007.

No. 430 (Commander-in-Chief)—U.S. Response to People's Republic of China (PRC) Actions

Resolved, that we urge the Administration to maintain a policy that demonstrates resolve and leadership in responding to the challenge of mainland China's proliferation of weapons and ballistic missile technology, increased military spending and modernization of its armed forces including increased ballistic missile forces aimed at the United States and our allies in Asia.

No. 431 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support the Death Penalty for Acts of Treason, in War and Peace, Against the United States of America

Resolved, that when justified by the nature of the crime, we support capital punishment for those who commit acts of espionage or treason against this nation; and

Further resolved, that we support federal laws that allow the courts to sentence those convicted of treason or espionage against the United States in accordance with the nature of the crime.

No. 432 (Commander-in-Chief)—Maintain Pressure on Castro

Resolved, that we urge the U.S. government to continue its present policy of no trade with Communist Cuba and no diplomatic recognition of that communist state and to increase the economic and political pressure on Castro; and

Further resolved, that we urge the U.S. government to use all measures, short of violence and/or invasion, to isolate and maintain pressure on Castro to hasten the time until Castro's dictatorship is overthrown

and the Cuban people can regain its freedom.

No. 433(Commander-in-Chief)—Oppose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Resolved, that we oppose ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the Senate of the United States.

No. 434(Commander-in-Chief)—Oppose International Criminal Court

Resolved, that we hereby oppose ratification of the treaty establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Senate of the United States, and we oppose the United States becoming a party to the ICC in any fashion.

No. 435(Commander-in-Chief)—Support Continued Live Fire Training at PFC Herbert K. Piliilaa Range at Makua Valley, Oahu, Hawaii

Rejected

No. 436(Commander-in-Chief)—Total Force Policy and Viable National Guard and Reserve Forces

Rejected

No. 437(Commander-in-Chief)—Award Distinctive Medals for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom

Rejected

No. 438(Department of North Dakota)—Support Equity for Reserve and Guard Members

Resolved, that we in coordination with the Reserve and National Guard components to solicit their input and assistance and in coordination with Reserve and National Guard Associations help develop legislative programs which will correct inequities when compared to members of the regular active duty components.

No. 439(Department of Arizona)—Award Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Retroactive to March 3, 1946

Resolved, that we petition the President of the United States to rectify the unjust omission of the original executive order by awarding the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal to all military personnel who have served overseas in expeditionary status during the period commencing March 3, 1946, and ending June 30, 1958.

No. 440(Department of Ohio)—Establish a Campaign Ribbon for Those Stationed at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

Rejected

No. 441(Department of Florida)—Support Retroactive Korea Service

Medal and Korea Presidential Unit Citation

Rejected

No. 442(Department of Florida)—Establish Combat Recognition Badges for Other than Infantry, Special Forces and Army Medical Department Personnel

Rejected

No. 443(Department of Oregon)—Posthumous Award of the Medal of Honor for Rex T. Barber

Resolved, we fully support all Congressional action to grant posthumous award of the Medal of Honor to recognize Lt. Barber's extraordinary courage at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty.

No. 444(Department of Alaska)—Award Imminent Danger and Hostile Fire Ribbons

Resolved, that we petition the Secretary of Defense to authorize the design/manufacturing and awarding criteria of two Defense Department ribbons with no medal attached, recognizing U.S. military personnel who have: (1) received "Combat Pay" or "Hostile Fire Pay" (HFP) subsequent to March 1, 1961 (Vietnam) ("Hostile Fire Ribbon"); and (2) received "Imminent Danger Pay" (IDP) subsequent to January 1, 1971 (Cambodia) ("Harms Way Ribbon"). Suggested criteria to be the same as IDP/HFP pay requirements with only one of each earned ribbon authorized per tour of duty.

No. 445(Department of Louisiana)—Oppose Law of the Sea Treaty of the United Nations

Rejected

No. 446(Department of Louisiana)—Take Action on the Illegal Immigration Problem

Rejected

**RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS**

No. 601(Commander-in-Chief)—Adequate Department of Veterans Affairs Budget

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to mandate a budget and authorize appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs, which will fully fund and maintain the integrity of and enhance the veterans entitlement programs and health care system.

No. 602(Commander-in-Chief)—Concurrent Receipt of Retirement Pay and Veterans' Disability Compensation

Resolved, that we urge the Administration to budget and the Congress to subsequently authorize and appropriate funds to immediately pay full military retiree pay to disabled retirees who also receive disability compensation, with no limitation or off-set from either earned entitlement.

No. 603 (Commander-in-Chief)—Timely Access to Quality Health Care

Resolved, that we urge the VA to establish, as the top priority, the reduction of waiting times for access to patient care and services.

No. 604 (Commander-in-Chief)—Federal Employees Health Benefit Program as an Option for Military Retirees

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of Defense to offer all military retirees the full range of the FEHBP as another lifetime health care option under the same terms as do all other federal departments, agencies and the Postal Service.

No. 605 (Commander-in-Chief)—Entitlement to Nursing Home Care

Resolved, that we urge Congress to mandate and provide funding for the provision of nursing home care for all veterans.

No. 606 (Commander-in-Chief)—Establish Presumption of Service Connection for Radiation Related Disabilities

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to amend Title 38 United States Code § 1112 and provide the necessary elements to ensure consistent determinations under all Title 38 regulations (particularly 38 C.F.R. § 3.309(d) regarding the granting of presumptive service connection for certain radiation-related diseases of skin cancer, posterior subcapsular cataracts, nonmalignant thyroid nodular disease, parathyroid adenoma, tumors of the central nervous system, prostate cancer, and rectal cancer.

No. 607 (Commander-in-Chief)—Effective Veterans Employment and Training System

Resolved, that we support a viable and effective veterans employment and training system, which has necessary funding and capability to assist veterans in seeking and maintaining meaningful employment and re-employment opportunities; and

Further resolved, that any veterans employment and training system be held accountable and that veterans receive priority of service in all federally funded job-training programs.

No. 608 (Commander-in-Chief)—VA Health Care for Women Veterans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide sufficient funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure necessary and appropriate

health care services are available to women veterans; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veteran Affairs to mandate a full-time women veterans program manager position at all VA medical centers.

No. 609 (Commander-in-Chief)—No Increase and Repeal of VA Home Loan Funding Fees

Resolved, that we urge Congress to refrain from further increasing the VA Home Loan funding fees and to repeal these fees as soon as possible.

No. 610 (Commander-in-Chief)—Mandatory Funding for Veterans Health Care

Resolved, that we urge Congress to establish a statutory entitlement for veterans health care as a means to assure veterans receive the care they justly deserve, obviate diminished access as the current primary method of cost control, and provide a basis for justification of those capital investments needed to streamline processes for efficiency improvements.

No. 611 (Commander-in-Chief)—VA Medicare Subvention

Resolved, that we support legislation authorizing the VA to collect and retain all Medicare dollars; and

Further resolved, that Medicare subvention collections should be used to enhance, not replace, federally appropriated dollars.

No. 612 (Commander-in-Chief)—Small Business Administration Veterans Programs

Resolved, that we support the strengthening and sufficient funding of an effective veterans entrepreneurship program in the United States Small Business Administration.

No. 613 (Commander-in-Chief)—Veterans Undiagnosed Illnesses

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue

the close working relationship with the National Academy of Sciences in the effort to ascertain to which toxins Persian Gulf War period veterans were exposed and what illnesses may be associated with such exposure; and

Further resolved, that Congress should continue prudent and vigilant oversight to ensure both the Department of Veterans Affairs and NAS adhere to time limits imposed upon them so they effectively and efficiently address the continuing health-care needs of Persian Gulf War period veterans; and

Further resolved, that the eligibility period for veterans to receive VA health care and their authority to be enrolled in at least Priority

Category 6 for such care, be extended while the War on Terrorism is actively engaged.

No. 614(Commander-in-Chief)—Exempt VA Disability Compensation in Determination of Eligibility for HUD's Assisted Senior Housing Program

Resolved, that the Department of Housing and Urban Development not consider VA disability compensation as income when determining eligibility for their Assisted Senior Housing Program.

No. 615(Commander-in-Chief)—Support for the Guard and Reserve

Resolved, that the provisions of the Uniformed Service Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act be strictly enforced; and

Further resolved, that we support the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in its efforts to educate employers on the ever-increasing importance of the National Guard and Reserves and their responsibilities as mandated by USERRA.

No. 616(Commander-in-Chief)—Specially Adapted Housing Allowance

Resolved, that we seek legislation to amend 38 U.S.C. § 2102 to allow a second grant to cover the costs of home adaptations for veterans who are forced to replace their specially adapted home with new housing.

No. 617(Commander-in-Chief)—Presumptive Service Connection for Tinnitus and Hearing Loss

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to grant service connection on a presumptive basis for any veteran diagnosed after discharge with hearing loss or tinnitus when such disabilities are associated with combat or a particular occupational specialty.

No. 618(Commander-in-Chief)—Licensure and Certification

Resolved, that we urge a standardized licensure and certification requirement be adopted by the appropriate federal and state agencies; and

Further resolved, that recently separated service members be afforded the opportunity to take licensing and certification exams without a period of retraining.

No. 619(Commander-in-Chief)—Adequate Funding for State Veterans Homes Programs

Resolved, that we support a VA per diem payment that equals 50 percent of the national average cost of providing care in a state veterans home; and

Further resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to fully fund the State Veterans Home Construction Grant pro-

gram.

No. 620(Commander-in-Chief)—Congressional Funding for the VA National Rehabilitative Special Events

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide a separate appropriation in the VA budget for the national rehabilitative special events so VA can continue to contribute its share of the funding.

No. 621(Commander-in-Chief)—Veterans Preference

Resolved, that we oppose all attempts to reduce or circumvent veterans preference.

No. 622(Commander-in-Chief)—Workforce Investment Act

Resolved, that at least one veterans advocate be placed on the state and local workforce development boards; and

Further resolved, that we request all “one-stop” centers created by the Workforce Investment Act provide priority of service to veterans.

No. 623(Commander-in-Chief)—Presumption of Service Connection for Veterans Suffering from Hepatitis “C”

Resolved, that we urge Congress to authorize an open-ended presumption of service connection for veterans with Hepatitis C until such time that medical research can adequately determine a reasonable latency period.

No. 624(Commander-in-Chief)—Increased Dependency and Indemnity Compensation to Surviving Spouses of Service Members who Die While on Active Duty

Resolved, that we urge the Congress of the United States to amend Title 38 U.S.C. § 1311(a)(2) to include the survivors of military personnel who are deceased on active duty for the purposes of eligibility for increased dependency and indemnity compensation.

No. 625(Commander-in-Chief)—A GI BILL FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact a new GI Bill for the 21st Century, which would provide an educational benefit that covers the cost of tuition, fees, books and related expenses along with a stipend to cover housing expenses at the university or college of the veteran’s choice.

No. 626(Commander-in-Chief)—Homeless Veterans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to fully fund all veterans homeless programs that are administered at the federal level.

No. 627(Commander-in-Chief)—Reinstatement of VA Priority Group Category 8

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reinstate priority group category 8 veterans for enrollment at VA health care facilities.

No. 628(Commander-in-Chief)—Require that Certain Veterans Employment and Training Service Positions be Staffed by Veterans

Resolved, that the positions of Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Deputy Assistant Secretary of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Regional Administrator for Veterans Employment and Training Service; Director of Veterans Employment and Training Service; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPS) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) be staffed by qualified veterans; and

Further resolved, that DVOPS and LVER positions be full-time and dedicated solely to serving veterans.

No. 629(Commander-in-Chief)—Include Dental Care as Part of the Veterans Uniform Benefits Package

Resolved, that we urge Congress to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide dental care to all enrolled veterans as a part of their Veterans Uniform Benefits Package.

No. 630(Commander-in-Chief)—Improve Veterans Prescription Drug Access

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to fill prescriptions written by private physicians for all veterans enrolled in VA health care.

No. 631(Commander-in-Chief)—Change Disability Pension Eligibility Requirements

Resolved, that we request Congress to change the eligibility requirements for disability pension to include veterans who have received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, the Navy/Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal, the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Combat Medical Badge or the Combat Action Ribbon for operations not falling within an officially designated period of war.

No. 632(Commander-in-Chief)—Repeal of the Montgomery GI Bill Pay Reduction Provision

Resolved, that we hereby petition Congress to repeal the pay reduction provision of the Montgomery GI Bill.

No. 633(Commander-in-Chief)—Place World War II Veterans in Enrollment Priority Category 6 for VA Health Care Purposes

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to include all World War II veterans in at least enrollment Priority Category 6 for VA

health care purposes.

No. 634 (Commander-in-Chief)—Attorney Fee-Based Representation at VA Regional Offices

Resolved, that we inform Congress of our strong opposition to allowing private attorney fee-based representation of veterans during the regional office claims process and appellate proceedings to the Board of Veterans' Appeals; and

Further resolved, that we petition Congress to pass legislation that will relieve the Department of Veterans Affairs from collecting fees directly from veterans disability compensation awards in fulfillment of any fee-based arrangement by the veteran with a private attorney, including those cases involving attorney representation before the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

No. 635 (Commander-in-Chief)—Refund of Montgomery GI Bill Contributions

Resolved, that we urge Congress to change the law to permit a refund of an individual's contribution to the Montgomery GI Bill when the service member receives a "general" or "under honorable conditions" discharge as a result of minor infractions or inefficiency.

No. 636 (Commander-in-Chief)—Additional Benefits and Services to Veterans Children with Spina Bifida

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact a law to provide Vietnam and pertinent Korean veterans children with Spina Bifida Cystica with comprehensive health care coverage that will now include attendant services, independent living services, special adaptive housing and adaptive automobile equipment.

No. 637 (Commander-in-Chief)—VA to Pay for Nursing Home Care in State Homes

Resolved, that we urge Congress to allow state veterans homes, who admit veterans that meet the VA requirements for mandated nursing home care, to receive the same average contract rate paid to private sector nursing homes for providing care to eligible service connected veterans.

No. 638 (Commander-in-Chief)—Military Retiree Survivor Benefit Plan Reduction

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend current law requirements that beneficiaries' annuities be reduced to 35 percent of the base amount and (restore it to 55 percent)—, notwithstanding the beneficiary's entitlement to Social Security.

No. 639 (Commander-in-Chief)—Exempt Priority Group Category 5 from

Paying VA Medication Co-Payments

Resolved, that we urge Congress to provide legislation to exempt all enrollment Priority Category 5 veterans from the requirement to make medication co-payments.

No. 640 (Commander-in-Chief)—Provide Sufficient Funding for the Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists

Resolved, that we urge sufficient funding be made available for the Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists.

No. 641 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support for Veteran and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Business Ventures

Resolved, that we support the statutory requirements of P.L. 106-50 and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation in their endeavors to provide opportunities to veterans.

No. 642 (Commander-in-Chief)—Increase Servicemembers Group Life Insurance

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to increase Servicemembers Group Life Insurance to an amount not less than \$500,000 for each member of the armed forces of the United States of America.

No. 643 (Commander-in-Chief)—Emergency Care Services for all VA Enrolled Veterans

Resolved, that Congress enact legislation to provide emergency medical care services for all VA enrolled veterans with life-threatening situations when VA facilities are not feasibly available.

No. 644 (Commander-in-Chief)—Increase in Special Monthly Compensation

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation to increase the special monthly compensation under Title 38 United States Code § 1114(l) through (s) by an immediate twenty percent above the current base amount and additionally, increase by fifty percent the current base amount of special monthly compensation under 38 U.S.C. § 1114(k).

No. 645 (Commander-in-Chief)—Women Veterans Health Care

Resolved, that VA must ensure laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to women veterans health care are enforced at both the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) and local facility levels; and

Further resolved, that VA needs to increase the priority given to women veterans programs and evaluate which health-care delivery model demonstrates the best clinical outcomes for women; and

Further resolved, that VA needs to increase its outreach efforts to women veterans because female veterans tend to be less aware of their veteran status and eligibility for benefits than male veterans.

No. 646 (Commander-in-Chief)—Uniformed Services Divorce Equity Act
Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that would prohibit forcing a service member from making payments to their former spouse on the date the service member first becomes eligible to receive retired pay if the service member elects to remain in the service; and

Further resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that ensures any increase in retired pay resulting from continued active duty service or promotion after a divorce is final, becomes the sole property of the service member.

No. 647 (Commander-in-Chief)—Minimum Compensation for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus for Combat Veterans

Resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that will authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to amend the Schedule for Rating Disabilities to provide a minimum 10% disability evaluation for any hearing loss or tinnitus for which a hearing aid is medically indicated.

No. 648 (Commander-in-Chief)—Honor Promises to Temporary Early Retirement Authority Retirees

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend present legislation to ensure TERA retirees receive the same benefits as their 20-year counterparts who retired for length of service (to include Combat Related Special Compensation)—.

No. 649 (Commander-in-Chief)—Extend Presumption of Service Connection for Korean Agent Orange Veterans

Resolved, that we urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to invoke his authority under Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to extend the benefits established under Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations § 1116 to veterans who served in Korea in or near the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) during the period September 1, 1967, and ending on August 31, 1971.

No. 650 (Commander-in-Chief)—Provide Grave Liners for all Eligible Beneficiaries who Desire Burial in a National Cemetery

Resolved, that we urge Congress amend Title 38 United States Code § 2306 to allow all eligible beneficiaries who request burial in a national cemetery to be provided a grave liner at no cost to the family.

No. 651 (Department of Arizona)—Provide Funding Support for Post Service Officers

Rejected

No. 652(*Department of California*)—*Establish an Award to Recognize Outstanding VA Employees*
Rejected

No. 653(*Department of California*)—*State Veterans Home Loan Programs*
Rejected

No. 654(*Department of California*)—*National Guard and Reserves*
Resolved, that we go on record urging Congress to enact legislation supporting National Guard and Reserve troops receiving Veterans and Military Benefits, such as TRICARE, in line with their increasing role in the total defense force.

No. 655(*Department of California*)—*Presumption of Service-Connection for Gulf War Veterans*
Rejected

No. 656(*Department of California*)—*Burial Plot Allowance*
Rejected

No. 657(*Department of California*)—*State Veterans Homes*
Rejected

No. 658(*Department of California*)—*Requesting Military Records*
Rejected

No. 659(*Department of Wisconsin*)—*Petition the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense to Establish a Breast Cancer Screening Program*

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Defense (DOD) and other appropriate federal agencies to initiate and develop a comprehensive study to determine if breast cancer is increasing at a faster rate for current or retired military personnel than for the civilian population, with a further determination if there is a greater incidence of breast cancer in those who are, or were, exposed to radioactive materials, chemicals and nuclear generated energy.

No. 660(*Department of Texas*)—*Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service Connected Illnesses Caused By Asbestos Exposure*
Rejected

No. 661(*Department of Texas*)—*Require that TWC Veteran Staff be Veterans and Disabled Outreach Staff be Disabled Veterans*

Rejected

No. 662(Department of Texas)—Retain the Position of DVOP and LVER with the Department of Labor

Rejected

No. 663(Department of Texas)—Require that Vets Positions be Veterans

Rejected

No. 664(Department of Texas)—Require LVER & DVOP Program Staff to Serve only Veterans

Rejected

No. 665(Department of Florida)—Definition for Service-Connection for VA Benefits Purposes

Resolved, that we urge Congress to reject any revision of the standard or definition that would change the terms of VA compensation for disabilities or deaths as a result of service in the armed forces.

No. 666(Department of Florida)—State Veterans Nursing Home Care

Rejected

No. 667(Department of Florida)—Resolution Concerning Burial Plot Allowance

Resolved, that Congress pass legislation increasing the burial plot allowance to \$725.

No. 668(Department of Florida)—State Veterans Home Loan Programs

Rejected

No. 669(Department of Florida)—National Guard and Reserves

Rejected

No. 670(Department of Florida)—Presumption of Service-Connection for Gulf War Veterans

Rejected

No. 671(Department of Florida)—Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service-Connected Illnesses Caused by Asbestos Exposure

Rejected

No. 672(Department of Ohio)—Veterans' Preference in Employment Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DVOPS), Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER), Assistant Secretary Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET), Regional Administrator

Veterans (RAVET), Director Vets (DVET) and Other Vets Staff
Rejected

No. 673(Department of Ohio)—Veterans Employment & Training Service
Rejected

*No. 674(Department of Ohio)—Department of Veterans Affairs
Employment*
Rejected

*No. 675(Department of Ohio)—Veterans' Preference in Federal
Employment*

*Resolved, that we support legislation that would amend Title 5
United States Code to require preference be provided to all honorably
discharged veterans of the United States military.*

*No. 676(Department of Ohio)—Licensing and Certification for Military
Training*
Rejected

*No. 677(Department of Ohio)—Civilian Credentials for Military Training
and Experience*
Rejected

No. 678(Department of Ohio)—Veterans' Preference in Employment
Rejected

*No. 679(Department of Ohio)—Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity
Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability
Compensation*
Rejected

*No. 680(Department of Ohio)—Employee Protection in Employment for
Treatment at VA Facilities*
Rejected

*No. 681(Department of Ohio)—Require that States Make Veterans'
Service Organizations as Mandatory Partners in any State, County or
Local Board Organized to Provide in Federally Funded Employment and
Training Programs*
Rejected

*No. 682(Department of Ohio)—Support Job Protection for Service
Connected Disabled Veterans Requiring Visits at VA Facilities*
Rejected

No. 683(*Department of Ohio*)—*Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Eligibility*
Rejected

No. 684(*Department of Ohio*)—*Reaffirm Support for the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP)— for all Separating and Retiring Military Personnel*

Resolved, we reaffirm our strong support of the Transition Assistance Program; and

Further resolved, that the Department of Defense require all separating, active-duty service members be given an opportunity to participate in Transition Assistance Program training not less than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement from the armed forces.

No. 685(*Department of Ohio*)—*Reaffirm Support for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)*

Resolved, we support legislation to reauthorize the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act program; and seek adequate funding for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act.

No. 686(*Department of Ohio*)—*Support Improvements of Veterans Employment and Training Service (Department of VETS) Performance Standards*
Rejected

No. 687(*Department of Virginia*)—*State Veterans Nursing Homes*
Rejected

No. 688(*Department of Virginia*)—*Increase the Federal Burial Plot Allowance*
Rejected

No. 689(*Department of Virginia*)—*Respect Obligations to Survivor Benefit Plan Beneficiaries*

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend Title 31 United States Code § 3102(1)(A) to remove the requirement that survivor benefits be subject to the six-year statute of limitations.

No. 690(*Department of Virginia*)—*Commissary and Exchange Privileges for Purple Heart Recipients, Disabled Veterans, and their Dependents, as a way for America to say Thank You*

Resolved, that we support lifetime Commissary and Exchange privileges for all recipients of the Purple Heart Medal, for all veterans with a disability rating of 30% or more incurred in the line of duty, and their dependents.

No. 691 (Department of Virginia)—*Service Officer Support for Concurrent Recipients*
Rejected

No. 692 (Department of Arkansas)—*Discounted Drug Prices*
Resolved, that while we support efforts to provide less expensive drugs to America's citizens, the VFW opposes any legislation at the federal, state, or local level that undermines veterans' benefits.

No. 693 (Department of Connecticut)—*Prescription Drug Benefit to all Veterans*
Rejected

No. 694 (Department of Minnesota)—*Definition for Service Connection for VA Benefits Purposes*
Rejected

No. 695 (Department of Minnesota)—*No Contracting of Twin Ports VA Outpatient Clinic*
Rejected

No. 696 (Department of Louisiana)—*Establish a National Trust Fund to Compensate Veterans for Service Connected Illnesses Caused by Asbestos Exposure*

Resolved, that we support the establishment of a national trust fund to replace the existing tort system for compensating veterans, their families and others suffering from asbestos related illnesses; and

Further resolved, the national trust fund will fairly compensate veterans suffering from asbestos related illnesses, and as appropriate, their dependents and survivors; and

Further resolved, that veterans will be compensated through the national trust fund on a no-fault basis thereby ending the vagaries and lengthy delays of the current tort bankrupt system; and

Further resolved, that the national trust fund established to compensate asbestos victims shall not replace, offset or diminish current benefits available to veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs compensation system.

No. 697 (Department of Louisiana)—*Memorial Burial Flag*
Rejected

No. 698 (Department of Michigan)—*Presumption of Service Connection for Melanoma with Related Disabilities*

Resolved, that we request the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to ask for a National Academy of Science review of available medical data

on melanoma as it relates to herbicide exposure.

No. 699 (Department of Michigan)—Government Headstones

Resolved, that we petition Congress to amend Public Law 107-103 to allow the purchase of a government headstone at an applicant's own expense through the government contractors for those interred prior to the enactment of Public Law 107-103.

No. 700 (Department of Michigan)—United States Flag for Burial Purpose
Rejected

No. 701 (Department of Alaska)—Amend Internal Revenue Code for the State Veterans Home Mortgage Bond Program

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend Title 26 United States Code to allow veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces after January 1, 1977, to be eligible for the Veterans Home Mortgage Program.

No. 702 (Department of Connecticut)—Furnish Headstones or Markers for the Marked Graves of Certain Individuals

Resolved, that we support amending Public Law 107-103 to allow the Department of Veterans Affairs to furnish a government headstone or marker to eligible veterans who died between January 1, 1990 and September 10, 2001, notwithstanding the fact that the graves are already marked with a private marker.

No. 703 (Department of Massachusetts)—Support for VA Paying its Fair Share of the Cost of Caring for Veterans Residing in State Veterans Home Programs

Rejected

No. 704 (Department of Europe)—Veterans Employment Preference with the U.S. Government Overseas

Rejected

No. 705 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support for a Memorial Commemorating the Sacrifices of America's Disabled Veterans

Resolved, that we support the construction of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial to honor the sacrifices of those veterans disabled in military service to their country.

No. 706 (Commander-in-Chief)—Sexual Trauma Care

Resolved, that we do not condone sexual assault and trauma currently so prevalent in the military; and

Further resolved, that VA establish a permanent VA program for all veterans who need sexual trauma treatment with no limitations or

restrictions placed on access to VA sexual trauma treatment services regardless of their length of service or reserve status.

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Michigan	Jackie L. Pickard	2780
Minnesota	Patrick T. Bohmer	246
Minnesota	Thomas G. Tweet	1296
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Mississippi	Johnnie L. Richard	2539
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Missouri	T. J. Lundy	473
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New York	William P. Juteau	502
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Pennsylvania	John A. Biedrzycki	418
Pennsylvania	Allen Q. Jones	21
Pennsylvania	Norman F. Rettig, Jr	249
Rhode Island	Armondo C. Azzinaro	8955
South Carolina	Johnny L. Wilson	4262
South Dakota	Delane E. Fickbohm	6149
Tennessee	William A. Mc Nairy	4577
Tennessee	Thomas A. Nolen, Jr	4939
Tennessee	Jon A. Witmer	684
Texas	William D. Bell	6873
Texas	Roy J. Grona	3377
Texas	Rudolph J. Ostovich	4747
Texas	Daniel L. Zitterich	5254
Utah	Frederick D. Jones	1481
Vermont	Frank A. Hickory	792
Vermont	Reginald K. Mongeur	6674
Virginia	Leon J. Fields	4522
Virginia	Gerald E. Jonas	1811
Virginia	W. J. Leonard	7327
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Washington	Richard A. Whipple	2886
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Illinois	John A. Metzger	2671
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Indiana	Leon Craven, Jr	6636
Indiana	Donald D. Dwelly	2695
Indiana	Stanley M. Hunt	2536
Indiana	Richard A. Lynch	3418
Indiana	Jerry R. Walling	2689

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Iowa	Theodore I. Ostby	7920
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Kansas	Russell R. Cutright	1650
Kansas	Robert B. Greene, Jr	7397
Kansas	Lawrence D. Tholen	2864
Kansas	Stephen L. Van Buskirk	7397
Kentucky	James W. Bates	5829
Kentucky	Cecil W. Caruso	10281
Kentucky	Alexander J. Feher	5171
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Massachusetts	Joseph E. Caouette	1105
Massachusetts	Michael J. Gormalley	2016
Massachusetts	Ronald A. Patalano	529
Massachusetts	Edward C. Walsh	6712
Michigan	Garry J. Goff	2406
Michigan	David S. Miller	3925
Michigan	Robert E. Schank	4164
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Minnesota	Louie R. Mrozek	6316
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Missouri	David Cartner	3174
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	4050
Missouri	Paul G. Jones	2866
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
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Montana	John W. Mahan	1116
Montana	James D. Matter	497
Nebraska	Rolland E. Hild	8334
Nebraska	Gerald L. Ludwig	7998
Nevada	James R. Parsons	10047
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New Hampshire	Robert W. Madigan	483
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New Jersey	James W. Manning	2639
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New York	Philip C. Schiffman	8691
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North Carolina	Colon J. Warren	9103
North Dakota	Ted A. Krogen	2328
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Ohio	Michael L. Hughes	3035

Ohio	Gregorio J. Vela	7424
Ohio	John Wasylik	2529
Oklahoma	William C. Bender	4446
Oregon	Harold C. Jordan	3965
Pacific Areas	Otis G. Montgomery	9957
Pacific Areas	Rhett O. Webber	9892
Pennsylvania	Theodore E. Bowers	8896
Pennsylvania	Allen R. Broadwater	8826
Pennsylvania	Roland J. Gallagher	6704
Pennsylvania	John M. Gunn, Sr	2506
Pennsylvania	Frank G. Mills	1754
Rhode Island	Robert J. Rocheleau	1271
South Carolina	Rodney J. Burne	3447
South Dakota	Dale L. Jensen	628
South Dakota	Linda M. Nelson	791
South Dakota	Larry L. Scudder	1273
Tennessee	Raul B. Hernandez	4730
Tennessee	William E. Jackson	684
Tennessee	Gary W. Whitlock	5266
Texas	C. W. Buchanan	3892
Texas	Buddi C. Harlan	4010
Texas	Manfred J. Knapp	2544
Texas	Donald D. Rhode	8790
Utah	Vernon R. Wade	3586
Vermont	Allan C. Brown	758
Virginia	John W. King	5500
Washington	Charles E. Vitiritti, Jr	9430
Washington	James A. Woods	318
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West Virginia	Wesley J. Thomas	573
Wisconsin	Gary J. Erickson	2344
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Illinois	Matthew M. Mihelcic	7980
Indiana	Gregory L. Baker	6978
Indiana	Kenneth A. Hullinger	7205
Indiana	Omar F. Kendall	673
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Iowa	Robert C. Peters	5981
Iowa	Donald W. Roepke	8884
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Michigan	Robert G. Black	9283
Michigan	Larry A. Coleman	1888
Michigan	William A. Dobbie	4659
Michigan	Lawrence Le Febvre	552
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Minnesota	Lester G. Orton	363
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North Carolina	Raymond J. Yamrus	7318
North Dakota	Richard J. Belling	7564
North Dakota	Allen C. Rusch	762
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Ohio	Mark O. Pheister	9473
Ohio	Gerald J. Ward	5713
Oklahoma	Billie D. Mc Gill	3077
Oklahoma	Richard K. Pack	5263
Oregon	Hubert A. Marsh	1383
Pacific Areas	Michael R. Jugan	8180

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South Carolina	Richard N. Bell	4262
South Carolina	William J. Jolin	6087
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South Dakota	Stanley E. Seymour	5860
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Georgia	Randy L. Mc Elroy	2872
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Hawaii	Nicholas S T. Young	1540
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Illinois	Maurice H. Kerckhove	2153
Illinois	Curtis E. Martyn	9773

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Illinois	Russell R. Rieke	5694
Illinois	Dale D. Roach	8350
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Indiana	Roman Chang	10003
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Iowa	Donald L. Gilbert	733
Iowa	Robert S. Randall	839
Kansas	Charles L. Brown	7437
Kansas	Buddy J. Haney	56
Kansas	Roger H. Sellers	6654
Kentucky	John K. Doelker	3636
Latin Amer/Carib	Dannie Cooper	3822
Louisiana	Landry E. Saucier	1736
Louisiana	Russell K. Shoemaker	3375
Maine	Philip M. Farrell	11299
Maine	Arthur J. Roy	1603
Maryland	Maurice L. Bishop	6054
Maryland	Daniel R. Williams	5370
Massachusetts	William J. Shea	3236
Massachusetts	Joseph S. Stavolta	1272
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Michigan	Kenneth E. Mader	1669
Michigan	Douglas E. Masseau	701
Minnesota	Daniel Bartholomew	230
Minnesota	Steven P. Sanders	1403
Minnesota	John L. Shalloe	8510
Mississippi	Louis M. Tanksley	9122
Missouri	Oliver R. Bergschneider	30
Missouri	Robert W. Craig	4043
Missouri	Charles F. Thrower, Jr	3838
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Nebraska	Eric G. Williams	7102
Nevada	Gilbert Hernandez	2350
Nevada	Walter Lewis	1002
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North Carolina	Douglas L. Seay	4309

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Ohio	Ronald D. Smith	7340
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Oklahoma	Henry L. Privette	8798
Oregon	Norman M. Henshen	7384
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Pennsylvania	Victor Aldinger, Jr	2493
Pennsylvania	Dwight R. Fuhrman	8896
Pennsylvania	Charles H. Prince	8826
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Rhode Island	Fred P. Prendergast	5390
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South Carolina	Louis A. Thornton	4262
South Dakota	Arnold J. Heggstad	4674
South Dakota	Dick L. Pickering	4726
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Tennessee	Herschel J. Sharp	8682
Tennessee	Kenneth N. Van Hook	5669
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Texas	Henry A. Lavigne	10351
Texas	Alexander Vernon	9191
Texas	Ferrell E. Warden	8552
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Virginia	G. R. Faris	8467
Virginia	Robert D. Manhan	7327
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West Virginia	Scottie E. King	1064
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Wisconsin	George J. Stevens	8400
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Connecticut	Joseph H. Perry	10004
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Du	Forest D. Edsall	27
Florida	John M. Carney	4643
Florida	William R. Kirsop	8083
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Florida	Kenneth A. Thie	9272
Florida	Michael J. White	3559
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Georgia	Joe T. Wood	8452
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Idaho	Ernest J. Shine	63
Illinois	Ken Pemberton	2244
Illinois	Donald L. Porter	2055
Illinois	William H. Regan	2287
Illinois	Vernon A. Soukup	7452
Indiana	Paul D. Curtice	1257
Iowa	Clinton L. Hoferman	6172

Iowa	Patrick J. Shanahan	788
Kansas	Lonnie R. Graham	7521
Kansas	Tom G. Sanko	1714
Kentucky	J. M. Temple	680
Latin Amer/Carib	Darryl S. Dalley	3822
Louisiana	Joseph Demahy	4201
Louisiana	Larry W. Rivers	1736
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Maine	John N. Trembley	3381
Maryland	Franklin A. Burchill	521
Maryland	John J. Gistedt	2678
Massachusetts	Richard L. De Noyer	1012
Massachusetts	Alan J. Hassig	29
Massachusetts	John J. Robarge	2425
Michigan	Charles R. Abner	9885
Michigan	Edmund R. Gucwa	6896
Michigan	Norman R. Mikkelsen	3256
Michigan	Edgar H. Robinson	2144
Minnesota	Jimmie L. Coulthard	6690
Minnesota	Thomas L. Hanson	1639
Minnesota	Stephen J. O`Connor	4114
Mississippi	Gene T. Carroll	4800
Missouri	Stoestle P. Avery	1894
Missouri	Thomas J. Hartman	35
Missouri	Jerry F. Jones	1829
Nebraska	Darrel R. Johns	5547
Nebraska	James H. Pierce	5547
Nebraska	Gary C. Steckelberg	7419
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New Hampshire	Billy J. Floyd	1631
New Hampshire	Robert T. St Onge	8214
New Jersey	Harry D. Crane	6255
New Jersey	William A. Goode	809
New Jersey	Theodore P. Sypko	335
New Jersey	George T. Van Allen	7504
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New Mexico	Joe D. Salas	401
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New York	William E. Mc Garr	6196
New York	Thomas J. Todaro, Jr	53
North Carolina	James C. Costin	10999
North Carolina	Preston F. Garris	2615
North Carolina	Gene D. Kent	7034
North Dakota	Wallace B. Bolte	1326
Ohio	James W. Dickens	5532
Ohio	Jacob R. Nekich	1662

Ohio	Allen R. Pardon	5803
Oklahoma	Herman O. Allmendinger	1843
Oklahoma	Dean Derieg	4613
Oklahoma	Robert B. Gomeringer, Sr	4876
Oregon	Dennis G. Guthrie	4108
Pacific Areas	Peter A. Callaghan	3457
Pacific Areas	William H. Wichmann	727
Pennsylvania	Neale H. Deibler	6493
Pennsylvania	Ronald G. Herman	8951
Pennsylvania	Franklin E. Lopes	92
Pennsylvania	Albert S. Thomas, Jr	974
Pennsylvania	Ronald G. Tyler, Sr	1462
Rhode Island	Salvatore J. Capirchio	2396
Rhode Island	Brenda L. Gomez	2396
Rhode Island	Frank E. Lightowler	6342
South Carolina	Lyn D. Dimery	10420
South Carolina	M. H. Gunter, Jr	8738
South Carolina	Ernest N. Russell, Jr	8738
South Dakota	Marvin M. Czerwonka	1273
South Dakota	James M. Matson	3312
Tennessee	Henry P. Applegate	9851
Tennessee	Dwight W. Gale	8422
Tennessee	Ramsey P. Locke	5066
Tennessee	Charles K. Miller	5156
Tennessee	James E. O`Neill	4641
Texas	Gailon K. Fletcher	3893
Texas	Donald L. Harwood	6794
Texas	Danny R. Henry	4372
Texas	William B. Moody	2034
Vermont	Samuel R. Haskins	1034
Vermont	Kevin T. Maloney	6689
Virginia	Dennis M. Cullinan	7916
Virginia	J. Gary Wagner	3150
Washington	Donald E. Bracken	2289
Washington	Andrew J. Martin	10018
West Virginia	Randall L. Bare	6669
West Virginia	Melvin L. Reed	573
Wisconsin	Richard L. Brye	10532
Wisconsin	William F. Hustad	10549
Wisconsin	Thomas J. Tradewell, Sr	6498

