109th Congress, 2nd Session.....House Document 109-148

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 106th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

[SUMMARY OF MINUTES]

Salt Lake City, Utah : : : August 20 - August 25, 2005

109th Congress, 2nd Session.....House Document 109-148

PROCEEDINGS

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106th ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

OF THE UNITED STATES

(SUMMARY OF MINUTES)

Salt Lake City, Utah

August 20-25, 2005

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

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NATIONAL ENCAMPMENTS OF VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS; PROCEEDINGS PRINTED ANNUALLY FOR CONGRESS

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,
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, OCTOBER, 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 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 20-25, 2005, which is submitted for printing as a House Document.

Sincerely,

Allen "Gunner" Kent
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. Irvin 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.

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 Olreans, 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 Olreans, Louisiana.
1968-1969	Richard W. Homan	Elected 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. Soden	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1974-1975	John J. Stang	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1975-1976	Thomas C. Walker	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1976-1977	R.D. Smith Jr.	Elected at New York, New York.
1977-1978	Dr. John Wasylik	Elected at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1978-1979	Eric Sandstrom	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1979-1980	Howard E. Vander Clute Jr.*	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1980-1981	T.C. Selman*	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	Succeeded T.C. Selman, Oct. 21, 1980.
1980-1981	Arthur Fellwock	Elected at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
1982-1983	James R. Currieo	Elected at Los Angeles, California.
1983-1984	Clifford G. Olson Jr.	Elected at New Olreans, Louisiana.
1984-1985	Billy Ray Cameron	Elected at Chicago, Illinois.
1985-1986	John S. Staum	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1986-1987	Norman G. Staab	Elected 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. Hogan	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1990-1991	James L. Kimery*	Elected at Baltimore, Maryland.
1991-1992	Robert E. Wallace	Elected at New Orleans, Louisiana.
1992-1993	John M. Carney	Elected at Indianapolis, Indiana.
1993-1994	George R. Cramer	Elected at Dallas, Texas.
1994-1995	Allen F. “Gunner” Kent	Elected at Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995-1996	Paul A. Spera	Elected at Phoenix, Arizona.
1996-1997	James E. Nier	Elected 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. Smart	Elected at Kansas City, Missouri
2000-2001	John F. Gwizdak	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2001-2002	James N. Goldsmith	Elected at Milwaukee, Wisconsin
2002-2003	Raymond C. Sisk	Elected at Nashville, Tennessee
2003-2004	Edward S. Banas, Sr.	Elected at San Antonio, Texas
2004-2005	John Furgess	Elected at Cincinnati, Ohio
2005-2006	James R. Mueller	Elected at Salt Lake City, Utah

Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .John Furgess
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .James R. Mueller
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .Gary L. Kurpius
Adjutant General. . . . . .John J. Senk, Jr.
Quartermaster General . . . . . .*Joe L. Ridgley
Quartermaster General . . . . . .Lawrence M. Maher
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 & 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
Assistant Quartermaster General . . . . . .Robert B. Greene
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
Director, Administration, Washington . . . . . .Edward L. "Leo" Andrew
Director, Public Affairs, Washington . . . . . .Joseph E. Davis
Director, Employment Service . . . . . .James N. Magill
Director, National Legislative Service . . . . . .Dennis M. Cullinan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs . . . . . .*Robert D. Manhan
Director, National Security & Foreign Affairs . . . . . .Michael Wysong
National Service Officer & Director,
National Veterans Service . . . . . .William L. Bradshaw
Manager, Information Technology . . . . . .* Alan F. Jones
Manager, National Convention & Meetings . . . . . .Vanessa Kane, CMP
*Retired **Moved to new position

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
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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 LATAM/CAR PAC AREAS) . . . . . .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
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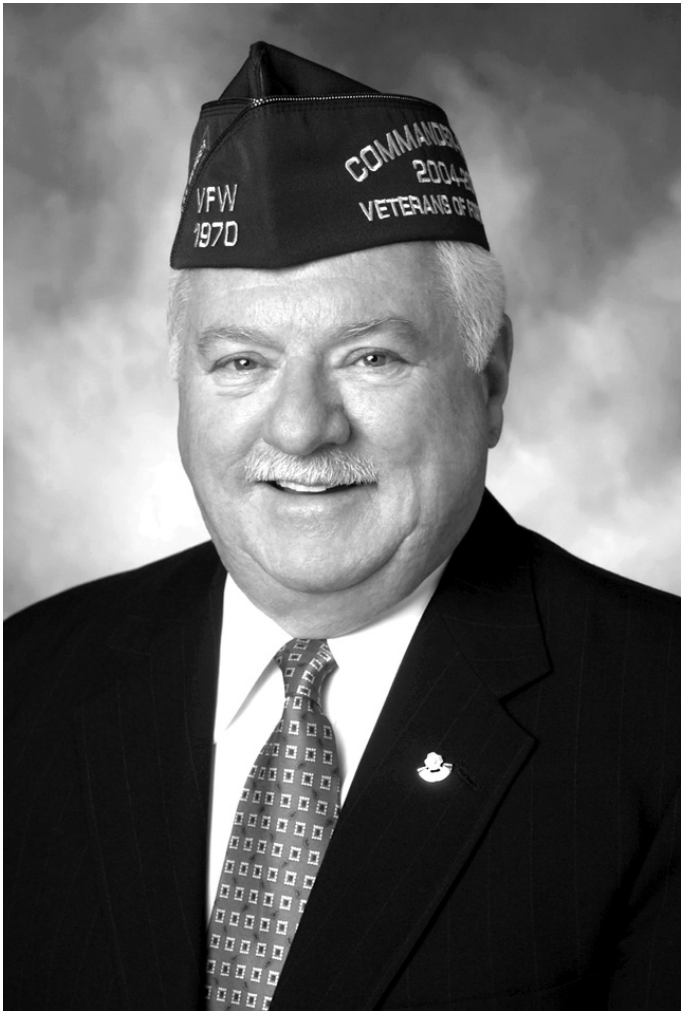
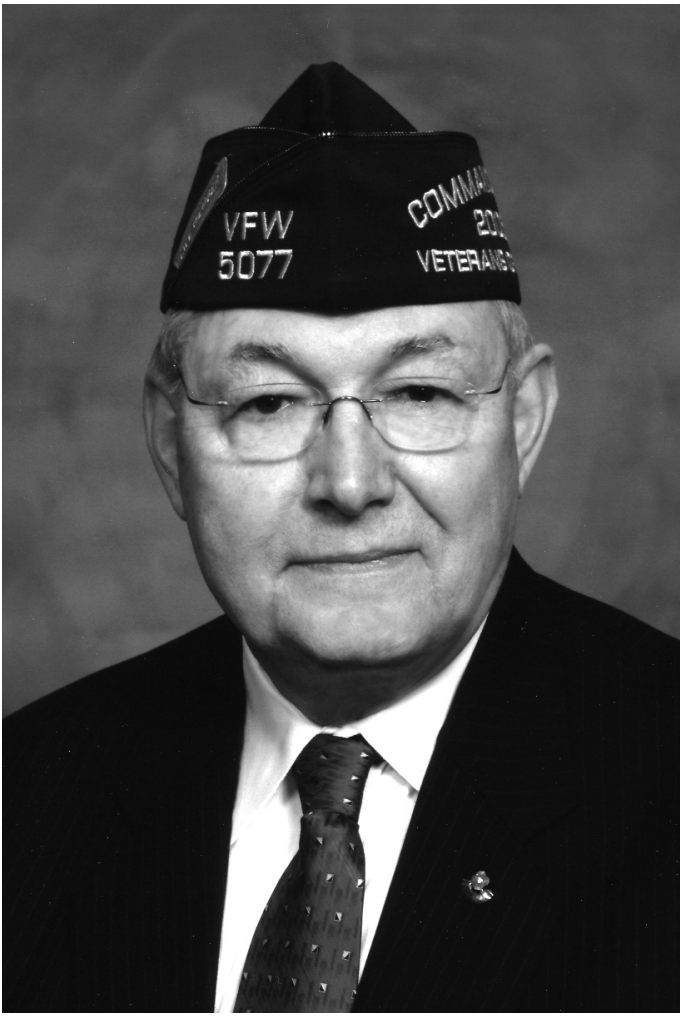
District B (IL) . . . . . .William H. Regan
District C (NY) . . . . . .Anthony M. Ferrarese
District D (OH) . . . . . .Gregorio J. Vela
District F (MI) . . . . . .David S. Miller
District G (CA) . . . . . .John L. Fitzke
District H (TX) . . . . . .Danny R. Henry
District J (FL) . . . . . .Harvey F. Eckhoff
Past Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .Edward S. Banas, Sr.



John Furgess
Commander-in-Chief
2004-2005



James R. Mueller
Commander-in-Chief
2005-2006

VFW NATIONAL OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS, 2005-2006

Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .James R. Mueller
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .Gary L. Kurpius
Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief . . . . . .George J. Lisicki
Adjutant General . . . . . .Allen F. (Gunner) Kent
Quartermaster General . . . . . .Lawrence M. Maher
Judge Advocate General . . . . . .Richard F. Therrien
Surgeon General . . . . . .Linda J. Fairbank
National Chaplain . . . . . .Dean Derieg
National Chief of Staff . . . . . .John L. Dahman
Inspector General . . . . . .Dan G. Petersen
Assistant Adjutant General & Executive Director
Washington Office . . . . . .Robert E. Wallace
Assistant Adjutant General-Operations . . . . . .John J. McNeill
Assistant Quartermaster General/
Chief Information Officer . . . . . .Robert B. Greene
Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General-
Operations . . . . . .Robert W. Crow
Senior Director, Administration . . . . . .Lawrence LeFebvre
Senior Director, Development . . . . . .Ronald G. Browning
Senior Director, Foundation . . . . . .Michael J. Gormalley
Director, Administrative Operations . . . . . .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
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2005-2006

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SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE 106TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH AUGUST 20-25, 2005

ANNUAL MEMORIAL SERVICE SUNDAY, AUGUST 21, 2005

(The Memorial Service of the 106th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, held at the LDS Conference Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, was called to order at 10:30 o'clock a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, presiding. The Gold Star parents, Gold Star wives and Past National Chaplains were escorted by the Sergeants-at-Arms.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and sisters, it is my honor to call into session this morning this wonderful tradition of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary, the Annual Memorial Service at the National Convention.

At this time I would like to ask the National Sergeant-at-Arms to prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors.

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS BARRY HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. All rise, please.

ADVANCE OF COLORS

(Whereupon, the VFW National Honor Guard advanced the Colors, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and the Star-Spangled Banner.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and sisters, at this time please be seated. We are so honored this morning to have the world renowned Mormon Tabernacle Choir to sing at this time "God of Our Father Whose Almighty Hand."

INVOCATION

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, will you now at this time please stand for the Invocation by Past Chaplain Bishop Boyd Winterton.

PAST NATIONAL CHAPLAIN WINTERTON: Our Eternal Father, who art in heaven, it is with humility and gratitude in our hearts that we assemble in this beautiful edifice, this locale so rich in history and tradition. In the shadows of these everlasting hills, as we meet at this appointed hour, we invoke a blessing upon all who shall participate in the ensuing program.

We acknowledge in retrospect many accomplishments of the past, while constantly responsibilities of the future. We are reminded in the Book of Ecclesiastics that to everything under the heaven there is a season and a

time to every purpose. There is a time for sorrow, and a time to hate, a time of war and a time of peace.

It is during this hour of peace and tranquility that we pause and take leave from our labors to honor those who have given so much on behalf of so many, and those today who continue to bear the scars from the past. May we today press forward with steadfast purpose and brightness of hope, harkening to St. Francis of Assisi: Make me an instrument of Thy peace.

But help us today to do so from a position of strength. May each of us in attendance magnify that spark of divinity. When you are in the service of your fellow beings, you are only in the service of your God. May that experience inspire us today, motivate us toward new heights not yet achieved. This Memorial Service is so humble in the most worthy name of God of Abraham and in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Please be seated. Comrades, Ladies of the Auxiliary and friends, we have met at this hour to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call. The Ritual of the Veterans of Foreign Wars provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Chief of Staff will see that there is no disturbance during this ceremony.

NATIONAL CHIEF OF STAFF RONNIE DAVIS: Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I request that the National Chaplain preside.

(National Chaplain Theodore Bowers presided during the Memorial Services performed by the national officers in accordance with the Ritual.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN THEODORE BOWERS: Now at this time the Mormon Tabernacle Choir will present us with "Sleep Soldier Boy".

(Whereupon, the Tabernacle Choir sang "Sleep Soldier Boy" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: I was just informed this morning that "Sleep Soldier Boy", the official hymn of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, was written by a woman from the great state of Utah.

(At the conclusion of the symbolic tribute performed by the national officers in accordance with the Ritual, the Tabernacle Choir sang "God Bless America.")

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I know you want to applaud. In January, 2005, Jim Matheson was sworn in for a third term representing Utah's Second Congressional District, which comprises the eastern half of Salt Lake City County, the northern tip of Utah County, and 14 eastern and northern Utah counties. It also includes the most popular southern Utah City, St. George.

Congressman Matheson is a sixth-generation Utahan, who was born and reared in Salt Lake City. Jim, his sister and two brothers, all attended Salt Lake City public schools. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Government from Harvard University and his MBA from UCLA.

Before his election to Congress, he worked in the energy industry for 13 years for several local companies and his own firm. His wife, Amy, is a pediatrician, and they have a son, Will. Congressman Matheson.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS

CONGRESSMAN MATHESON: It is an honor and a privilege for me to address you today. We gather today to pay tribute to courage and to sacrifice. We remember the heroes who faithfully answered duty's call. We extend our condolence to the families and friends who bereave. We pray for those who have passed on as well as for those who must keep going. We treasure the memories of soldiers who died too young as well as the living history of the great warriors who are here among us.

General Dwight Eisenhower said, "Freedom has its life in the heart, the actions, the spirit of men, and so it must be daily earned and refreshed, else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die." All the honorable national virtues that made men and women willing to sacrifice themselves in our past wars have blossomed in America since the attack of September 11. Our all-volunteer Army is joined in ever greater numbers by the hometown units of the National Guard and Reservists. They are the very depths and brightest men and women that make up this country.

I have had the emotional privilege in this job to shake the hands and look into the eyes of those citizen soldiers as they head off to war. They do not complain. They march steadfastly towards danger. They are so young. At Walter Reed Medical Center, where I go to visit our injured troops, I see profiles of courage.

Recently, I met a 19-year-old field artillery soldier from Georgia who had just arrived in the hospital. He had lost an arm in combat in Iraq and he had just emerged from surgery. But he spoke cheerfully about his future. Another patient I met was a young tank commander blown off a bridge by an enemy bomb. He told me he needs to be back in Iraq so that he can lead his unit and bring them home.

Another said he remembered nothing from the time he was involved in the explosion until weeks after his evacuation, and that his heart stopped twice during surgery. His survival, his friend told him, means that God has more work for him to do. Bombs and bullets have taken a physical toll on our young soldiers, but their resolve remains unfazed. I am awed by the depth of their devotion to their fellow soldiers and to their missions. They do us proud.

America's staunch ally of terrorism is British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who in an address to the United States Congress said, "We are so much more powerful in all conventional ways than the terrorists, yet even in all our might we are taught humility."

In the end, it is not our power alone that will defeat this evil. Our weapon is not our government, but our belief. I see those beliefs embodied in our men and women in uniform today. I see those beliefs embodied in our veterans, in their faces, in your faces, in the names of the dead on our Monuments. We are able to calculate the price of freedom. It is a cost we bear, but one we must never take for granted.

General Douglas MacArthur, in a speech he gave at West Point,

noted that the soldier, above all other people, prays for peace for he must suffer and bear their deepest wounds and scars of war. I know that many Utahans, especially that are gold stars, purple hearts, folded flags, and last letters from home, such prayers are fervently offered each and every day. We all pray for an end to this war and all wars, so the future generations might not bear such a terrible loss.

We honor our heroes, not only because they are worthy of our honor, but also by recalling their sacrifice we remind ourselves and our leaders to avoid mistakes that could unnecessarily lead future generations into harm's way. The world is a much smaller place than it was when we sent Utahans across the wide ocean to fight in trenches.

We now have seen the destruction of the 21st Century threat, one that strikes from the shadows and then hides in lawless parts of the world. How like American soldiers to step up, confront this new enemy and take on this daunting task. I believe that we can never say thank you enough to the men and women who don the country's uniform and service ideals that we value. I take the responsibility in supporting their efforts very seriously.

I am grateful to the VFW for sponsoring this 106th Annual Memorial Service today. I feel what Walter Lippmann wrote at the grave side of a father and son killed together in battle during the Civil War. "The moon gives you life and the bugles and the drums give you music; and my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans, my heart gives you love." Thank you so much for your service and thank you for your sacrifice. May God bless our soldiers and their families.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Now, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir will present and perform the inspiring hymn "Battle Hymn of the Republic".

(Whereupon, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" at this time.)

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Remain standing now for the Benediction that will be offered by the Wisconsin State Chaplain, Charlene Cobb, followed by the taps.

BENEDICTION

WISCONSIN STATE CHAPLAIN COBB: It is always a privilege to take time to remember our loved ones and celebrate their service and sacrifice. We pause today to remember all they have meant to us and the vital role they played in our great country.

Our presence here keeps their memories alive and focuses our priorities on the truly important things of this life, freedom, family, friends. Our departed are not just some and daughters, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers.

This Memorial Service is very personal. My dad, a World War II veteran, a Purple Heart recipient, passed away on the 21st of July. We miss them and mourn our lives without their presence. We come here today to celebrate those lives and pay homage to the difference they have made in this world and in our lives.

When our country calls, they answered willingly to give every-

thing. If we stop to think about that, the pride I feel for our veterans and their families is overwhelming. One minute they are children playing, not a care in the world, and the next they are defending an ideal ready to sacrifice everything also that we can live free.

We owe all those who have gone before and everyone here in this room, and especially those currently in harm's way, for the freedoms we enjoy. Let's pray.

Lord, we humbly come into your presence to thank you for the time we had with our loved ones. We ask that you give us your peace. Let our hearts be full of the memories we cherish. Keep us from the despair of our loss and comfort us as we mourn them. Everyone and everything belongs to you, and we are only stewards for a short time.

Help us to understand your will, and when we don't, to have the faith that you are in control and everything works together to fulfill your will. You have promised that nothing, no trial will befall us that you have not ordained and that with the trial you will be there so that we can bear it.

Turn our sorrow and our loss into a celebration of their lives and what they have gained. Relieve from the cares of this world and life everlasting. We are truly blessed to live in this country and to call those in this company our comrades and sisters.

I entreat you to make our lives an example for future generations to admire and emulate. Be with us. Give us the strength to carry on and continue the fight until everyone in this world knows the freedoms we enjoy. Make us ever mindful of the privilege we have here and keep us faithful in guarding our freedom lest we lose them through neglect. As we depart, keep us in your perfect care so that we can have the peace that surpasses all understanding. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

(Whereupon, the Taps were played at this time.)

RETIRING OF COLORS

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the Gold Star Parents, Gold Star Wives and Past National Chaplains from the room.This concludes our Memorial Service. Thank you for your attendance. Enjoy your convention.

(Whereupon, the Memorial Service was concluded at 11:30 o'clock a.m.)

JOINT OPENING SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2005

(The Joint Opening Session of the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and the 92nd National Convention of the Ladies Auxiliary, was called to order on Monday, August 22, 2005, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., in the Salt Lake Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, by Comrade Donald Myers, Chairman of the VFW 106th National Convention Committee.)

DEDICATION OF CONVENTION

ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN SENK: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am John Senk, the Adjutant General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Welcome to this Joint Opening Session of the 106th VFW National Convention.

Joining us this morning are the Commanders and Auxiliary Presidents of the 2004-2005 Outstanding Community Service Posts. Please stand as a group and be recognized. (Applause) Thank you for all of your hard work.

This year,190 Commanders have earned the right to be called All Americans. Now, 33 Department Commanders and 36 of the top District and Post Commanders are with us today. Commanders, please stand and let us recognize you. (Applause) Let us show our appreciation to the Ogden State band and Weber State University ensemble. (Applause) The group is under the direction of Tom Root and will also be performing tomorrow at our Patriotic Rally.

It is now time to officially open the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Please welcome this year's National Convention Chairman, from the great state of Utah, Don B. Myers. (Applause)

WELCOME

COMRADE DONALD B. MYERS (Convention Chairman): On behalf of myself and all those that are working so hard to make this convention a great success, I welcome you to Salt Lake City with sincere hope that 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

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

COMRADE MYERS (Convention Chairman): For this morning's Invocation, we have the National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars

of the United States, Theodore Bowers.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Gracious and Righteous God, be with us as we gather for this, our 106th National Convention. We ask your blessing upon the work of our convention. May your wisdom and counsel guide us in our decisions. We ask for strength and for the ability to do the tasks you set before us.

May our activities be counted as among the good deeds that please you. Keep us concerned about the welfare and improvement of our great organization dedicated to the service and honor of our veterans. Teach us to think wisely and carefully before we speak; to act with courage and conviction for the good of all; and to deal charitably with one another that we may continue to enjoy mutual respect.

So may we serve you in spirit and in truth that our accomplishments will be built upon the firm foundation of charity and justice. Thus may our work in our private sessions bring credit to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary and be of benefit to those we seek to serve.

We pause now to remember our men and women in the armed service in harm's way. Give them faith, courage and the comfort of knowing they are loved and respected, and a sense of your presence in the midst of their duties and responsibilities. We give you all glory, honor and praise, now and forever more. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COMRADE MYERS (Convention Chairman): Please remain standing as we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, and the singing of the National Anthem, and the posting of the Colors.

(Whereupon, the assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the National Anthem presented by Ladies Auxiliary President JoAnne Ott.)

COMRADE MYERS (Convention Chairman): National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now post the Colors.

(Whereupon, the Colors were posted at this time.)

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

COMRADE MYERS (Convention Chairman): The house lights will now dim for a special presentation.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

(Whereupon, a video presentation was given at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN FURGESS

COMRADE MYERS (Convention Chairman): It is now my pleasure to introduce a gentleman who has served veterans of for many years and is now our Commander-in-Chief.

John served in the U.S. Army from 1965-70 and continued in the Tennessee Army National Guard until 1993 when he retired with the rank of Colonel. In Vietnam, he served in a military intelligence unit with the Americal Division's headquarters at Chu Lai He was awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, among other awards during his 28 years in uniform.

In 1970, John joined VFW Post 1970 in Nashville, Tennessee, where he became a Life Member in 1974. He has served in various positions within the VFW including Post Commander, District Commander and State Commander in 1978-79, becoming Tennessee's first Vietnam veteran to hold that office. He served as a member of the VFW National Council of Administration in 1999-2001, and has been appointed to numerous national committees.

He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro in 1965. He graduated from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1979.

John is a Life Member of Disabled American Veterans, AmVets, and the Military Officer's Association of America. He is a long-time member of the American Legion in Nashville and the Americal Division Veterans Association. He is currently serving on the Veterans Employment and Training Service Advisory Committee of the U.S. Department of Labor.

John retired in October, 2002, from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs where he served as Assistant Commissioner for 20 years, supervising 11 field offices.

Please welcome our Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. (Applause)

REMARKS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. You have heard that introduction many times. Thank you, Don. One more round of applause for Don Myers and this great National Convention Committee. (Applause) We are going to have a great 106th National Annual Convention. My thoughts go back many, many years. I have had a wonderful time telling that story about our early days as an organization. I may have one or two occasions this week to tell it once again.

They are with us in spirit, my comrades and sisters, and don't think for a minute they are not. But there is another group that is with us in spirit this morning. They are the young men and women serving this very hour in harm's way, in Iraq, Afghanistan, other troubled spots around the world. They are our future. You have welcomed them with open arms in a very aggressive outreach. Thank you for that. That is the secret of our success. If there is any magic formula about membership growth in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, it is outreach to these young men and women returning daily.

They have earned their stripes, they have earned their credentials. They are eligible to be members of this great organization, and we need them. Let's greet them this morning, even though they are not here with us. (Applause) I am going to take just a few moments as we kick off a very busy week. We are so very proud to have in a couple of hours to join us the President of the United States and the First Lady, Laura Bush, President Bush and Laura Bush. What a thrill it would be for this convention to welcome them.

Please bear with us for those few anxious moments when we move the stage people around and do things that are simply necessary for the visit of the President. There will be many highlights of this National Convention, but that is one of the highlights as the Commander-in-Chief with the national media attention visiting this great National Convention.

I want my wife, Alma, to stand. We have been married 34 years, three wonderful daughters, eleven grandchildren. She has been with me all the way. Thank you, Alma. I love you. (Applause)

I am very fond of saying that from Biloxi to Buffalo to Bakersfield, and thousands of Posts in between, we gather here to kick off this great National Convention. It has been my rare privilege and honor, comrades and ladies, to travel throughout this organization for three years. In each and every visit, without exception, you have welcomed me and respected the position of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief. Thank you for that.

Your dedication, your spirit is so overwhelming to we national officers. We enjoyed very much getting out and being with you. The hard work that you do makes the VFW what it is. Please join me in giving each other a well-deserved round of applause. (Applause)

In a couple of days, the Tough Riders will fade into history, but they will never be forgotten. 54 State Commanders carried that honorary title all across this globe as they worked literally in the trenches to do the things that were necessary. Many of them are here this morning, and if you are one of our Tough Riders, State Commanders, 2004-2005, please stand now as a group and be recognized. Thank you. (Applause)

A radio personality asked me one time on the air after three years what would be my most memorable experience as Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States? At that time, during that interview, I told him that it would have to be that first visit to Hanoi.

As a Vietnam veteran, I had never ever thought I would be in Hanoi, but that is where this wonderful U.S. Embassy is now located, and the Ambassador welcomed us with open arms. But since that interview, that highlight has been over ridden by another, and one I will truly never forget.

During the last couple of days of July and the first week of August, I had the extreme pleasure and honor of visiting our troops in Iraq. One percent of requests to visit are approved. That is one percent, and it included the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you for that support. (Applause)

We did fly into Kuwait and they did meet us the next morning in these powerful Blackhawks helicopters of the Arizona National Guard, and flew us to Baghdad. Our great senior editor of the national magazine escorted us, Tim Dyehouse, and he was really challenged to write that week for our national magazine. You will read about it in our October issue. Jerry

Cohen, a Professional Contract Video photographer joined us, and three comrades who, by the way, paid their own way, the State Judge Advocate of Texas and his good friend, Ross Worley, a businessman from Kansas City, a retired major of the Special Forces. He had made several visits to Vietnam working independently establishing libraries.

They had invited a former State Senator who campaigned throughout the State of Texas to be elected to the Land Commission, the Texas Land Commission, a Vietnam veteran. We six spent that remarkable week in Iraq. The first morning we journeyed by Blackhawks to Falusia, where the Marines had recently lost 20 of their comrades killed in action, most of them from a Marine Reserve Unit from Ohio, near the home of our National President.

That Marine Major General told me in effect his Marines are doing a wonderful job, and they truly are. Let's greet the Marines in Falusia this morning. (Applause)

Then over in the base camp where 4,000 Tennessee Army National Guardsmen are headquartered, and two Sergeant Majors walked up to me and said, "Chief, how many applications did you bring?" I caught myself feeling through my pockets. This one Sergeant Major said, "I need 300." This other Sergeant Major said, "If he wants 300, I want 300." I got Kansas City on the telephone and they were in the mail that same day. Thank you, John, for that quick response. That is the first spirit we saw all week.

We ended the week at 1900 hours that last evening in the office of General Casey, who welcomed us as the first veterans organization to visit Iraq. He said, "Chief, what is it you want to talk about?" I said, "Well, General, first, we are very disappointed as an organization and frustrated that all the good work we have seen this week, one week, one slice of time, is not getting told back home."

He said, "No, it is not getting told." I said, "Maybe we can help. We had men and women who could write letters to the editors. We have men and women who can call radio stations. We have men and women who can very well be interviewed, television guests."

He said, "Will you do that?" I said, "We will absolutely do it. I have spoken with our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief an we will launch a defensive to do that very thing." General Casey said, "I will get you the material." And my little fax machine in Nashville, which is almost burned out after 30 years, is already receiving this information.

We have a wonderful mission ahead of us to make sure the news media understands that it is not all the supreme sacrifice that these veterans are making daily in time of war, but it is also more of a story that tells of their hard work from the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, 24 hours each day, and we saw those projects.

They have a tough spirit visiting the Iraqi unit so full of morale, so appreciative of our visits. Comrades and ladies, keep doing what you are doing. The support is important now as much as ever before. Operation Uplink is important now as ever before, unmet needs, family assistance is important now as never before. Will you do that? (Applause)

All right. I note in the course of the next few days I will have an opportunity, brief short minutes at a time, to relate to some of the comrades in the business session, some of these visits over the last three years. I cer-

tainly do look forward to that, Bosnia, Kosovo, Moscow, Taipei, such wonderful allies around the world.

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL OF MERIT AND CITATION TO JoANNE OTT, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

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

JoAnne Ott was elected National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States at its 91st Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio, last August.

A Life Member of Canal Fulton Auxiliary No. 9795, she is eligible through her father, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II.

Her theme "Symphony of Service", reflects her belief that both organizations working together for veterans can achieve great things. Since this organization was founded in 1914, the members have conducted programs demonstrating this theme of combining their talents to create a harmony of service for veterans.

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 left at home.

During the last five years, Mrs. Ott has prepared to lead the organization by visiting with soldiers who were wounded in Iraq as they recovered at the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, and giving them Operation Uplink long distance telephone cards to call home on behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary VFW.

She has attended the National Veterans Affairs Volunteer Service Conference, presented awards to graduates at the military academies, and volunteered at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, which the Auxiliary has sponsored since 1987.

Please join me in giving a very warm welcome to National President JoAnne Ott from Ohio.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Gold Medal of Merit and this citation awarded to JoAnne M. Ott, National President, Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, 2004-2005.

"In sincere 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 and commitment to a 'Symphony of Service' inspired everyone she met, and will serve as the true 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 22nd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PRESIDENT JoANNE OTT

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

I am honored and humbled to receive this special award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I thank you so very much. This past year has been quite an experience for me. It has made me realize more than ever just how much our programs are needed.

Representing the Ladies Auxiliary, I handed out Operation Uplink telephone cards to our troops. I met soldiers returning from Iraq at the airports and bid farewell to another unit on their way to Iraq. I sat with those who had been wounded in the war in Landstuhl, Germany, and talked to the father who is starting a program to help returning soldiers like his own son heal to get back to civilian life.

It was a privilege to visit the veterans at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, to ride on the motorcycle with the Vietnam veterans in Roaring Thunder, and to see the spirits and determination of the athletes participating in the Wheelchair Golden Age Games.

With each new person I met and every experience I had, I gained new insight and a fresh appreciation for the good that our program provides for our veterans in our communities.

This convention marks the end of the 91st year that the Ladies Auxiliary has partnered with the VFW, and as we move closer to that 100th year together, I know that there are even greater things that we will accomplish together. I am proud to have served as the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I am honored that I have the opportunity to serve with my Commander-in-Chief John Furgess.

Commander-in-Chief, I wish you and all the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars a very successful convention. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, JoAnne, for your leadership, and to all the Ladies Auxiliary members thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO THE 105TH NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my distinct pleasure to present a Certificate of Appreciation to the 105th National Convention Committee for their work in planning and conducting last year's 105th National Convention.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the Committee is John Wasylik, Past Commander-in-Chief and the Convention Committee Chairman for the 105th National Convention. Doc Wasylik. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "The Certificate of Appreciation presented to the 105th National Convention Committee. "In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of their dedicated and tireless efforts to insure the success of the 105th National Convention of the Veterans of

Foreign Wars of the United States held in Cincinnati, Ohio, August 14 - August 20, 2004.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 2005."

It has got the seal and it has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant General John Senk. (Applause)

RESPONSE BY PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF WASYLIK: Commander-in-Chief Furgess, Madam President JoAnne Ott, Distinguished Guests, all of you: On behalf of those outstanding volunteers from the great state of Ohio who did all of the real work, I accept this Certificate of Appreciation from the organization, and I want to thank them for making everything possible.

I want to thank the staff from Kansas City for their cooperation in helping us make it a success. I want to thank the staff from the Washington office for helping to make it a success. Without their cooperation, we could not have done the job that we did. Last, but most important, I have a gal up here with me. She has been with me 51 years, all the way from Post Surgeon to this position. Without her cooperation and without her steadfast support, I wouldn't be here. So I want to thank her, too. God bless America, God bless the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary. (Applause)

GREETINGS - HONORABLE ROCKY ANDERSON, MAYOR OF SALT LAKE CITY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and sisters, as we have already experienced, Salt Lake City 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 Salt Lake City, the Honorable Rocky Anderson. Mayor Anderson.

MAYOR ROCKY ANDERSON: We welcome you to Salt Lake City, and we are honored and privileged to be your host. You, and those who have served our country before you, have sacrificed so much. For that, our nation is and will always be grateful.

We must be certain that our young people know what was given by so many in order that we can all be free, so they and those who follow will share that gratitude. You exemplify the highest notions, the courage, commitment and the generosity reflected in offering so much so that others can be free.

Courage and commitment to the highest ideals of freedom have characterized our nation's military since George Washington and his troops led our country to independence. Those values can be imparted to our young people and to later generations if we continue to teach about the foundations of our country and about how those in our armed forces have sacrificed ever since to keep the torch of freedom burning bright.

In this difficult time, with the war in Iraq, we must make it clear that regardless of anyone's views toward the decisions of our political leaders, we all proudly support our troops. It is a democracy and civilian lead-

ers determine how our military resources will be utilized. We can debate, as we should in a free country, the decisions of our political leaders, but we must always support without wavering and be grateful toward our men and women in the armed forces. It is not enough, however, to just say the right things, we must demonstrate our support by providing our troops with the best equipment that technology has to offer, and the resources our troops need to be as safe and as effective as possible in their very dangerous and important work. Our nation's political leaders must listen and respond when our soldiers point out they are not receiving adequate supplies and equipment.

Also, we need to be firm in our commitment to you, our veterans who have served this country so heroically. At the same time, massive tax cuts have been provided to the wealthiest in our country, and huge cuts in veterans benefits have been proposed by some of our nation's leaders, and instead of slashing benefits for veterans our country should be providing high-quality health care, education and housing benefits to our veterans consistent with Abraham Lincoln's admonition to care for him who shall have borne the battle.

You risked your lives for this country and your loved ones watched you risk your lives for this country, and some of you suffered injuries in battle, both physical and emotional. As a nation, we must live up to our promise that you will receive quality health-care assistance through the Veterans Administration.

I am proud to say that we have a wonderful housing facility at our own Veterans Hospital in partnership with the city, with the state, with the federal government, that is providing such essential services for those who otherwise would be homeless in our community.

Your organization plays such an important role in our communities, by helping us to remember and provide for the needs of veterans and by educating our young people about the huge sacrifices you and your fellow soldiers have made to this country. We must make certain that later generations understand that freedom is not free, that our liberties were obtained and sustained only in great sacrifice by our servicemen and servicewomen, as well as by their loved ones.

You who have gathered in Salt Lake City are an inspiration. By telling your stories, you are helping the next generations to remember what we should never forget about the freedoms we enjoy and the tremendous sacrifices made by so many to make this a free nation, and if there is one thing I could urge parents, educators, those who know what so many have sacrificed for our liberties, please make certain that our young people read about it.

I just finished the book 1776. It absolutely is an inspiration to read about how much was given by those who helped bring our nation independence. A great friend of mine, General Jacobson, wrote his memoirs about being in Bataan Death March, and spent something like three years in a Japanese prison war camp.

Our young people need to know about this so they can pass this on to later generations, so not only will they be grateful to those who gave so much, but they will understand that our liberties came at a very, very dear cost.

We are pleased that we have a beautiful place in our city, Memory Road, dedicated to the memory of those who have given their lives in the service of our country. I hope that you will be able to visit that place during your visit here. We must do all we can to keep those memories alive.

Thank you for coming to Salt Lake City. You honor us by your presence and thank you for your great service to this nation. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mayor. We appreciate those words and we certainly do appreciate that support. The Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary honor the dead by helping the living, and we will continue to do that on into the future.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN, JR., GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF UTAH

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Governor Huntsman is a seventh-generation Utahan. He attended the University of Utah and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

As a business executive, he has held several leadership positions with Huntsman Corporation, most recently as Chairman and CEO of its holding company. His public service career includes serving as a White House staff assistant to President Ronald Reagan.

Under President George Bush, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Trade Development, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, as well as U.S. Ambassador to Singapore, the youngest U.S. Ambassador in our century.

He is fluent in Mandarin. He also served as a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative and U.S. Trade Ambassador under President George W. Bush.

Please welcome our distinguished guest, the Honorable Jon Huntsman, Jr., Governor of Utah. (Applause)

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE JON HUNTSMAN

GOVERNOR HUNTSMAN: Thank you, sir, for that wonderful introduction. I am extremely delighted that my wife is here to listen to those kind comments. It is a rare thing in my life these days.

Welcome to Utah. As Governor, I am pleased to welcome so many of you here. We are a state that values freedom, we are a state that values country. We treasure and we honor those who have kept and still work to keep us free. Thank you for taking the time to visit.

We are delighted to be the host state for the 106th Annual Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. You know, a few months ago I had a chance to visit in my office with your fine National Commander, John Furgess. He spoke with pride about this great organization and the wonderful veterans who are the heart and the soul of the VFW. He was right. It has been an honor to meet so many of you personally, to hear your stories, and to learn of your sacrifices.

On behalf of the great state of Utah, the greatest state in America, I say not only welcome but thank you, and thank you for your service to the greatest nation on earth. As a nation, however, we are not only blessed by

the past service of you who are veterans, but by the service that you continue to provide.

In that spirit, I would like to briefly recognize a few of you from Utah who have served the cause of freedom and continue to provide assistance to friends, neighbors, fellow veterans and their communities. One such individual is Darrell "Sarge" Loveland. Sarge, as he goes by, was a Marine Raider in World War II.

He is active in Honor Guards, does monthly training sessions for new Air Force members on the realities of combat. In addition to his devoted work with the VFW, Sarge Loveland has been involved with the Boys State program for 50 years.

John Awatta also served in World War II. He is a veteran of the U.S. Army, and served as the Past VFW Department Commander. Despite the personal challenges that John faces, he performs dozens of military funerals each year.

Norm Nelson is a veteran of the United States Air Force, who served his country in Vietnam. Norm is a VFW Vice-Commander and heads up one of the Honor Guards in the State of Utah. We were all proud when Norm and his colleagues presented the colors during the 2002 Winter Olympics here in Salt Lake City.

Johnny James is also a U.S. Air Force veteran who served in the Vietnam conflict. He is the Past Department Commander and Chair of our Veterans Advisory Council. Sarge, Norm, John and Johnny represent the best of the values and ideals of the VFW members. We appreciate your service deeply.

One of the moments that I will always treasure as Governor, when I walked through an Honor Guard lined up outside a VFW Post in Ogden just north of here, and seated beneath the United States flag signed a bill that established a second veterans nursing home here in our state. While there, I placed my hand over my heart as George Wallen, a recipient of the Medal of Honor, recited the Pledge of Allegiance; a moment I will never forget.

I would like to recognize the service of so many of Utah's veterans, including Terry Schell, Bill Jones, Dennis Persack, George Wallen and others who worked so hard securing funds for this new nursing home. Our Utah veterans earned it, they deserved it, and now they are getting it.

There are other moments during my short tenure as Governor that I will always remember. Some of the most joyous occasions so far have been greeting troops as they return to their families after having served overseas in the theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The most solemn moments during my service of government has come as I have attended the funerals of those who have lost their lives in service to our nation.

I want you to know that I salute those who are serving in the United States military under his command. Let there be no question here today, we honor all of you who have served our nation in the past, and we salute those who now are fighting for freedom around the world. (Applause)

May God continue to bless the United States of America and may he keep in his watchful care those who have sacrificed so much in the name of liberty, freedom and openness, and a grateful generation.

It is an honor to have you here in our state today. Thank you all so very much.

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

PRESENTATION OF AMERICAN FLAG SET TO GOVERNOR JON HUNTSMAN

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We are going to do a presentation at this time for the Governor. It is now my pleasure to introduce Chloe Williams, the Ladies Auxiliary National Patriotic Instructor, who will present Governor Huntsman with a commemorative flag sets.

LADIES AUXILIARY NATIONAL PATRIOTIC INSTRUCTOR WILLIAMS: I would like to ask the Honorable Governor of the State of Utah to please come forward. On behalf of the members of the Ladies Auxiliary, it is my honor and privilege to present this beautiful red, white and blue flag of formation, to be a reminder of the sacrifices and hardships of America's veterans who have made it possible for us to live in a free country.

GOVERNOR HUNTSMAN: Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Ladies, and thank you, Governor. Let's give them another round of applause. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF MINISTER KAO, HUA-CHU VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION, REPUBLIC OF CHINA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my privilege to introduce General Kao, Hua-chu, the Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission from the Republic of China. General Kao served his nation in uniform for more than 35 years before he became Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission, which is similar to our U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

He was a gracious host to a VFW delegation I led to Taiwan last month that also included Adjutant General John Senk.

Today, we are gathered to re-sign a joint proclamation that was originally signed in Chicago in 1980 when Howard Vander Clute was Commander-in-Chief.

The proclamation, which we will re-sign this morning on our 25th anniversary, reads as follows:

"WHEREAS, the Republic of China on Taiwan has been a strong and loyal American ally since its origin; and

"WHEREAS, the 23 million citizens of the Republic of China enjoy freedom and have prospered through enterprise economy under democratic principles; and

"WHEREAS, the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States have enjoyed the bonds of friendship for the past 40 years,

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we reiterate our brotherhood and shall industriously pursue a policy of close cooperation and coordination toward a greater understanding of our mutual goals and com-

mon interests in behalf of veterans of our respective countries."

Now, I would like to ask General Kao and Adjutant General John Senk to join me in signing this Joint Proclamation.

(Whereupon, the Proclamation was signed at this time.)

Comrades, let's formally welcome to the mike for his remarks, General Kao, a great friend and ally of the United States, and a wonderful Minister of the Veterans Affairs Commission of Taiwan. Welcome, General Kao.

GREETINGS - MINISTER KAO, HUA-CHU

MINISTER KAO: Commander-in-Chief Furgess, National President Ott, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a great honor to be invited to address your National Convention. This is my first time to attend the VFW Annual Convention since I became the Minister of Veterans Affairs of the Republic of China on Taiwan last year. I am most pleased to be here in this world city of Salt Lake City, in the great state of Utah, to meet our friends from the VFW, especially in the year marking the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II and the 50th year of the Korean War.

Many of your members have been involved in the two wars and their contributions to those wars deserve our respect. On behalf of my colleagues and my battle veterans in Taiwan, I wish you a successful 106th National Convention in the wonderful state here this week.

The VFW and the VAC have a very strong relationship for almost 50 years. In 1980, the VFW and the VAC formally entered into a proclamation relationship. This was the first brotherhood relationship with a veterans organization. Now, 45 years later I am honored to continue this important tradition. Just last month, in July, I was honored to receive Commander-in-Chief Furgess, Adjutant General Senk and their spouses for a short four-night visit to Taipei, where veterans are honorary citizens. We have established a very comprehensive system to care for them.

In addition to free veterans hospitals, we also have 18 veteran homes for service officers and benefits officers. A construction company, we built highways, freeways, airports, hospitals. In Taipei, we have financial buildings, currently awards notorious buildings from the beginning. This company only hires Army veterans, especially the Veterans Army Engineers.

Four nights is not enough to get any understanding of how we support our veterans. Your next visit you should allow more time so we can give you a greater understanding of our country. The VFW has been a very close friend of the VAC.

The VFW has hosted a blood drive in our hospitals to help our wounded soldiers since 1980. The VFW has expressed its full support for our government through your national commission resolutions.

The VFW has continued its comradeship, friendship, urging the United States government to continue selling the necessary defensive weapons equipment and technology. Both our government and the people are very much appreciative for your support.

Taiwan, the Republic of China, has been pursuing the life of

peace, democracy and freedom just like America. My dear friends, in the VFW for the past 94 years, we, in the Republic of China, have been pursuing governments of the people, by the people and for the people as our President mentioned.

None of us want to have anything to do with Communism. That is why we need your support, community support for defense freedom. We are also just one, and we have shared a history of fighting against our common enemies. My dear friends in the VFW, we are lucky to have this comrade friendship with you. We will cherish it in the years to come.

It is time we should join hands to fight against terrorism and we, the VAC, can do more and we are always with you. Thank you again for inviting me to speak at the Joint Opening Ceremonies, and I wish you a successful completion and good health to all of you. I salute you, I salute your servicemen and women. Thank you very much. (Applause)

MR. HANS SONG: Thank you very much. To express appreciation of our country, the Republic of China to Commander-in-Chief John Furgess for his friendship and efforts in promoting the relationship between our two countries. I will read the citation.

The citation reads, "Mr. John Furgess, 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 John Furgess 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."

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

The inscription on the plaque states, "Presented to John Furgess, 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 22, in the year 2005." (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more round of applause for Minister Kao and Hans. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF EDWARD S. BANAS, SR.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, his theme was "Courage and Conviction" and these words describe his attitude about veterans to a tee. Ed Banas knew the importance of setting the example for others to follow, not asking anyone to do what he wasn't willing to do himself.

Ed Banas reasserted the VFW's 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, Past Commander-in-Chief Edward S. Banas, Sr. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Edward S. Banas, Sr., Commander-in-Chief, 2003-2004.

"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 'Courage and Conviction' during the 2003-2004 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 22nd day of August, 2005."

"Approved by the National Council of Administration," and signed by John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BANAS: Commander-in-Chief Furgess, Delegates to this Convention, both the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary:

I humbly accept this honor and I accept it because each and every one of you are a part of allowing it to happen. You people practice good stewardship. You know that these organizations do not belong to us. We have to constantly educate people who come after us so we can pass on the traditions and virtues.

I am very humble this morning and thank you again from the bottom of my heart for having enough faith in me to let me serve as your Commander-in-Chief. To each and every one of you, thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: He now serves with the National Cemetery system, and we are all very proud of him.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2005 VFW HALL OF FAME AWARD TO PAT TILLMAN (POSTHUMOUSLY)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We have a very special award that follows. Pat Tillman's name resonates among all Americans as that of an all-American hero. He was an outstanding and talented pro-football player who had a promising future playing with the Arizona Cardinals.

Deeply impacted by the September 11th, 2001, attacks on America, Pat decided to turn down the Cardinals offer of $3.6 million to stay with the team and decided instead to enlist in the United States Army. After the basic Army training, he volunteered for the elite Army Rangers and was assigned to the 75th Ranger segment and was deployed to the Middle East as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Eventually, he was

deployed to Afghanistan and was killed in action on April 22nd, 2004.

His decision to relinquish a multi-million dollar contract and professional football career was clear testimony of his love for America by putting aside his career and serving in the armed forces during such a critical juncture in our nation's history.

Pat Tillman stirred the heart of the nation. His love and his devotion to his country continues to inspire us all. On behalf of the Tillman family, and here to accept the 2005 VFW Hall of Fame Award is the Executive Director of the Pat Tillman Foundation, Mr. Alex Garwood. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "The Hall of Fame Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Pat Tillman posthumously.

"In heartfelt recognition of his fervent love of country and indomitable American spirit, as he paused a successful career in the National Football League to pursue an active role in the global war on terrorism as a Ranger in the United States Army. His courageous determination, valiant leadership and firm resolve as a 'team player' earned him the utmost respect and sincere 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 22nd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration," signed by John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. ALEX GARWOOD

MR. GARWOOD: Thank you. Those words sure mean a lot. There is a wonderful expression about the company you keep being a fine reflection of you. My friend, Pat, took me many places when he was alive. I met many fascinating and amazing people. Now that he is gone, that holds true and that expression, the company you keep is a fine reflection of you.

What an incredible honor it is for my friend, Pat, to be one of you, to be a Veteran of Foreign Wars, to have stood up for his country, to go and fight like you-all have. But moreover to come back and serve those in the community again stepping up and helping those that you can when you come back making it a better place for when they do come home from Iraq or Afghanistan.

It is a true honor to be able to stand here with you. Candidly, when I thought about this honor to be able to come and speak to you, I wasn't sure what to say. The best two words I could think of were "thank you". I wish I had the opportunity to look you each in the eye, shake your hand and tell you thank you personally, but trust me when I tell you that it is an honor for Pat to be recognized, and an honor for us to stand here with you. Thank you very much. It is humbling to be here.

As the Executive Director of the Pat Tillman Foundation, it is extremely humbling. It is also inspiring. As the Executive Director, I am Pat's brother-in-law. His wife and my wife are sisters. More importantly, I was a friend, which means I had the honor and privilege of earning his friendship, which was a challenge, but one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had in my life.

I will tell you a quick story about Pat. My wife and his wife and I had the opportunity to travel through Europe, and this is the off season where Pat decided to challenge himself between the NFL season by running a marathon and sitting on his duff was not his way. He decided on running 26.2 miles for fun.

We ran all throughout Europe. We ran in Paris, we ran in London. Each morning we would get up and train. What a great time to spend with your friend, running, talking, arguing and debating whatever it was. One time we ran on the coast of Ireland. Pat has family there.

We ran 15 miles and we ran through sleet and rain, through their cliffs in the rainstorm. We were on the north side of the beach, and I looked over to Pat, I am freezing, and he is taking off his shirt. He runs and he jumps in the ocean. He comes back, and I said, "What are you, crazy?" He said to me, "When am I going to be back here?"

This is a simple story, but Pat lived his life to the fullest. Any opportunity he had he took it. That is the way he lived his life. Jumping in the ocean was not a life-changing experience, although it was very cold. But when he had an opportunity to step up and serve his nation, he did.

When he had the opportunity to go to school and graduate, he did. But he did it in three and a half years cum laude. We had the opportunity to play on Saturdays and Sundays, all of those things that I can share with you about my friend are true, but it is hard to describe the incredible man he was.

So, for us as a foundation, which his wife, Marie, is Chairman of the Board; his brother, Kevin, who like you served his nation, who like many of you have fought in Afghanistan, he is also on our Board. It falls to us to carry forward that legacy, that passionate legacy, that legacy of not saying I think I should do it or ought to do it, but actually doing it.

So that challenge falls on us, that opportunity falls on us. We are carrying forward Pat's legacy in a program called Leadership Through Action. We provide the inspiration for young college students to step up and take action. We provide the know-how, the skills to help create programs to help others step up, much like you in the VFW have done in helping our veterans that are coming home are helping you. That is the spirit of Pat.

Ironically, the first class starts today at Arizona State University, the first of many. There are 14 Tillman scholars. They participate in year-round work. They start today to carry forward his passionate legacy. They again become a part of that company that you keep, the company to be able to stand here with all of you as a reflection of my friend, Pat, is a tremendous honor. Again, thank you. It is an honor to be here. Thank you again. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Than you, Alex. Please accept this $5,000 donation from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States to the Pat Tillman Foundation. Thank you, Alex. (Applause)

MR. GARWOOD: Thank you. It is a pleasure.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I am going to request another standing ovation for the VFW Hall of Fame Award posthumously to Pat Tillman.

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

INTRODUCTION OF THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER - SPENCER DRISCOLL

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, over the past 57 years, the Voice of Democracy Contest has enabled high school students from across the country and overseas to think, write and speak our 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 very pleased to have with us today the 2005 First Place National Winner in the Voice of Democracy Contest.

He graduated from Billings West High School in Billings, Montana, and was sponsored by VFW Post 1634 and the Ladies Auxiliary in Billings when he entered the contest.

Here to present his award-winning essay, "Celebrating Our Veterans' Service," the 2005 First Place National Voice of Democracy winner and recipient of the $25,000 T. C. Selman Memorial Scholarship, Spencer Driscoll. (Applause)

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY WINNER - SPENCER DRISCOLL

MR. SPENCER DRISCOLL: As the darkness fades, a woman awakens to the emerging sunrise. She has not slept for two nights, and her face is showing it. Still, she pulls herself out of the bed, awakens her husband and scrambles downstairs silently to sip a cup of fresh-brewed coffee. She glances around the ever-familiar kitchen, where even the touch of the cold marble counter cannot erase the memories of Thanksgivings, family, and the joy of two laughing girls.

As she heads back up the stairs, she almost collapses. Weariness from sleepless nights over her impending departure weighs heavily on her psyche and she knows it will not become any easier. As the sun shines its eye above the distant mountaintops, she returns to her preparations. But first she kneels in fervent prayer. "For my family," she says, "For God, for my country." She rises and paces into her daughters' bedroom where she leans over and, while running her hand slowly through the hair of each, gently places a kiss on their cheeks.

And then she is gone.

As she rides the bus to leave for war, questions race through her mind. "Will my daughters be all right?" "Will I come home intact?" Even an everyday worry arises, "Did I forget to turn off the coffee maker?" For this woman is one of us, yet so much more. She is a mother to us all, providing for the well-being of every citizen. A sacrifice that most of us would not be willing to make, she readily accepts -- even though she has so much at risk: her home, her family, her life.

Three months later, two staggering soldiers approach the front

porch. The husband is devastated; their words sear into his very being. How will he cope? What about his daughters? Days later, three black-clad, solemn beings traverse the sidewalk and enter the ominous church. The doors shut.

This reservist is one of the true heroes of our generation, the mothers and fathers, the sisters and brothers who risk their lives in defense of our valued and precious freedoms. My generation, aptly named the September Eleventh generation, has experienced selfless acts of courage performed by those involved in the rescue efforts at the World Trade Towers, the War in Iraq, and Operation Enduring Freedom yet while our leaders have given much credit to our most recent soldiers and veterans, we should not forget those who sacrificed in the generations before us. How will we remember them? How will we honor them?

Every day on television one can see the latest casualty count as well as the reception of those who have arrived home. With imbedded reporters, one can become almost an eyewitness to the sacrifices our military is making. Weekly documentaries on virtually every news station detail the missions of our fighting men and women, and Americans can easily research the up-to-the-minute progress in Iraq. But what about the previous wars in which thousands of Americans died?

My fear is that we will forget.

The Vietnam War has continually remained a controversial topic of discussion, and most Americans have all but forgotten about our Korean War veterans. Furthermore, not until this last year has the government fully recognized our World War II veterans with a memorial. It has become a situation where, after a war is fought and concluded, most Americans forget about the sacrifices our veterans have made.

When I heard that the Voice of Democracy topic for this year was the celebration of our veterans' service, I could think of nobody better to consult than my own father, a recipient of a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart, the father of seven and now the grandfather of nine, who was medically discharged because of his disabling wounds in Vietnam. Every year since his service, medical care for his wounds has diminished. Although he was promised coverage for the rest of his life, the reality tells a different story.

Many Americans will agree that a name on a commemorative plaque is sufficient recognition for those who have served and died. But what about those who still live? How do we reward them?

Each American has a solemn duty to recognize every one of our veterans. It appalls me, the lack of attention we grant them. Many politicians believe that because veterans' care is too controversial a subject, they should not mention it for fear of losing votes, yet how should we celebrate their service? Memorial Day and Veterans' Day provide some recognition, but most people view those two days simply as days off school and work instead of as opportunities to acknowledge the sacrifices our service members have made for us.

To answer how we should commemorate our veterans' service, I have a one-word response: vote. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have died in the defense of our democratic way of life, and yet almost half of America refused to acknowledge their sacrifice and cast a vote in the November 2000 election. The only true way to show that we

cherish the life our veterans have granted to us is to act. We should celebrate our nation by helping to shape it. We should honor our veterans' actions and lives by exercising the very right to which they dedicated their lives to uphold. Where will you be when November second rolls around? Where have our veterans been?

And now the three somber figures must once again become a part of us. Help grant these two girls the opportunity to live an optimistic life -- vote. Let their father know that although his wife is now gone, he has our support. But even before you vote, find out who will get the job done -- who will help to memorialize this woman's life? Help make her and all other veterans an indelible part of our history by fulfilling your civic duty. And let her family feel safe in knowing that she will forever be remembered.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Another good round of applause for Spencer Driscoll. (Applause) Thank you, Spencer.

INTRODUCTION OF GENNADY SHOROKHOV, VICE PRESIDENT, COMBAT BROTHERHOOD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my privilege to introduce Mr. Gennady Shorokhov, the Vice President of the all-Russian public movement of veterans of local wars and armed conflicts.

The Combat Brotherhood, as it is more commonly known, has more than 2.5 million members and is one of the largest and most organized of the Russian military veterans' organizations. Mr. Shorokhov served his country for 23 years in uniform and is a veteran of the war in Afghanistan.

We first met last October when I led a delegation to Moscow to discuss POW/MIA issues, as well as what we, as veterans, can do to support our governments in their fight against domestic and international terrorism.

We were joined then by Mr. Yuri Bogus-Slavski, who is the Director of the U.S. Government's POW/MIA Accounting Office at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. We are fortunate to have Yuri with us here today as a translator. His home is in Salt Lake City and we welcome him home.

We are very grateful to the Combat Brotherhood for their efforts to break down barriers in their government to help America account for missing service members from all wars, China, Burma, India theaters that is so important in World War II.

Today, it is my honor to seal that relationship by signing this document which reads in part as follows:

"We, as representatives of the two leading combat veterans' organizations of the United States and the Russian Federation agreed to assist our nations' leaders in fighting international terrorism. "We will improve the social status of veterans, disabled veterans, and the families of those who died in uniform.

"We will provide medical and psychological assistance to veterans, and we will develop joint events in the interest of our cooperation."

This declaration is already signed by General Gromauve, the President of the Combat Brotherhood. Now, I would like to ask Mr. Shorokhov and Adjutant General Senk to join me as a witness to my signature to finalize this joint protocol.

RESPONSE BY GENNADY SHOROKHOV

MR. SHOROKHOV: Dear Commander-in-Chief, dear family members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars: First of all, best regards from General Gromauve, the Commander and Director of our organization of veterans' organizations and to pass on our best wishes to the veterans in the USA.

The document that was signed today, that I signed and Mr. Furgess signed, shows our commitment to cement our relations for our veterans. The more we talk to each other, the more I find out about you and I realize that the issues facing veterans in both countries are exactly the same.

When war is going on, we can't stop firing. For us, war goes on because it stays in our heart and the memory of fallen comrades stay with us forever. We will do everything possible so that the memory of our combats, of our arms will stay with us forever.

We need to help our countries, we need to help our military, active service soldiers. Right now, our main task is to fight against global terrorism. Last year, both our organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the fight against terrorism.

As it was during the glorious years of World War II with America, this puts the final touches on the package. Today we must help, we must unite with our governments to fight terrorism. I think a fine example is set by our comrades from World War II. We will follow that example.

I don't know where it will end, in Afghanistan or Iraq, but in any case wherever it is we will put a final touch and finish the war on terrorism. Each one of us make a commitment, that one small step to help our veterans defeat terrorism.

I want to thank the leadership of your fine organization, the VFW, for paying so much attention to such important relations in foreign countries and the VFW. Today I spent some time looking at the display, looking at photographs of young people that died in Afghanistan.

I remembered my comrades that died in Afghanistan as well. I realize that it doesn't matter which country you served, the problems for veterans are exactly the same in all countries. Our main task is organizations such as the VFW and our organization to make sure that the soldier is not alone with all these issues and we will help them as much as we can.

I want to wish you all great friendship and good health. We hope that our governments will nourish a long friendship with Russia and the United States. Thank you so much.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I told Mr. Shorokhov I had another vision this morning, and his eyes sort of lit up. When we visited his headquarters last fall, he readily wanted to accept this idea of this agreement, Veterans Organizations Against Terrorism Around the World.

This morning I have another vision. I hope that one day in the future a Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the

United States and a representative of the Combat Brotherhood will be welcomed and invited guests to the international space station high above. What do you think about that? (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS TO THE 2005 ALL AMERICAN COMMANDERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Now, comrades and ladies, this is another very important part of this convention, this great convention.

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. I have asked our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, and as you know our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is away attending family funeral services. He will join us tonight back in Salt Lake City.

The Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief-Elect George Lisicki, of the Eastern Conference, will assist in this presentation. These are the Commanders of this elite group, all Americans.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK:

Alabama	Department	Lawrence O. Sepanski
Alaska	Department	Martin E. Miller
Arizona	Department	William E. Chagnon
Arkansas	Post 3543	Billy R. Hogue
California	Department	Everett R. Martin
California	District 1	Jack E. Turner
California	District 13	Terry L. Vernon
California	District 23	James E. Kokas
California	Post 12021	Neal Baum
California	Post 10577	James M. Jones
California	Post 1508	Robert M. Nickle
California	Post 888	Robert J. Magner
California	Post 6552	Raymond Fairbank
California	Post 184	Eugene F. Garcia
Colorado	Department	Robert E. Clements
Colorado	Post 4051	Arthur C. Christensen
Delaware	Department	Ludwig J. Kubicki
District of Columbia	Department	Clinton Townsend
Europe	Department	Steven A. Ward
Europe	District 1	Forest D. Edsall
Europe	District 3	Wayne C. Mertz
Europe	Post 10436	Billy D. Barber
Europe	Post 10658	Frank J. Hanchak
Europe	Post 27	Robert "Joe" J. Mulligan
Europe	Post 10658	Jason A.. Shindoll
Florida	Department	Allen E. Hall
Georgia	Department	James R. Coggins
Hawaii	Department	John S. Chapman
Idaho	Department	Leo J. Dub
Idaho	Post 2738	Tim McBride
Indiana	Post 7964	Gary Estes
Indiana	Post 1257	Bobby D. Warrix

Kansas	Department	Larry G. Graham
Kentucky	Department	Michael G. Penney
Latin Am/Car	Department	Wilberforce E. Brooks
Maine	Department	Robert R.. Worthley
Maryland	Department	Ronald. Dickens
Maryland	Post 6506	Randy. George
Mississippi	Post 3036	Isaac M. Prine
Nebraska	Department	Leroy Z. Clausen
Nebraska	District 5	Roger C. Broeker
Nevada	Department	Michael D. Downey
New Hampshire	Department	Kevin P. McKeating
New Jersey	Department	Donnie C. Wine
New Jersey	District 11	Lewis. Donovan
New Jersey	Post 10065	Donald W. William, Sr.
North Carolina	Department	William C. Dohl
Ohio	Department	Keith E. Harman
Ohio	District 3	James D. McAlpin
Ohio	Post 6846	Homer. Amspaugh
Oklahoma	Department	Julia R. Cherry
Oregon	Department	Thomas G. Laing
Pacific Areas	Department	Barney L. Patsel
Pacific Areas	Post 9985	Jeffery. Birkle
Pennsylvania	Department	John A. Brenner
Pennsylvania	District 21	William J. Mayer
Pennsylvania	Post 155	Walter J. Rickabaugh
Pennsylvania	Post 1599	Robert F. Harris, Jr.
Pennsylvania	Post 5958	Cecil K. Dennis
Tennessee	Department	James R. Inman
Texas	Department	John R. Fair
Texas	Post 4372	Earl. Baumann
Vermont	Department	James H. Lane
Virginia	Department	Tommy W. Hines
Virginia	Post 392	Edward L. Powers
Washington	Department	Gary W. Hulsey
Washington	District 6	Robert A. Cruze
Wisconsin	Department	William A. Backes
Wisconsin	District 11	Calvin F. Wells

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more salute for the All American Commanders. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE JAMES E. VanZANDT CITIZENSHIP AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, another very important annual award is the James E. VanZandt Citizenship Award.

The Home Depot, the number one home improvement retailer in the country, has an outstanding record of community involvement and staunch support of our nation's military. Home Depot continually demonstrates its appreciation of our nation's military by making those who serve our nation a priority within its corporate structure.

The Home Depot has provided career opportunities to over 10,000 veterans in 2004 alone. Recognizing the sacrifice of our nation's citizen soldiers who have been called upon to serve in the active-duty military, the Home Depot has been proactive in not only protecting the benefits of their guard and reserve employees, but have, in fact, enhanced them.

Home Depot has been identified as one of the top-ten military friendly employers in the nation.

Please welcome Mr. Carl Liebert, III, Senior Vice-President for Operations, who is here to accept the 2005 VFW James E. VanZandt National Citizenship Award on behalf of the Home Depot. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "James E. VanZandt Citizenship Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Home Depot.

"In special recognition of the care, concern and compassion shown our nation's military as evinced by the hiring of over 10,000 veterans in 2004, enhancing leave of absence benefits for associates called to active duty and sponsoring welcome home celebrations for their associates upon their return.

"Their numerous patriotic awards makes the Home Depot the employer of choice for the military community and one of the top-ten military friendly employers in the nation.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 22nd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration," and signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - MR. CARL LIEBERT, III

MR. CARL LIEBERT: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Furgess, for those kind and generous remarks. Thanks to Adjutant General John Senk for having us, and more importantly for an Army of individuals who do great things for our great country.

I would like to also congratulate the Ladies Auxiliary, JoAnne Ott, for receiving the Gold Medal and certainly for having us here today. It is an honor for me to take part in today's celebration. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the associates of the Home Depot and our Chairman and President, CEO, it is my pleasure to accept the James E. VanZandt Citizenship Award.

At the Home Depot, we know when the VFW gets behind a cause or issue and gives it its stamp of approval, it will get done. You have shown in the past your pride in our nation. You have built the reputation of uncompromising compassion so deep that your members never forget and thereby the rest of the world is compelled to remember.

The James E. VanZandt Citizenship Award is one that we will cherish at Home Depot for many, many years to come. There are 1,800 of our own associates who are currently on active duty. It also reflects the tens of thousands of others who are in the reserves and are associates that support them every day.

As a former naval officer, I know the honorable meaningful service takes place in many, many places, upon death or wherever. I have

learned the basis of citizenship can belong to anyone, a private or a corporate citizen. That is what we strive for every day at Home Depot, demonstrate corporate citizenship by living out our core purpose, improve everything that we touch, from how to treat customers to planning the merchandise in our stores, and how to operate our stores, and especially how we support the communities in which we live, work and operate.

The military is one we have pledged unwavering support. For example, last year we operated Operation Career Fund with the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs. Our goal is to honor the men and women as well as to say thank you and to get back to the active duty, and you can come and check us out at the Home Depot.

We designed the program to provide meaningful career for veterans and spouses. We did it for them. Last year we hired more than 15,000 veterans at Home Depot. Early in the year, we heard from soldiers who said they needed to put their tents down and move more quickly. We gave them hundreds of five-gallon buckets filled with personal items to make their time away from home a little easier.

Overall, our company has pledged to spend $1 million in tools and materials to Iraq. In 2003, we launched Project Home Front to repair the homes of thousands of military families while they were called away to serve their country. (Applause) Since the inception of the Home Depot Leadership Program a few years ago, we have trained approximately 600 junior military officers to serve as store managers when they are running multi-million dollar operations across the country.

That is because we believe in them and their values and the skills and desires to serve long after the war is over. I want to thank you for acknowledging our company's efforts and honor these that have given so much of ourselves. In fact, they are saying the Home Depot orange, red, white and blue.

In partnership with the VFW, it gives me great pleasure to donate this $5,000 check to the Greater Prince George Business Round Table, a non-profit business alliance in Maryland. The Round Table is rebuilding and renovating a special facility at Andrew Air Force Base that serves wounded troops that are coming from the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Those returning soldiers stay there for 48 hours before being transferred to other locations throughout the country for treatment and rehabilitation, and we like to help make that first touch home a welcoming as much as possible. Thank you for your honor, and our company will stand for you in the fight for freedom and justice and perform responsibilities as great corporate citizens. God bless our men and women who serve our country, and God bless America. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, please accept this $5,000 honorarium, which Home Depot wishes to go to the Greater Prince George Business Round Table. Thanks once again. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF CHRIS CONNINGTON, DIRECTOR OF BRAND MARKETING, VERMONT AMERICAN POWER TOOL ACCESSORIES AND GUNNERY SGT. R. LEE ERMEY, UNMET NEEDS SPOKESPERSON

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The VFW Unmet Needs Program is committed to improving the lives of veterans and military service personnel, their families, and the communities in which they live and work. While our military troops are working to keep us out of harm's way, the Unmet Needs Program is attempting to do the same for their families.

With the generous help of corporate sponsors like Vermont American Power Tool Accessories, the Unmet Needs Program continues to reduce the hardship many families endure while a spouse is deployed.

Vietnam Veteran R. Lee Ermey, "the Gunnery" serves as the official spokesperson for the VFW Foundation's Unmet Needs Program. With us this morning is Chris Connington, from Vermont American and "the Gunnery", R. Lee Ermey. Welcome, gentlemen. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. CHRIS CONNINGTON

MR. CONNINGTON: It is an honor and privilege the company that we keep today. These words have been spoken and they certainly describe how proud I am to represent the men and women of Vermont American Power Tool Accessories in front of so many thousands and thousands of true American heroes. Thanks so much for having us here today.

Commander-in-Chief Furgess, National President Ott, Adjutant General Senk, thank you-all for such great support for a terrific first year of the Unmet Needs Program. About a year and a half ago, the employees of Vermont American wanted to find a way to give back meaningful to the military families. Commander-in-Chief Furgess mentioned two things this morning. Those things that were important included membership and helping our military families. I want to be able to invite all of you to a presentation at 2:00 p.m. today in Room 150-G, where I will talk and give all kinds of stories, funny stories, clever stories from our Posts and Auxiliaries from across the country as they were successful in promoting the Unmet Needs Program.

So, please, at 2:00 p.m., in Room 150-G, if you can make it, please come to that presentation. Also, after we are off stage here, it is such a pleasure to have the President and First Lady here, and after that is over, we will run a video that gives a great overview of the Unmet Needs Program. You can enjoy the success of our first year of the Unmet Needs Program.

What I would like to do with our shortened schedule is introduce a number of individuals. Besides, of course, the men and women from Posts and Auxiliaries across the country, there are some very, very important people from the VFW Foundation that have helped to make the Unmet Needs Program such a success.

Those individuals, and I will call you up here, Mike Meyer is one of those individuals and General Rufus Forest. Fellows, if you will come up here and we will give them a round of applause. (Applause)

I would also like to invite another great corporate sponsor, who to date has donated $100,000 to the program. We have some members from Wal-Mart Corporation. If you could come up here, please. (Applause) I would like to have Mike Meyer make a presentation with the folks from Wal-Mart with regard to the Unmet Needs Program.

MR. MIKE MEYER: I don't know if you-all realize the importance of Wal-Mart to our organization. I am sure most of you do. In three years,

they have given us $7.4 million for Operation Uplink phone cards. (Applause) Last year they gave us $1 million cash for the Foundation, and through that gift we have raised $2.3 million through direct mail through the Development Department.

The purpose of the gift was to help organizations that we work with to help our troops and their families. So by working with the Unmet Needs Program, they have received $100,000 last year and we are ready to make another presentation to Unmet Needs at this time. That is in the amount of $70,000. (Applause)

We are getting ready to make another announcement, and I will let Chris take over.

MR. CONNINGTON: As we make ready for our next presentation, I would like to introduce not only a television super star and a movie star, but somebody who I have come to know through our travels together over the past year as a true American hero. More than anything else, more than television and movie fame, our Ermey is a Marine. (Applause)

SERGEANT ERMEY: As the Unmet Needs Programs, I have got exactly one minute, so you better keep up. Here is the situation. More than anyone, more than we have ever experienced, we have got a lot of married men in the military today.

We are activating a lot of Reserves and National Guard troops, and they have families We are taking them away from their families and their jobs, where they are making $3,000, $4,000 a month, and they are a PFC in the Army or in the Marines, and they are making $1,000 a month. They are having a heck of a time to make ends meet.

What happens, we activate this young man or lady and we are sending them over to fight the war for us in Iraq, and in the meanwhile we allow their families to slowly sink into poverty. We have stopped that. The Unmet Needs Program has saved over 150 families from being evicted out of their apartments in the past year and a half.

We need your help. We need you to pass the word. Here is what we need you to do. Go to the unmetneeds.com, and there are three buttons there. You have come to help us financially. You have come to donate a skill for us, or you have come because you need help, you have servicemen serving in Iraq or servicemen, period, then you push the help button. That is all there is to it. Go see us on www.unmetneeds.com. Thank you very much and have a great day.

MR. CONNINGTON: As they prepare for the second check presentation from Wal-Mart, I want to mention as you watch the video as soon as you put something on a disk, it is obsolete. I want to give you a little bit of an update. When you see the numbers on the video, it will have fewer families and fewer dollars distributed.

As of yesterday, over 475 families across this great land and over $700,000 has been distributed to help people with rent and mortgage expenses, to help people with home and auto repairs, to help people with medical deductibles, over $700,000, and the Auxiliaries and the Posts are a big part of that. Thanks so much. As they finish preparing for the next presentation of checks, I would like to mention as well that a number of Posts from across the country have been incredible. I want to give you, if I could, one or two quick stories while they are coming back.

Ed Rasmussen from Washington State, now, I know that there are a whole host of people within the State of Washington and within the Districts that have helped in a particular help we gave to a family in the Spokane area. But again, that is what the Commander-in-Chief Furgess said.

Ed Rasmussen stopped by our booth in the Convention Center yesterday and said, "Chris, the Unmet Needs Program and all the help and work from the associates that you have also contributed to a tremendous increase in Life Members." Ladies and gentlemen, 248 new Lifetime Members, because they read about it, they saw it, they participated in the help that the Unmet Needs Program provided to the McLean family in Spokane, Washington.

Then one last question. We, in the State of California, Jim Cokas, Jim Jones and Jim Wolfe, people I have worked with, I know there are thousands of others like them. As we kick off a program that took the Posts and the Auxiliaries into stores, we had a few snafus as you might imagine.

A couple of times the store wasn't prepared for the VFW Posts or the Auxiliaries to show up. So they wouldn't let them in. As you can imagine, I had some angry phone calls. There were times when the Posts and Auxiliaries didn't show up, I would get an angry call then.

This program ran through the month of June. About two and a half weeks ago, I got a phone call. The phone call message was a call from the manager at the Modesto store and he said he had a problem. He said the Post was here and they did a great job and they got the money, but they won't leave. (Laughter)

They are there every morning now. They are knocking on the doors to get people started earlier. They are probably making coffee and taking people through the aisles and selling tools. So thank you, Post 2814 from the Modesto area. Thank you for the California segment. We greatly appreciate all the work that has gone on.

I don't know what has happened on our second check presentation. Folks, please go by Room 150-G at 2:00 p.m. and we will take care of that as well. Now, the Wal-Mart folks were also going to donate another $71,000 to Fisher House today. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A great American, Wal-Mart, ladies and gentlemen. This is the time where Bob Wallace said, "John, can you soft shoe a little bit?" Well, he knows I can't sing and I am not too good at cheering, either. But two quickies.

Many of you have heard me tell the wonderful story, not about Teddy, I will do that later. (Laughter) What about the five reasons we are free as a nation? I was able to share this with the President of the United States in the Oval Office in March. He was very relaxed. He was very interested in the story.

As I went out to Reno last year for a VFW visit, I rented a car and drove back 100 miles east to Hawthorne, Nevada. There is that great armed forces celebration, the third Saturday in May. Their Grand Marshals were five Navy Seals. Their average age was about 25, if that.

They were training in those beautiful but rugged mountains around Hawthorne in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan where they probably are at this very hour. That evening at the VFW Post, they were guests of honor at the banquet, and typically the VFW Posts on a

Saturday evening, there is a lot of noise in the background.

But they were so honored to be there, and almost as an afterthought, the Master of Ceremonies introduced their Voice of Democracy recipient, a young 16-year-old young lady who had proudly took the podium and the noise continued in the background, and she said -- gosh, I hate to tell you, but I am going to keep you in waiting to hear what she said. I hope most of you know what she said. We shall return.

(Whereupon, the video is shown at this time.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Please welcome the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller and Senator Orrin Hatch.

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE ORRIN HATCH

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and sisters:

It is a special honor for me to introduce to you the distinguished United States Senator from the great state of Utah, Senator Orrin Hatch. Senator Hatch was elected to represent Utah in the U.S. Senate in 1976. He is the most senior Republican member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and is also the second-ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee. Please join me in a warm VFW welcome for Senator Orrin Hatch. (Applause)

GREETINGS - THE HONORABLE ORRIN HATCH SENATOR HATCH: Thank you so much. We are happy to be in Salt Lake City. We are grateful to have you, but grateful for the service you have given. We appreciate what you mean to this great country and what you have done for this country.

Air Force One is on the way, and I have to tell you he is a great President of the United States with guts and ability, and he is doing a good job. I hope you all realize that. 9-11 occurred and with his leadership we have not had a terrorist incident since 9-11. Now, that is because of the leadership of this President.

In spite of the media, in spite of how some of the national media has been portraying everything that is wrong, if you talk to our servicemen overseas, they are saying they are doing a great job, they are accomplishing things that have not been accomplished before in the Middle East.

In Afghanistan, we are going to win there if we just have the guts to stick with it and do what is right. How about the fact that we deposed tyrant Hussein, and what about peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians? We have never done it, but we have because of this President and the leadership he has given us.

For the first time in years, we have had democratic elections in local areas in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, some of the first democratic elections forever in the Arab states. It wouldn't have happened except for the leadership of George W. Bush.

Just think about it. Would we be pulling out of Lebanon if it had not been for the leadership of George W. Bush? Think about Saudi Arabia has asked them to leave Lebanon. Those are major, major achievements. Let me mention one other thing. I am the author of the Flag

Protection Amendment. The national media and some of these other people think we are going to put people in jail if they defecate or urinate on the flag or burn it with contempt. There is not one single line that says the Congress of the United States will protect it from acts of desecration.

There is one line that would restore the Constitution to where it was before five Justices changed it by force of will. That Constitutional Amendment is the only Constitutional Amendment that has a chance of passing, and it is going to be because of the Veterans of Foreign Wars if it does pass.

Frankly, if we pass it, that sends a message that we don't want five Justices of the United States, none of them elected in their positions, to determine these types of issues and values for all America. We want to have the elected Representatives who have to stand for re-election to determine these values. That is the way it ought to be. (Applause)

We are one or two votes short in the United States Senate. The House has the votes to pass it. If we all get together and work on it and make it clear, all we want to give the Congress is the right, if it wants to, to protect her flag.

This amendment would grant that right, but we have for 200 years before five un-elected Justices changed that right. Let's get together and get behind it and let's pass it.

I believe the 38 states will ratify that so fast that our heads would be spinning as we would be sending a message to our young people and the great debates that follow that we have some values and we are not going to let anybody tamper with it. Let's get together and do it. Let's support our troops and let's support this administration. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States and Ms. Laura Bush.

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

Thank you, comrades and ladies, for that great welcome. Before I introduce our next speaker, I first want to recognize and welcome the First Lady of the United States, Ms. Laura Bush.

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

I now have the distinct honor and privilege to present to you someone who is no stranger to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. This is the fourth time he has spoken before our National Convention, first as a candidate and three times as the holder of our nation's highest office.

And for five consecutive years, he has met with our Voice of Democracy Award winners in the White House. That, to us, Mr. President, is unprecedented.

Although we don't always agree on every policy, you and your administrative give us the opportunity to sit down and discuss our disagreements face-to-face.

On behalf of our nation's veterans, the VFW is deeply grateful for that access, and no more than that can we ask.

Ladies and gentlemen of the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, may I present to you the Commander of the U.S. Armed Forces, President George W. Bush.

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

SPEAKER - THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you all. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. It is a pleasure to be back here in Salt Lake City, Utah. And I am proud to again stand with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Thanks for having me. (Applause)

I really enjoy coming to these conventions. Members here come from all walks of life and you do vital work across our country. I know first-hand the spirit of the VFW. I was raised by one of your members, a proud veteran of Post 4344 in Houston, Texas, former President George Bush. (Applause) Where is that mighty Texas delegation? (Applause) Behave yourselves. (Laughter)

I am honored to serve as the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Armed Forces. The men and women who wear the uniform today are protecting our nation and our way of life. And they are upholding a tradition of honor and bravery and integrity set by American veterans. All of you defended this country with unselfish courage. You have earned the respect of our citizens. And so on behalf of a grateful nation, thank you for your service to the cause of freedom and peace. (Applause)

I appreciate John Furgess. I appreciate working with him for the past year. He is a good, honorable man, and he has represented the VFW with distinction and class. It takes judgment to be the president of an organization. And so when I first saw John this morning, I realized he was a man of good judgment.

He said, "You have got to understand, Mr. President, most of the people are really excited to see Laura." (Laughter and applause) I am proud she is traveling with me. I am proud to call her wife, and a lot of folks in this United States of America are proud to call her First Lady. (Applause)

And I am pleased the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is with us today. Ranger Vet, a man who is doing a fine job on behalf of the veterans across the United States, Secretary Jim Nicholson. (Applause)

When I landed out there at the airport, I was greeted at the base of the stairs by the Governor of this great state, Governor Jon Huntsman. And I appreciate you being here, Governor. And I want to thank your wife, Mary Kaye, for joining us as well. There she is. Hi, Mary Kaye. I know the Lieutenant Governor, Gary Herbert, is with us, and Jeanette. I appreciate you being here, Lieutenant Governor.

I got on Air Force One down there in Waco, and they told me that we had a special guest on our plane. I said, "Well, who is it?" They said, "Well, it's Orrin Hatch." I said, "Fantastic, glad to give the fellow a ride." (Laughter) And the reason why I'm glad to give him a ride, he's a strong ally, and I appreciate a strong ally in Orrin Hatch. He does a great job for Utah and he does a great job for the United States of America. (Applause)

I appreciate Congressman Chris Cannon joining us today. Thank you for being here, Congressman. And also Congressman Jim Matheson. am proud you both are here. Thanks for taking time to be here today. (Applause)

They must have changed the immigration laws here in Utah, because they allowed the Idaho Governor to come across the border. (Laughter) I am proud to be here with my friend, Dirk Kemthorne. Thank you for coming, Dirk. (Applause)

I want to thank the Senior Vice Commander Jim Mueller for his hospitality. I am looking forward to working with him. I want to thank JoAnne Ott, the outgoing National VFW Ladies Auxiliary President. And I want to thank Sandy Germany, who will be the incoming President. (Applause)

Most of all, thank you-all. As Veterans of Foreign Wars, you stepped forward when America needed you. You took an oath to defend the nation, and you kept that oath, overseas and under fire. You triumphed over brutal enemies, liberated continents and answered the prayers of millions across the earth. All of us who have grown up in freedom must never forget your service and your sacrifice.

We also remember the troops who left America's shores, but did not live to make the journey home. We think of the families who lost a loved one, and who carry a burden of grief that remains for a lifetime. We remember the men and women in uniform whose fate is still undetermined, our prisoners of war and those missing in action. America must never forget them. We will not stop searching until we have accounted for every soldier, sailor, airmen and Marine missing in the line of duty. (Applause)

VFW's mission is to honor the dead by helping the living, and VFW members are making good on that promise every day. Together with your superb Ladies Auxiliary, VFW members have adopted military units, mentored youth groups, assisted in blood drives, and provided countless service to fellow veterans and their families. When you hear the name VFW, you know a certain type of work is being done, honorable, decent and faithful to the nation's highest ideals.

In war and in peace, America's veterans set an example of citizenship, and we honor your devotion to duty and to our country. All of America's veterans have placed the nation's security before their own lives. Your sacrifice creates a debt that America can never really fully, fully repay.

Yet there are certain things the government can do. My administration remains firmly committed to serving America's veterans. Since I took office my administration, in working with the United States Congress, has increased spending for veterans by $24 billion, an increase of 53 percent in my first four years as President. (Applause) In my first four years as President, we increased spending for veterans more than twice as much as the previous administration did in eight years. (Applause)

Health care is a top priority for our veterans and it is a top priority for my administration. The past four years, we have increased the VA medical care budget by 51 percent, and we are using those resources to make real improvements for our veterans.

Over the past four years, we have increased total outpatient visits from 44 million to 55 million. We have increased the number of prescriptions filled from 98 million to 116 million. Since January, 2002, we have reduced the backlog of disability claims by 20 percent. Claims are now being processed 68 days faster. By the end of this year, we plan to cut another 15 days on the average turnaround time. (Applause)

We place a special focus on treating men and women returning

from combat, and veterans with service disabilities and lower incomes and special needs. In the last two years, we have committed more than $1.5 billion to modernizing and expanding VA facilities, so more veterans can get care closer to their homes. My administration is helping the veterans who fought and sacrificed for America to get the quality care they deserve.

We are also getting results from veterans beyond the health-care system. For more than a century, federal law prohibited disabled veterans from receiving both their retired pay and their VA disability compensation. Combat-injured and severely disabled veterans deserve better, and I was honored to be the first President in more than 100 years to sign concurrent receipt legislation. (Applause)

We have also expanded grants to help homeless veterans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. No veteran who served in the blazing heat or bitter cold of foreign lands should have to live without shelter in the very country whose freedom they fought for. (Applause) You defended our flag in uniform; you continue to defend the flag today.

I share the VFW's strong support for a Constitutional Amendment to protect the American flag. (Applause) In June, the House of Representatives voted to ban flag desecration, and I urge the United States Senate to pass this important amendment this year. (Applause)

At this hour, a new generation of Americans is defending our flag and our freedom in the first war of the 21st Century. The war came to our shores on the morning of September 11th, 2001. Since then, the terrorists have continued to strike, in Bali, in Riyadh, in Istanbul and Madrid, and Baghdad and London, and Sharm el-Sheikh and elsewhere. The enemy, the terrorists are ruthless and brutal. They are fighting on behalf of a hateful ideology that despises everything America stands for.

Our enemies have no regard for human life. They are trying to hijack a great religion to justify a dark vision that rejects freedom and tolerance and dissent. They have a strategy and part of that strategy is they are trying to shake our will.

They kill the innocent. They kill women and children knowing that the images of their brutality will horrify civilized peoples. Their goal is to drive nations into retreat so they can topple governments across the Middle East, establish Taliban-likened regimes, and turn that region into a launching pad for more attacks against our people. In all their objectives, our enemies are trying to intimidate America and the free world. And in all their objectives they will fail. (Applause)

Like the great struggles of the 20th Century, the war on terror demands every element of our national power. Yet this is a different kind of war. Our enemies are not organized into battalions or commanded by governments. They hide in shadowy networks and retreat after they strike.

After September 11th, 2001, I made a pledge, America will not wait to be attacked again. We will go on the offense and we will defend our freedom. (Applause)

We have a comprehensive strategy to win this war on terror. It includes three parts, protecting the homeland, taking the fight to the enemy, and advance in freedom. The first part of our strategy is to protect America. We are reforming our intelligence services to stay ahead of our enemies and to rout out terrorists cells before they strike.

We are using our diplomatic and financial tools to cut off terrorists' financing and to drain them of their support. We have more than tripled funding for homeland security since September 11, 2001. We have provided more than $14 billion to train and equip state and local first responders. Many of our police officers and fire fighters and first responders are veterans, and America is grateful for their dedication to keep this country safe. (Applause)

One of the most important tools we have to protect America is called the USA Patriot Act. This good law permits our intelligence and law enforcement communities to share information. It gives our law enforcement officers many of the same tools to fight terror that they already use to fight drugs and street crime.

The Patriot Act is fully consistent with the United States Constitution, and as a result of that act, we are getting results. Our law enforcement intelligence officers have used the Patriot Act to help break up terrorist cells and support networks in California and New York and Ohio and Illinois and Virginia and Florida and other states.

Key provisions of the Patriot Act are scheduled to expire at the end of this year. Yet the terrorist threat to our country will not expire at the end of this year. When the House and Senate return from their recess, they need to send me a bill to renew the Patriot Act. (Applause)

All these steps to protect the homeland have made it safer, but we are not yet safe. Terrorists in foreign lands still hope to attack our country. They still hope to kill our citizens. The lesson of September 11th, 2001, is that we must confront threats before they fully materialize. (Applause)

Vast oceans and friendly neighbors are not enough to protect us. A policy of retreat and isolation will not bring us safety. The only way to defend our citizens where we live is to go after the terrorists where they live. (Applause)

So the second part of our strategy is to take the fight to the terrorists abroad before they can attack us here at home. This is the most difficult and dangerous mission in the war on terror. And like generations before them, our soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines have stepped forward to accept the mission. They have damaged the Al Qaeda network across the world and we are going to keep the terrorists on the run. From Afghanistan to Iraq, to the horn of Africa, our men and women in uniform are bringing our enemies to justice and bringing justice to our enemies.

Our goal is clear: to secure a more peaceful world for our children and grandchildren. We will accept nothing less than total victory over the terrorists and their hateful ideology. (Applause)

Iraq is a central front in the war on terror. It is a vital part of our mission. Terrorists like Bin Laden and his ally, Zarqawi are trying to turn Iraq into what Afghan was under the Taliban, a place where women are beaten, religious and ethnic minorities are executed, and terrorists have sanctuary to plot attacks against free people.

Terrorists are trying to block the rise of democracy in Iraq, because they know a free Iraq will deal a decisive blow to their strategy to achieve absolute power. The Iraqi people lived for three decades under an absolute dictatorship and they will not allow a new set of would-be tyrants to take control of their future. (Applause)

The response, the people of Iraq have made a clear choice for all to see. In spite of threats and assassinations, more than eight million citizens defied the car bombers and killers and voted in free elections. (Applause) In spite of violence, the Iraqi people are building a nation that secures freedom for its citizens and contributes to peace and stability in that region.

Now, Iraq's leaders are once again defying the terrorists and pessimists by completing work on a democratic constitution. The establishment of a democratic constitution will be a landmark event in the history of Iraq and the history of the Middle East.

All of Iraq's main ethnic and religious groups are working together on this vital project. All made the courageous choice to join the political process and together they will produce a Constitution that reflects the values and traditions of the Iraqi people.

Producing a Constitution is a difficult process that involves debate and compromise. We know this from our own history. Our constitutional convention was home to political rivalries and regional disagreements. The Constitution our founders produced has been amended many times over. So Americans understand the challenges facing the framers of Iraq's new Constitution. We admire their thoughtful deliberations; we salute their determination to lay the foundation for lasting democracy amid the ruins of a brutal dictatorship.

As Iraqis continue to take control of their own future, we will help them take responsibility for their own security. The enemies of a free Iraq are determined. They are adapting their tactics so they can take more innocent life. American and Iraqi forces are adapting our tactics, too. We are on the hunt side-by-side with Iraqi troops. We are working to defeat the terrorists together.

As we hunt down our common enemies, we will continue to train more Iraqi security forces so they can take on more responsibilities in fighting the terrorists. After all, it's their own country.

Our military strategy is straightforward. As Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down. And when Iraqi forces can defend their freedom by taking on more and more of the fight to the enemy, our troops will come home with the honor they have earned. (Applause)

In the long run, victory in the war on terror requires changing the conditions that give rise to violence and extremism. So the third part of our strategy in the war on terror is to spread the hope of freedom across the broader Middle East. Free societies are peaceful societies. By standing with those who stand for their liberty, we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and our grandchildren.

As we work to spread freedom in the Middle East, we have cause for optimism. The rise of liberty in Iraq is part of a wider movement in the region. The tide of freedom ebbs and flows, but it is moving in a clear direction, and freedom's tide is rising in the broader Middle East.

In Afghanistan, men and women have formed a free government after suffering one of the most brutal tyrannies on earth. America is proud to call Afghanistan an ally on the war on terror. In Lebanon, people took to the streets to demand their sovereignty. They have now gone to the polls and voted in free elections.

As freedom takes root on these countries, it is inspiring democratic reformers in places like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Across the region, a new generation deserves to be free, and they will have it. And the world will be more peaceful because of it. (Applause)

In the heart of the Middle East, a hopeful story is unfolding. After decades of shattered promises and stolen lives, peace is within reach in the Holy Land. The Palestinian people have expressed their desire for sovereignty and peace in free and fair elections. President Abbas has rejected violence and taken steps toward democratic reform.

This past week, Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli people took a courageous and painful step by beginning to remove settlements in Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank. Israeli disengagement is an historic step that reflects the bold leadership of Prime Minister Sharon.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have elected governments committed to peace and progress, and by the way forward is clear. We are working for a return to the road map.

We are helping the Palestinians prepare for self-government and to defeat terrorists who attack Israel and terrorists who oppose the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state.

We are providing $50 million in direct assistance to the Palestinians for new housing and infrastructure projects in Gaza. We remain fully committed to defending the security and well-being of our friend and ally, Israel, and we demand an end to terrorism and violence in every form, because we know that progress toward peace depends on an end to terror.

We will continue working for the day when the map of the Middle East shows two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security. (Applause)

As more nations replace tyranny with liberty and replace hatred with hope, America will be more secure. Our nation has accepted a mission, and we are moving forward with resolve. Spreading freedom is the work of generations, and no one knows it better than you. Freedom has contended with hateful ideologies before. We defeated Fascism; we defeated Communism; and we will defeat the hateful ideology of the terrorists who attacked America. (Applause)

Each of these struggles for freedom required great sacrifice. From the beaches of Normandy to the snows of Korea, courageous Americans gave their lives so others could live in freedom. The morning of September 11th, we have known that the war on terror would require great sacrifices as well.

We have lost 1,864 members of our Armed Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom and 223 in Operation Enduring Freedom. Each of these men and women left grieving families and loved ones back home. Each of these heroes left a legacy that will allow generations of their fellow Americans to enjoy the blessings of liberty. And each of these Americans have brought the hope of freedom to millions who have not known it.

We owe them something. We will finish the task that they gave their lives for. We will honor their sacrifice by staying on the offensive against the terrorists, and building strong allies in Afghanistan and Iraq that will help us win and fight -- fight and win the war on terror. (Applause)

As veterans of foreign wars, you know that the rise of liberty is critical to our national security. You understand the power of freedom because you have witnessed it with your own eyes. In a single lifetime, many of you have seen liberty spread from Germany and Japan to Eastern Europe, to Latin America, to Southeast Asia and Africa and beyond.

You have seen that democracies do not fight each other, and that liberation leads to peace. With your courage and commitment to freedom, you have lifted lives of millions around the globe, and you made this country and our world more secure.

The generation of men and women who defend our freedom today is taking its rightful place among the heroes of our nation's history. Once again, America has found patriots who are selfless and tireless and unrelenting in the face of danger. Once again, the American people have been steadfast and determined not to lose our nerve. And once again, we have confidence in our cause, because we know that freedom is the future of every nation and at the side of freedom is the side of victory.

I want to thank you for the example you have set for all who wear our nation's uniform. I want to thank you for your bravery and your decency. May God bless this nation's veterans and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

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

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: At this time we will recess until 1:15 p.m. For a quick bite during the recess, take advantage of the Mess Hall and concessions in Halls B, C, or the cafe in the concourse area. Our business session will reconvene at 1:15.

(NOON RECESS.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, please take a seat for this afternoon's business session.

Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the room by opening the Bible for this afternoon's session. Comrades, good afternoon and welcome to the business session of the 106th Annual Convention.

First, as we call the meeting to order, I would like to call on Comrade Dave Butters for the official credentials report.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

COMRADE DAVE BUTTERS: Commander-in-Chief, first of all, I want to thank you for your appointment as your National Convention Credentials Chairman. I am from Newark, Delaware, and I stand before you to report the number of delegates registering with voting credentials as of the close of business at 4:00 p.m. yesterday, August 21, 2005.

The delegates registering their credentials by 4:00 p.m. today will be added to tomorrow's totals up to the maximum authorized per Post. The total Post delegates, 8,882. The total Department Commanders, 44. The total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 27. The total National Officers, 38. That is for a grand total of 8,991. A simple majority will require 4,496. A two-thirds majority will require 5,594.

Now, if we have any National Council members, any

Department Commanders or Past Commanders-in-Chief who have not picked up their voting delegate credentials, you should do so at your earliest opportunity. Thank you, Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for a good initial report.

Comrades, at this time we will begin with our Committee reports, and the first one is the report of the Convention Rules. The chair is Past Commander-in-Chief Clifford Olson.

REPORT OF CONVENTION RULES

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON: Good afternoon, comrades. First, I would like to thank the Commander-in-Chief for the appointment as Chairman of the Convention Rules Committee, and I would like to introduce my Co-Chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief John Staum.

The Committee met yesterday and after great length and debate, the following recommendations were made 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 24, 2005, 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 at 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, on any subject before the Convention.

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

11. Voting strength shall be determined by 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 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 inter-

fere 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.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN STAUM: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, John Staum, Past Commander-in-Chief, a delegate from Post 9625, Minnesota, makes a motion that the convention rules be accepted.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON (Post 8699-Massachusetts): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Clifford Olson, Post 8699, Massachusetts, proudly seconds the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: There has been a proper motion made and seconded. Is there discussion of our Convention Rules?

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dan Johnson, a delegate from Post 63, Department of Idaho. I make a motion that we delete the second sentence in Paragraph No. 7, which says, "This convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds." This would allow us to consider the resolutions on the national travel policy for national VFW officers.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Dick, you said you want to make a motion. There is a motion on the floor that has been seconded. We are under discussion of that motion that the convention rules be accepted, yes or no. If you want to argue, go ahead and argue your point, but you are not making a motion.

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): I would like to amend the motion on the floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Okay. You want to amend the Convention rules. Is there a second to the amendment?

COMRADE TRAVIS WHALEY (Post 924 - Alabama): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The Parliamentarian tells us to set that aside and we will discuss it later. We will set that aside and come back and discuss that momentarily. Otherwise, is there any discussion on the convention rules? Seeing none, those in favor shall vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The rules are adopted.

Now, Dick, at Microphone No. 3. So you understand the parliamentary situation, you are asking this convention to suspend the rules. That will require two-thirds. We are perfectly willing to do that as long as you understand the parliamentary procedure. Do you want to state your position again?

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): We believe that because this convention, the National Convention, any National Convention, has the supreme authority of the VFW, we believe that this convention should have the authority to act on the resolutions concerning national officers' travel policy.

The Committee came out and said that was financial, it was financial implications, that it would be referred to the Council of Administration. But we would like this convention to address it rather than the Council.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Are you making that in the form of a motion, Dick?

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Yes, sir, I would

like to make a motion that we delete the second sentence in Paragraph 7.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You will have to restate it for the record. Simply restate your motion.

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): I make a motion that the second sentence in Paragraph 7 of the convention rules be deleted for this convention.

PARLIAMENTARIAN ED BURNHAM: We have adopted the convention rules and the provision is a two-thirds vote to suspend the rules. Now, the proper motion would be to suspend the rules in this instance with that No. 7, and then to eliminate that. I think that is the proper motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Benny Bachand, a delegate from Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. I think the Parliamentarian is incorrect. He made a motion, an amendment to the rules prior to the adoption of the rules. You said it was perfectly allowable to set that aside. We would not have agreed on the official rules if we had not had the opportunity to vote on the amendment, so that amendment was in order and it was seconded by Travis Whaley from Alabama. I believe that we are still under the Convention rules and the adoption with the amendment that was submitted by Dick Johnson.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We will vote on the amendment. I think that is proper, Microphone No. 2. Now, what the motion is is to delete one sentence in the convention rules that has to do with expenditure of funds. Is there any discussion on that amendment?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): As Comrade Johnson had indicated, the Finance and Internal Affairs Committee of which there were several resolutions submitted to that Committee, the Committee rejected those based on the fact that the convention rules did not allow us to discuss those items because it called for expenditure of money.

Those convention rules had never been adopted and have not been adopted, and, therefore, we should have been entitled to discuss those resolutions in the Resolutions Committee. If we never have that opportunity, why are we bringing resolutions to our Department Conventions, if we don't have the opportunity to bring them here before this convention, our supreme body, which is the body sitting here in Salt Lake City?

We believe that the body has the right to discuss policy of your organization, and certainly the Council can take up the expenditure. We don't believe that any of the resolutions that are submitted relative to the travel policy call for expenditure of money, but calls for policy of the organization. We believe the delegates have an opportunity and should vote on what the policies of the Veterans of Foreign Wars should be. Thank you.

Microphone No. 3.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL LARRY MAHER (Post 7356-Missouri): I understand the frustration of the comrades here today, I do, but I would like to point out that the by-laws gives the National Council of Administration the power at its first annual meeting following the National Convention to approve and adopt an annual budget.

That budget sets forth what money will be spent on travel and what money is going to be spent on the Commander-in-Chief's trips, and

all the other things that I think the comrades are concerned about. I have a commitment of the incoming Adjutant General, and I think the commitment of most Council members, that we will deal with these issues in October. That is the best I can say.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: In other words, that is the next meeting of the Council of Administration, Larry?

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL MAHER: Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: In October, in Kansas City. Past Commander-in-Chief Olson.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CLIFFORD OLSON: If I may, the thinking behind this Rule No. 7 is exactly as the Quartermaster General just spoke. It is up to the Council of Administration to determine the budget. We can't spend money if it is not in the budget. This was the thinking of putting it in here. It has been in here for 100 years, and we continued to put it in here.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

COMRADE RON GASCON (Post 792 - Vermont): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I rise in support of Comrade Benny Bachand's comments. What we are talking about here is policies. I don't think that deleting that will create any problems financially.

We just want to be able to discuss these things, and we are not trying to take anything away from the Budget Committee. That is all I have to say.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you.

Microphone No. 3 once again.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dean White, Post 27, Department of Europe. I believe that it is the responsibility of this convention to give direction to the National Council of Administration about what we want them to do. Therefore, we need to discuss the policies that we want them to approve. Therefore, we should pass this amendment to Rule 7.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there any further discussion on the amendment? Not being any further discussion, then I think we are in order to vote on the amendment, which would change the approach to the expenditure of funds. The Committee has explained that it is a long-standing policy of this organization that the responsibility for the budget rests with the Council of Administration.

The question here today is to amend that to allow, I suppose, a discussion on the floor about travel expenses. Really, the proper place will be the Council of Administration, when the budget is finalized in October, when the Budget Committee meets and the entire Council meets. After that explanation, is there need for further discussion on the amendment?

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RON ROSKIEWICZ (Post 9460 - Connecticut): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, there is a law in Demeter's manual and it is called force of custom. It says it is always in effect and especially in voting. That means when you do something year after year after year, the same thing, the same way, it takes a two-thirds majority vote to change that custom.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is what the Parliamentarian explained earlier. Thank you. It does take two-thirds. Do you want to speak from here? I have given the Adjutant General permission to speak from here as opposed to going out to the floor to speak.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I just want to add something that perhaps the delegates may not have clear in their minds. That is, if this convention would vote to spend $1 million, then it would be up to the Quartermaster General and the National Council of Administration to find that money. Where, I don't know. But keep that in mind as you cast your vote. If you spend the money here and it is not available, we are all in deep trouble.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have heard the discussion now on the amendment to take that one sentence out of our Convention Rules. It is a dramatic change because the Council would do that very thing in October.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 - Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Wayne Thompson, Judge Advocate General. I think we have got somewhat mixed up on this debate and discussion. It is very clear, comrades, in our by-laws that the Council of Administration sets the budget and determines its expenditures for this organization.

However, if there is an interest in discussing policies affecting expenditures would not be out of order. If that is what you are asking, then the various resolutions that are submitted to the Finance and Internal Affairs Committee, I don't think anyone will stop you from debating those.

Keep in mind no matter what you would decide we cannot direct the Council, as far as the expenditure of any monies. That is their final authority. The only way you could ever change that, you will have to change the by-laws. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Judge Advocate General. I think these further explanations are in order, but I think you may be formalizing it too much. We will be happy to discuss an issue like that. It doesn't take an amendment to the Convention Rules to discuss something like that from the floor. Everything is open.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I would like to remind everyone the supreme body of this Veterans of Foreign Wars is the delegates sitting here right today. They will decide how we are going to set policy. I know what the Quartermaster General says and what the Adjutant General says.

If this floor decided that the Veterans of Foreign Wars should spend $1 million, yes, it would be the responsibility of the Council to go spend it. Give credit to the people who work day-to-day in the fields for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They have good judgment.

If they decide that is what we should do, that is what the Veterans of Foreign Wars should do. You, yourself, Commander-in-Chief, said in your acceptance speech, "I work for you." You said that in your acceptance speech. What we are saying is start working for us. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, I think we have discussed it long enough. We have had explanations from the Quartermaster General, from the Adjutant General, from the Judge Advocate General. Whenever issues are brought up on the floor, the Council is ready to formulate what would be a good operating budget come October in conjunction with their responsibilities as the Council of Administration. So let's go ahead and vote now on this amendment.

To come back to Dick, I don't think it is necessary to restate that. Dick, do you want to restate it?

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): That is fine, sir. I don't think we should.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: All right. Ed, do you want to explain the proper parliamentary procedure?

PARLIAMENTARIAN ED BURNHAM: As I understand it, the amendment is to delete the last sentence of Rule No. 7, which says, "This convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds."

Is that your understanding, comrade?

COMRADE DICK JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): That is correct. It is just that sentence, the second sentence of Paragraph 7.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I need the sentence in front of me. "This convention will not consider any resolution calling for the expenditure or appropriation of organization funds." That is the motion and it requires a two-thirds vote. It has been properly seconded.

On the amendment, those in favor of the amendment will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The chair says the "ayes" have it. The two-thirds is approved. We are moving right along. We are going to adopt the Convention Rules as just amended. Those in favor of adopting those rules as just amended, vote "aye"; those opposed vote "no". The "ayes" have it. The Convention Rules are now adopted.

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL RECRUITER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Comrades, we are going to go back now and pick up two very important awards that were omitted earlier due to the visit of the President, not omitted, but we just couldn't get to them at the time. They are so important to this organization.

As Commander-in-Chief, I wanted to stress during this entire year the importance of recruiting as well as rewarding those individuals who worked so hard to recruit new and reinstated members into the VFW. This year I have the great pleasure of naming joint winners of the National Recruiter of the Year Award.

These two individuals have both recruited more than 1,500 new or reinstated members. I felt it important to recognize both of them. The winners are Peter Mascetti, VFW Post No. 10658, Department of Europe, and John M. Warner, VFW Post No. 4851, Department of California.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Recruiter of the Year Award presented to Peter J. Mascetti in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition for your outstand-

ing service in the Veterans of Foreign Wars Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiatives and untiring efforts during the 2004-2005 membership year contributed immeasurably toward the national membership goal of 180,000 new or reinstated members.

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

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Banas and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

That same wording on the citation is also being accorded to National Recruiter of the Year Award for John M. Warner. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE PETER MASCETTI

COMRADE PETER MASCETTI (Post 10658 - Department of Europe): I am kind of lost for words and that is unusual for me. I would like to thank the Department of Europe for supporting me this year. I would like to thank John Warner for keeping it real. He kept pushing me. I want to thank my wife for taking time to support me. Comrades, all you have to do is go out and get them. Thank you.

COMRADE JOHN WARNER (Post 4851 - California): Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to thank the Department of California for all their help, and also the First District of California All American District Commander. Thank you very much. I would like to also thank Dan Basinger, who sent me out recruiting, and he is going to retire, but he helped me out an awful lot. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Give a round of applause to the Recruiters of the Year one more time. A job well done. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATIONS OF THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE AWARDS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: For 2004-2005, I also created the Challenge of the Future Awards recognizing those individuals who recruited the most new or reinstated members in four different categories.

Category 1 is for ages 18 to 34-year-old members, and the winner is Robert J. "Joe" Mulligan, Post 27, Department of Europe.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Joe was named All American Commander this year.

"Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Challenge of the Future Award presented to Joe Mulligan in sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of your outstanding service in the VFW Membership Program.

"Your exceptional initiatives and untiring efforts during the 2004-2005 membership year contributed immeasurably to the national membership goal of recruiting 180 new or reinstated members.

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

It has the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and Adjutant General John J. Senk,

Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE ROBERT MULLIGAN

COMRADE ROBERT MULLIGAN (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Comrades, thanks for the honor. Thanks for the opportunity to serve Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and folks, like Peter said, the folks are out there and go out and get them and sign them up for this great organization. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Category 2 is for 35 to 50-year-old members and the winner is Wilbur R. Dudley, Post 6115, Department of Texas. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Comrades, in the essence of time we are going to shore this up a little bit. The same citation is being awarded to each one of the Challenge of the Future Award winners.

RESPONSE - COMRADE WILBUR DUDLEY

COMRADE WILBUR DUDLEY (Post 6115 - Texas): Comrades, you might have got some older ones, we got some new ones. There is good hunting out there. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Category 3 is for 51 to 65-year-old members, and the winner is Daniel D. Boyer, Post No. 7726, Department of Virginia. (Applause) Danny is serving as State Commander 2005-2006.

RESPONSE - COMRADE DANIEL BOYER

COMRADE DANIEL BOYER (Post 7726 - Virginia): I am honored to receive an award for something I love to do, and I am so pleased that this afternoon I am going to share my recruiting secrets with all of you The secret is quite simply ask them and they will join. Thank you, comrades. Let's go get them.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: And finally, Category 4 is for Active Duty, Reserve and National Guard members, and the winner is Lonnie Garza, Post No. 3413, Department of Texas. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE LONNIE GARZA

COMRADE LONNIE GARZA (Post 3413 - Texas): To all you comrades, thank you very much, and I wish you all the best of luck. Look out, Europe. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's salute the National Recruiter one more time, each and every one. Thank you so much. (Applause)

I call on Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera for the report of the Committee on National By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual. Chairman Spera.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL BY-LAWS,

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Thank you very much. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, thank you for the opportunity to serve on this Committee and allow me to introduce my co- chairman, Past Commander-in-Chief from the great state of Tennessee, Cooper T. Holt.

We met in session and came up with our recommendations. I will read the by-law recommendations to be approved: B-2; B-3; B-5 and B-7. I move at this time for adoption of those four.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF COOPER T. HOLT: Commander-in-Chief, I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been properly made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I ask that B-5 be set aside.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: B-5 is set aside. Let's vote on the others and we will set aside B-5. Those in favor of adopting the motion will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. The motion is approved.

All right. Dean, discussion on your set aside.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I move that B-5 be rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETER MASCETTI (Post 10658 - Department of Europe): I will second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Okay. It has been properly made and seconded. Let's discuss that.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I withdraw the motion. I understand it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion now is to adopt. On the question, those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): B-5 is set aside, and I would like to discuss not to accept it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You are under discussion now.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Yes, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dean White, Post 27, Department of Europe. I think there is possibly some confusion. I think this amendment should not be adopted, because of the paragraph that gives the National Headquarters every three years to automatically raise their Life Membership based upon the cost of living figured by the Social Security index.

This body is the only body that can raise Life Membership dues. If the National Organization feels the Life Membership dues are not in line with what is needed to perpetuate the program, then they need to

come back to this body and ask for another increase of the Life Membership dues. It should not be automatic.

Although the paragraph in question here says increase or decrease, I will say the decrease is about $1 apiece. This Life Membership increase should not be accepted regardless of the month of the increase. Let the national body come back with a fixed amount and then we will change it every year, if need be, by this body.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Dean.

Microphone No. 3. COMRADE PAT BOTTNER (Post 246 - Minnesota): I rise in favor of B-5. I may have a lot of opposition to that, but I do rise in favor of that. It was stated yesterday in the meeting as a member of the Committee if you do not like the three-year increase, you can come back at the next convention and pull it out. But at this time, I will vote in favor and call for the question. I am in favor of B-5.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE CHRISTOPHER KOZAKIOWICZ (Post 9907- Arizona): I stand in opposition to this. It has nothing to do with the three-year increase. As I come to the VFW, I have found that every member of the group of this organization is supposed to be treated the same, and if you look at the increases in that Life Membership it is not the same across the board.

For the most senior group, this goes up by $65 and the most junior age group it goes up almost $140. If we are going to do a Life Membership increase, it should be an even increase across the board and treat all the veterans the same.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1, under discussion.

COMRADE PAUL MANLEY (Post 51 - Washington): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Resolution 208 was supposed to be a substitute schedule of the original proposed Life Membership fees, and get the increase, rather than by-laws. I would like to make a motion to amend B-5, to substitute that schedule into the rates for the next 15 years.

PARLIAMENTARIAN ED BURNHAM: There is a motion on the floor and we are discussing whether or not you adopt B-5. Now, the only option is to adopt it or reject it. You can't make any changes to it because the by-laws provide it has to be mailed out prior to the convention. We have to accept it or reject it as it has been submitted. The discussion now is to adopt, to speak for or against it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1. I am sorry, Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOE RIDGLEY (Post 8220 - Missouri): I rise in support of B-5. I don't believe it was the only by-law amendment that was submitted by you. It was one submitted by Maryland. First of all, I want to address the comrade that discussed the fee schedule, and there is no way today we can have an actuarial finding here because that is how fees are set based on life expectancies, interest rates and other factors.

So, it is never going to appear that the fees are equal. It just won't happen for an annuity like this to work, and for the organization to be able to pay back the payout every year that needs to be paid out unless you have some actuarial funds.

Second, I believe we should approve this by-law, because as

you have heard me say when I was Quartermaster General on numerous occasions, it is not for today, it is for tomorrow. I do agree this body can change this by-law any time they want. In three years, if they don't want the increase, they don't feel it is legitimate, they can change it. But we need to start doing something now to make sure of that.

We sit here and talk about getting the young veterans in here. We talk about getting the Iraqi veterans and Afghanistan veterans, the Desert Storm veterans in our organization. We have got to start thinking 10, 20 years in advance what we are going to leave to them in our organization.

This by-law is not going to put any more money in the pockets of the Departments or National Headquarters next year, but in 10, 20, 30 years from now, it will certainly help pay the bill. I hear it from my Post and other Posts they are looking for money. They are having a hard time surviving.

In my own Post, the bar doesn't support the bar, the Post supports the bar. That is embarrassing, but that is another story. We have got to start thinking about the future and the financial future of this organization now.

Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Joe. Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 - Maryland): Commander-in-Chief, I rise in support of this resolution which was actually introduced by the Department of Maryland. Let me give you a little background. When we originally received the proposed by-law change from National, it was an immediate adverse reaction when our members looked at the figures. But we did a little research.

We looked at the financial situation that we were facing in the VFW and taking into consideration that this is for the benefit of the organization, not of any of the people individually, we decided to come up with a substitute proposal which is before you at this time.

If you look at the history of the financial market the last couple of years, you see what has been happening as far as pension funds are concerned, or whatever affects pension funds affects our Life Membership fund because they are increased also.

It runs on investments that have gone down dramatically over the past years. That is why you find the pension fund going outside of business and turning them over to the government to run. We have a responsibility to this organization.

It is our responsibility to do what is best not for ourselves but for the best of the organization. That is why the Department of Maryland decided to put in this recommendation.

Now, I want you to bear in mind also this will not affect any of your current members. They all have the opportunity now to become Life Members if they want to at the old rates, because the old rates will stay in effect until January 1st, 2006. So, there is nothing that you are going to do today that will have an adverse impact on your current membership. I urge you to support this amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE KEN PIKE (Post 4876 - Oklahoma): I call for the ques-

tion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The question has been called for. You have heard ample debate, pro and con, and the parliamentary procedure is do you want to cut off debate? It has been called for. Is there a second?

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It has been seconded. Those ready to vote in favor will say "aye"; those opposed "no". The "nays" have it. We will continue, then.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): There is no opposition to a Life Membership fee increase. The opposition is to taking away the rights of this convention to set the Life Membership fee on an automatic three-year increase or decrease, voted automatically in. That takes it away from the delegates to this convention.

If the national body feels they need an additional Life Membership increase, then they come back to the convention and say we need another increase. If we want to remove that three-year provision and we approve it, it will not take effect until the next year. We would already have the Life Membership increase.

So, we do not want this three-year automatic increase or decrease of the Life Membership. It takes away the rights of the delegates to this convention. The delegates will tell you you don't have any rights and you can't take them away from them.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone 1.

COMRADE VICTOR FUENTEALBA (Post 9083 - Maryland): I want to reiterate what was said previously by one of the other previous speakers. There is nothing to stop this convention next year or the following year from amending this, if it is adopted, and removing the cost-of-living increase.

It is not going into effect for three years anyway. We have two or three years to determine what our experience has been with this by-law. I urge you to approve this by-law.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE SHIRLEY SHAW (Post 4647 - California):

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Shirley Shaw, Post 4647, Department of California. I rise in favor of B-5. It is our obligation to leave it to our children and their children, the future of this organization. These are our sons and daughters that will be put forth. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Any further discussion? Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DON LIMECHERF (Post 1603 - Maine): As it has been said, I have a problem with it or I have discussed it with all the officers over the last 16 years. You know, this is strictly something to take care of financing. I get a little tired of being criticized because I am not paying my share, because I happened to buy a Life Membership maybe 20 years ago.

It is nice to think about 20 years, but this organization has to think about now, or there won't be any organization 20 years from now. Sixteen years without 100 percent, I am so ashamed, I probably will go in the Legion. I have two Posts.

It is not like when I was making $75 a month. These kids in ser-

vice today are making $20,000 to $30,000 a year. I have not run across any of them. That's why for me to have to go to a guy 81 or 82 years and change that, it isn't going to work.

That is the exact same thing that happened five years ago, and we voted it down, and then you did it. I am against this increase. I am not against any increase, but anything that is going to take care of us 20 years from now, where we can't take care of ourselves in 2005.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN "GUNNER" KENT: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am "Gunner" Kent, Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. I rise to support this resolution, and I disagree with my comrade from Europe who says I am giving up my vote if I pass this resolution.

Comrades, nobody can take your vote away from you any time, anywhere, any place. It was proven earlier when you voted to talk about the travel policy. This convention rules. Every year, if you don't like the increase, you can come back here and defeat an increase. Nobody is taking your vote away unless you give your vote up.

So let's set that nonsense aside and talk about what the Life Membership Program is for. When I joined in 1978, my Post got a pay back of $3.50. My Post still gets a pay back of $3.50. My Department gets a pay back of $3.50. I am going to use this little example here.

In 1995, I went to work in Washington, D.C., and my cigarettes were $3.85 a carton, and I got one dollar back because I went to the commissary. That paid them $2.85. My Post was getting $3.50 for my membership. When I left Washington, D.C., the cigarettes were $36.50, and I wasn't getting a dollar back. My Post was still getting $3.50.

The lesson here is prices go up, and it is great to sell a cheap Life Membership, but it does no good to sell a cheap Life Membership if you cannot give your members the services they desire because the cost of living out-spends what the member is paying for his Life Membership.

We want a vital organization. To have that, we have to quit selling ourselves cheap and make this organization what it should be. I stand in full support of this. We owe it to the Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans, we owe it to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We should pass B-5 and get on with our business.

Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETER MASCETTI (Post 1065 - Department of Europe): Having recruited over 400 Life Members, this will turn off a lot of veterans momentarily-wise. I agree with "Gunner" to a point. If we have this much difficulty trying to get this back and forth, change views or opinions, how much trouble are we going to have in three years if the increase is too much and not satisfactory, and go back to this body again and try to lower it?

The debate has been one hour and 15 minutes. What will it be three years from now? I think you have to increase it. They can have an increase, and next year they can increase it. Bring it on the basis that the sitting body will make that decision at that moment. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK: Thank you,

Commander-in-Chief. I am John Wasylik, Past Commander-in-Chief, Post 2529, Sandusky, Ohio. You know, I am one of the oldest members around this place any more. I used to be the kid.

I remember the arguments when I was in the chairs and we went through the Life Membership. Everybody screamed that the Vietnam veterans will not be able to afford that, we won't have any Life Members. Are there any Vietnam veterans in the room that are not Life Members? I spoke in favor of this at the Mid-Winter Conference. Unfortunately, I had a personal conflict and couldn't stay at the State Convention. At the Mid-Winter Conference, I told the comrades there, reminded them that when they have their election they will be asked by National what their Post charge was, and I pointed out to them that they better raise their Post regular dues.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I think we all need to start emphasizing what we used to do quite a bit of, and what I have heard here on this floor we are too cheap; we are too cheap. Tell me any organization that charges as little for regular dues as we do. I can't think of one in my home area.

I am not going to name any of the rest of them, I don't pretend to bring any other organization into this discussion. I am talking about the VFW, the finest organization in the United States. We give it away. I am in favor of B-5, but B-5 will not work until we raise regular dues in the Post to make it work well.

So we really have got the cart in front of the horse. We really should be talking about regular dues and what are we going to raise them to? Those of us who are from the bigger Posts and bigger Departments better be thinking about the little Posts and the little Departments where dues money is so important so that they can stay alive.

So let's talk about raising regular dues. Let's go ahead and raise B-5. We need it. We need to stay physically alive and we can't do it without money. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Please be seated. We are voting to accept B-5, a by-laws change which requires two-thirds. After that five-minute recess, is there a call for further discussion, or are you ready to vote? Those who vote in favor of B-5 will say "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. It is two-thirds.

Comrades, it was not an easy call, but two-thirds is recognized by the chair.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROGER MAYS (Post 2051 - Michigan): I rise before this delegation to ask for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We need ten Departments. That is one.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I request a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Europe requests a roll-call vote.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAN PETERSON (Post 2251 - Colorado): I ask for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is three.

COMRADE DONNIE VERINCHI (Post 9573 - Mississippi): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is four.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE WALTER McALLISTER (Post 3381 - Maine): I ask for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is five.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DARRELL McGEE (Post 5666 - Oklahoma): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is six.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE McKINLEY SMITH (Post 8773 - Kansas): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is seven.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DONALD DOELE (Post 4927 - New York): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is eight.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE ROGER EGE (Post 1904 - Oregon): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is nine.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN BEAM (Post 1040 - Washington): I call for a roll-call vote.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: There are ten Departments that have asked for a roll-call vote. Let's go to the roll-call vote. Remember, comrades, it takes two-thirds to change the by-laws.

(As Assistant Adjutant General Senk called the roll, the following votes were cast:)

NAME	YES	NO
Commander-in-Chief John Furgess	X	
Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief James Mueller	X	
Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.	X	
Quartermaster General Larry Maher	X	
Surgeon General Steven J. O'Connor	X	
National Chaplain Ted Bowers	X	
Inspector General William Jolin	X	

COUNCIL MEMBERS	YES	NO
District No. 3	X	
District No. 4	X	
District No. 8	X	
District No. 10	X	
District No. 11	X	
District No. 12	X	
District No. 13	X	
District No. 16		X

District No. 21		X
District B	X	
District C	X	
District G	X	
District H	X	
District J	X	

STATE	YES	NO
Alabama	177	
Alaska	77	
Arizona	196	20
Arkansas	76	45
California	563	59
Colorado	30	113
Connecticut	51	52
Delaware	91	
District of Columbia	21	
Department of Europe	152	
Florida	462	
Georgia	138	68
Hawaii	46	
Idaho	95	
Illinois	419	
Indiana		237
Iowa	100	22
Kansas	3	201
Kentucky	126	
Latin America/Caribbean	19	
Louisiana	37	15
Maine		121
Maryland	225	
Massachusetts	195	3
Michigan	12	277
Minnesota	231	99
Mississippi		75
Missouri	175	
Montana	78	6
Nebraska	169	18
Nevada	115	
New Hampshire	76	9
New Jersey	49	21
New Mexico	110	
New York		150
North Carolina	112	7
North Dakota	121	
Ohio	322	
Oklahoma	13	120
Oregon	78	20
Pacific Areas	73	
Pennsylvania	392	

Rhode Island		46
South Carolina		104
South Dakota	131	
Tennessee		130
Texas	235	26
Utah	67	
Vermont	50	40
Virginia	145	
Washington		217
West Virginia	2	115
Wisconsin	190	4
Wyoming	62	

PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF	YES	NO
Edward Banas	X	
John Carney	X	
George R. Cramer	X	
James R. Currieo	X	
Art Fellwock	X	
Robert E. Hansen	X	
Walter G. Hogan	X	
Cooper T. Holt	X	
John E. Moon	X	
James E. Nier	X	
Clifford G. Olson, Jr.	X	
Larry W. Rivers	X	
Ray Sisk	X	
John W. Smart	X	
R. D. "Bulldog" Smith	X	
Ray Soden	X	
Paul Spera	X	
John S. Staum	X	
John Wasylik	X	

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, that completes the roll call. We will have to wait until the Tellers give us a count.

We want to get this correct. There were two votes that we did not quite understand. It is hard to hear up here. Arkansas, can you give me your votes again, please? You have 121 votes. We have 76 yes, 39 no. We recorded 76 yes, 39 no. District of Columbia, Troy Gatling, you have 21 votes. All I have here is 15, and that is what the Teller had.

COMRADE TROY GATLING (Department of the District of Columbia): 21 yes.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Arkansas, 76 yes, 39 no. They had 121 total votes.

COMRADE JOHN FITZKE (Department of California): That does not total up.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Arkansas, do you want to repeat your votes?

COMRADE AURBURY SECREST (Department of Arkansas): 76 yes;

45 no.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: That is correct. It tallies.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We do have the completed vote tallied. I think the lesson learned from Monday, don't miss any meetings from now on. The motion failed. We needed 5,994 to pass. We had 5,755. So the motion fails.

Mr. Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, we will go on. There were three by-law changes that were recommended not to be approved: B-1, B-4 and B-6.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I recommend adoption of B-4. I move the adoption of B-4.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: And we need a second Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PETER MASCETTI (Post 10658 - Department of Europe): I second that motion.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, B-4 proposed by the Department of Europe, amends Section 101, Eligibility, to change the first paragraph by deleting the "1" on the third line, after the word, "membership"; replacing the "semicolon" after the words "congressional charter" on the seventh line with a "comma", and deleting the words "and (2) who is a citizen of the United States", in its entirety.

PARLIAMENTARIAN ED BURNHAM: The motion before us is to adopt B-4. It was properly seconded. So we are open for discussion on the adoption of B-4. It has to do with, if I am correct, the elimination of the citizenship requirement. Is that correct?

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): Yes.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We are under discussion.

COMRADE DALE NAGAN (Post 10708 - Department of Europe): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dale Nagan from Post 10708, Germany. I have heard about this subject for a long time. I helped write the first resolution that came out of the Department of Europe.

I have had a lot of fine comrades here in the hall tell me for years this organization has always had a citizenship requirement. That is incorrect. This organization for almost the entire first half of its existence never had a citizenship requirement.

It came out of the Joe McCarthy era at the end of the Korean War. We have all served here, almost every one of us in this room, with at least several foreign citizens. Many of us served with them when we were in combat. For us to stand here and say you were fine enough to stand up and swear allegiance to America, even though you were a citizen of another nation, you were fine enough to go through our training and you were fine enough to go through all of the dangers and everything else we did, but no, no, you are not a soldier or sailor, Marine or airman anymore, you are not a citizen. So you are not good enough to be in our veterans organization.

Wait a minute. They all swore allegiance when they were soldiers. We ought to give them the opportunity as they faced everything we did.

They had every qualification except being a citizen. We ought to extend to them the right to say no, I don't want to accept membership but I will still abide by the obligation. We are not giving them that opportunity. We are just saying you went out, you did everything we did, and you got shot and you maybe got wounded, but that is not good enough. What is good enough, then, comrades? We are not talking about making this whole world.

We are not talking about tomorrow morning if we change this 50,000 foreign nationals are going to ask to join the Veterans of Foreign Wars. But I submit respectfully to each and every one of you that it should be their right. The citizenship requirement wasn't put in here because it was necessary, it was put in here because it was politically correct at the time.

I submit to you we are the last major veterans organization to deal with and get rid of that antiquated cow. We stand up and we stand before you and we pledge allegiance to the United States, and we are going to recognize everybody's rights and everybody is equal, and that is what we should do.

But then we sit down and say that the guy next to us in the foxhole isn't good enough anymore, because he is not a citizen or she is not a citizen. Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2 for discussion.

COMRADE RAY LUPO (Post 1761 - Maine): We have heard all this before from the Department of Europe. It is about time they put it to bed. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you can't be in this organization. That is the way it reads and that is the way it should stand. I recommend that we put it to rest.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3 for discussion.

COMRADE RICH YOUNG (Post 1631 - New Hampshire): I think you should be a citizen of the United States of America to be a member of this great organization and that we not adopt this.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Still at Microphone No. 3 under discussion.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I agree with Comrade Lupo, we should put this to rest. We put it to rest by passing it. It is about time that we passed reasons of our founding fathers. You said that was the greatest generation in the VFW. You created the Tough Riders.

Well, let's bring about those rough riders' values and take care of all our veterans. We don't want to just take care of the U.S. veterans. If they served in the U.S. armed forces, they are entitled to benefits. We are supposed to be here to lobby for those benefits for those veterans.

So that we want for veterans? They are U.S. military veterans. They belong in this organization. If we don't let these people in, I am sure many of you remember a few months ago the Gold Star mothers had an issue where they denied membership to a non-U.S. citizen mother.

The press just destroyed the Gold Star mothers, how heartless they were. All it takes is the one veteran to go before the America media and say I served this country and they won't let me join the VFW, and we will be facing the same publicity. We don't need it.

We need to change that citizenship requirement and go back to the way the founding fathers wanted this organization to run, and let's eliminate the citizenship.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Under discussion, Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ALBERT MITCHELL (Post 5725 - Minnesota): I speak as a testament to a non-citizen serving in the armed forces. I came from Canada, joined the armed forces, but I did not come to America for a better life. That is what I decided to do is stay here.

I served in the armed forces in Vietnam in '67 to '68. I came back. Yes, I was denied American Legion, I was denied the VFW, and that was only for a little bit. The year later they awarded me my American citizenship and I was able to join the organization.

But I speak in favor of this for the simple reason we take an eligibility and it says you have to have a valid DD Form 214. We are not questioning the fact about anybody. If you don't have that DD Form 214, you are not eligible for this organization, because that i a piece of paper that tells you what is going on with your service. That is the way I understand it.

Then you have medals, too, but that is on that form, the DD 214. What I am saying is there are checks and balances to this for the VFW, and I really think that the non-citizen, I don't have any friends in Canada that I know of that are still up there that belong, that are aware of the VFW conflict or any of those conflicts, I am speaking about myself. I think we should look at the eligibility requirement more so than the citizenship requirement.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE PAT TEAGUE (Post 63 - Idaho): We have got enough non-citizens in this country now. If people who served in the military want to become a citizen, we have steps where they can become a citizen and then they can become a member of our organization, the VFW. That is all I have to say.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: All right. Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE EUGENE MANFREY (Post 4647 - Florida): Comrades and members, any member of an allied forces that served for the United States forces since World War II, Korea, Vietnam and today are eligible for United States citizenship. All they have to do is contact their Congressman.

This has been investigated. Just recently I turned over some information from the United States Congress to tell Europe that those people that want to become citizens are eligible for citizenship if they apply.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DON LINSCOTT (Post 1603 - Maine): Basically, I think this is to follow the laws of the United States, although we believe that whenever we make any kind of change. My understanding, and I don't know, but I am told by many that you join the military, they are given the chance of being a United States citizen. No? That means that after the election we may be able to elect a Commander-in-Chief that is a foreigner. That is all.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 3, under discussion.

COMRADE CARLOS GORDON (Post 3835 - Department of Caribbean/Latin America): We have been in this nonsense because we say we honor the dead by serving the living. We seem to forget the dead. This

is an opportunity to become a U.S. citizen because they are dead. They died for the cause of this country.

Now, I have dual citizenship. I am one of the lucky ones. Some countries will not allow you to have dual citizenship. If you are properly in that country and you become a U.S. citizen, that is a black eye in that country's eyes. That is the problem.

My brother was in Vietnam and he was not a U.S. citizen when that happened. He is lucky. Today he is a U.S. citizen. But we ought to have that opportunity. I rise to say that we need to take a hard look at this and the guy that serves, he has a Purple Heart, and because he is a German national, if he becomes a United States citizen, he is no longer a German national.

If he doesn't become a U.S. citizen, that doesn't stop him from fighting. He fought under the flag and he swore allegiance to that flag at the time he was fighting, and I was not a U.S. citizen. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 2 on discussion.

COMRADE JOHN FITZKE (Post 4647 - California): I call for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The question has been called.

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE HARRY TAWABE (Post 9879 - California): I question the fact we had people of Japanese ancestry undercover for us, but they were not a citizen of the United States of America, because they could not take out citizenship. Like the gentleman said, as soon as they joined the United States military, they should be offered an opportunity to become a citizen of the United States of America.

If this was so, many of these boys that come back in the box could have American citizenship. Once they are dead and we put on the service and put them in the box, posthumously is given the citizenship of the United States Government. You know, we all served in World War II.

Many of us got shot, some of us were still there. I am a native of Japan. I was born here and I am an American citizen but I am a volunteer and I will say I will fight for my country against any and all enemies in 1943. Until then I was an enemy alien.

Even though I am an American citizen, I would say those that wanted to give of their life for this country should be able to become citizens in this country. Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, comrade.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOHN FITZKE (Post 4647 - California): I called for the question.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second?

COMRADE EUGENE MANFREY (Post 6287 - Florida): I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We have had good discussion on this. This will change the by-laws of the organization if you vote "aye". It does require a two-thirds vote to pass. I will call for the question first. Those in favor of calling for the question, please say "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it. The question is now on the table.

Now, we need two-thirds. We have a motion. We have a motion to adopt. It takes two-thirds to adopt. We are changing the by-laws if we change our citizenship eligibility. Those in favor of changing that eligibility vote "aye"; those opposed vote "no". The chair recognizes two-thirds. The motion does fail.

Mr. Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the next item is to the Manual of Procedure. We only have one. It is M-1, recommended by the National Bylaws Committee and recommended for adoption. I move we adopt M-1.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CHARLES SHORT (Post 1673 - Connecticut): I have a point of order to my chairman. I believe we did not vote on that recommendation. We initially did not recommend three motions. Then we went in immediately and discussed and voted on the one motion.

We still have pertaining to two not to recommend. I think they have to be voted on, don't they?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Are you referring to the two by-laws?

COMRADE CHARLES SHORT (Post 1673 - Connecticut): Yes.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: They died for lack of a motion.

COMRADE CHARLES SHORT (Post 1673 - Connecticut): I am sorry.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Those in favor of adoption of M-1 will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the last item is the proposed amendments to the Ritual. The Committee recommends approval of R-1. I move for approval and adoption of R-1.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A proper motion has been made and seconded. Is there any discussion? Those in favor of the motion will vote "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Commander-in-Chief, it was the recommendation of the Committee to reject R-2. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, that concludes my report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. Let's give the chairman a good round of applause. That is a hard, tough job year in and year out. (Applause)

Comrades, thank you for your attendance and debate this afternoon. The hour is late. We have important proceedings, of course, this evening, with the Distinguished Banquet. We will go ahead and dismiss, unless the Adjutant General has any further administrative announcements.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. The Distinguished Guests Reception by invitation only will be in Room 250, A, B, D and E. The General Reception will be in the North Foyer. The Distinguished Banquet will be in he Ballroom, first floor, at 7:00 p.m.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, thank you. It has been a long, great day. I look forward to a good day tomorrow. Have a great evening. We stand in recess.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 3:45 o'clock p.m.)

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS BANQUET
AUGUST 22, 2005

(The Distinguished Guests Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, meeting in the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, was called to order at 7:00 o'clock p.m., by Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief James Mueller presiding.)

WELCOME

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 106th VFW National Convention Banquet.

I am Jim Mueller, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the VFW and your Master of Ceremonies for the evening.

Please join me in expressing our appreciation to the Liberty Belles who entertained us this evening with some great music. (Applause)

I hope all of you have enjoyed your day here in Salt Lake City. We are pleased to have you with us this evening, our VFW National and Department leaders, the VFW Ladies Auxiliary leadership, but especially you, the members. We are also honored by the presence of our distinguished guests, who will be introduced following dinner.

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

National Chaplain Theodore Bowers.

INVOCATION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, come be our guest at our banquet this evening. We thank you for bringing us together once more. Conduct the business of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary, and celebrate our accomplishments this past year, to launch a new year of activities and services for veterans, communities and our nation.

We thank you for the goodness to us. We now thank you for the food we are about to partake. Bless us and the food, and may the fellowship be an added blessing as we strive to keep America one nation under God. Amen.

(Whereupon, the assembly gave the Pledge of Allegiance at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: The USO Liberty Belles will perform the National Anthem.

(Whereupon, the Liberty Belles sang the National Anthem at this time.)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Please be seated and enjoy your dinner.

(Whereupon, dinner was served at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Ladies and gentlemen, if you have not finished your meal, please continue, because I am going to start the program this evening. Good evening, once again, ladies and gentlemen. I would very much appreciate having your attention as we begin our program this evening.

(Whereupon, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Mueller introduced the guests on the dais at this time.)

INTRODUCTION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: 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 "Celebration of Service" leadership team for the past year. He has been a source of pride and inspiration to all of us. I know that many others share in their gratitude for a man who has done so much for so many.

John 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 his beliefs.

In 1970, John joined VFW Post 1970 in Nashville, Tennessee, where he became a Life Member in 1974 He has served in various positions within the VFW, including Post Commander, District Commander, and State Commander in 1978-'79, becoming Tennessee's first Vietnam veteran to hold that office. In August, 2004, John was elected Commander-in-Chief at the 105th National Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio.

John served in the U.S. Army from 1965-'70 and continued in the Tennessee Army National Guard until 1993 when he retired with the rank of Colonel. In Vietnam, he served in a military intelligence unit with the Americal Division's Headquarters at Chu Lai. He was awarded the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation medal, Army Achievement Medal and Vietnam Service Medal, among others during his 28 years in uniform.

John retired in October, 2002, from the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs where he served as Assistant Commissioner for 20 years, supervising 11 field offices.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join with me in proudly welcoming our Commander-in-Chief, John Furgess.

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

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY TO THE VFW

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, comrades. Greetings. Good evening. Let's give round of applause to our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the great job he has done as Master of Ceremonies, Jim Mueller from Missouri. (Applause)

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, "Symphony of Service." Since the organization was founded in 1914, the members

have conducted programs demonstrating their ability to work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars to create a harmony of service for veterans.

During her term she has demonstrated exceptional strength and commitment as she led the Ladies Auxiliary to a deeper commitment to patriotism and service.

I am pleased to have had 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 welcome, from the great state of Ohio, the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, JoAnne Ott.

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

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT JoANNE OTT

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT OTT: Commander-in-Chief Furgess, National VFW and Auxiliary Officers, Comrades, Sisters and Special Guests:

Good evening. Tonight we celebrate a year of achievement for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. For 19 years, we have been partners and 616,439 members of the Ladies Auxiliary are proud of what we have accomplished together.

We have tried to be good citizens by being there to help, whether sponsoring cancer research, writing letters to our Congressmen, donating blankets to the homeless or cheering hospitalized veterans, and we will continue 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 America's veterans, their families and our country. I hope that you will enjoy tonight's festivities. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE 2005 DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO THE HONORABLE TOM RIDGE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades and ladies, this banquet is truly one of the highlights of this great National Convention. Tonight, we are honored to have with us the former Secretary of Homeland Security, the Honorable Tom Ridge. (Applause)

Tom had already graduated with honors from Harvard when he was drafted into the U.S. Army where he served as an Infantry Staff Sergeant in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970 and was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and the Combat Infantryman's Badge.

He finished law school when he returned to the states, and entered private practice before becoming an Assistant District Attorney in Erie County, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Ridge was elected to Congress in 1982 and was the first enlisted Vietnam combat veteran to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. One of his key assignments was on the House Veterans Affair Committee, where he proved his commitment to his fellow veterans. He also traveled to Vietnam to conduct negotiations involving the full accounting of

American POWs and MIAs.

After serving in Congress for five terms, he was elected the Governor of Pennsylvania in 1995. During his term, he was praised for the state's economic growth, fiscal responsibility, environmental protection, support for veterans, education enhancements, and his "get tougher" on crime policies.

In the wake of the September 11th tragedy, Tom resigned as Governor to accept the President's appointment as its Senior Advisor on Homeland Security, and then as the First Secretary of the newly-created Department of Homeland Security.

Secretary Ridge successfully created a new department by molding 22 different organizations into one team with one mission, and that mission was to safeguard the United States of America.

One of the things the Secretary often said was that "trust is a great force multiplier."

Mr. Secretary, your men in Vietnam trusted you, your state trusted you, and your nation trusted you.

In recognition of your contribution to the cause of American security, unity and world peace, the VFW is honored to present to you the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Distinguished Service.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the former Secretary of Homeland Security, and a fellow VFW Life Member from Post 3374 in Greenville, Pennsylvania, the Honorable Tom Ridge.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Dwight David Eisenhower Award, Distinguished Service Medal and Citation presented to lifetime of dedicated and loyal public service as evidenced by his military service with the United States Army, seven terms in the Congress of the United States, two terms as Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, and as the first Director of the Office of Homeland Security in the history of the United States.

"His comprehensive national strategy to strengthen protection against various attacks in the United States earns him the highest 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 22nd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

REMARKS BY THE HONORABLE TOM RIDGE

MR. RIDGE: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, let me thank you, Commander, and your colleagues for that very warm and kind introduction, and thank you for your very warm reception. I must tell you to be among my fellow veterans is to be among friends, and I feel very much at home tonight. So I thank you. (Applause)

I must tell you that I am absolutely convinced the reason I got elected to Congress and I had the opportunity to serve in public service was in the first congressional election which I won by 729 votes. The only reason I won, frankly, in my judgment, and I had some good people work-

ing for me, but I think the citizens in my district were wanting to bet on a vet. I will tell you that in Northwestern Pennsylvania it is far more important to wear the uniform of this country than to go down to the school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. You can take that to the bank.

Now, I also know we have got some representatives here in the largest Department of the VFW from the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and are my buddies from the VFW of Pennsylvania around tonight? Very good; very good. I will tell you all, as was mentioned, I am a proud Life Member of Greenville Post 3374, Greenville, Pennsylvania. My colleagues say to me, please tell everybody in the audience if you are in the neighborhood to drop by, the drinks are on them. Be sure if you do, I will get the bill and I won't mind at all.

It is a great privilege to be among those who so ably served and sacrificed for our country. When I am talking about your service here, I am talking about everyone here, reservists, members, Gold Star members, Ladies Auxiliary, every single one of you.

Thank you, President Ott, for the extraordinary contribution that you and the Ladies Auxiliary continue to make to our country through your organization. Every single year you commit the incalculable number of hours to community service. It is to serve one another, but the most priceless contribution any individual can give to any cause is time. The Ladies Auxiliary donates hundreds of thousands of hours of their time to many worthy causes. I want to thank you personally, the Ladies Auxiliary, for the great work that your membership provides. Thank you. (Applause)

All of us in this banquet hall know very well that when one person in the family puts on a military uniform, basically the entire family wears the uniform as well. Millions of families since the founding of our country have served the cause greater than themselves, and many have paid a dear price for that service, and the price has been borne by family members.

Months, if not years of a brother, sister, husband or wife away from the family and missing the joys associated with living with that family. Perhaps years of coping with physical or psychological wounds of war, when that loved one returned home; yes, the pain of lives lost. When one member of the family puts the uniform on, every member of the family puts it on.

So may our fellow countrymen never forget something that we know full well that freedom is not free, and that all who has and continue to serve that cause through whatever capacity, stand as a vanguard of our nation's liberty and security, and for that we can never, ever thank them enough. (Applause)

I suspect there are some of you in the audience that have sons and daughters, nieces and nephews, cousins, or people you care about serving in the military as we are assembled this evening. I would like you to stand and be recognized on behalf of those that we honor tonight. Please be recognized if you are in that group. (Applause) Thank you. They are the smartest and the toughest, some of the greatest people that we have in this country doing their country proud wherever they serve.

Also, I want to recognize and thank Tony Orlando. I want to thank Tony for your annual salute to veterans, the Yellow Ribbon Award, for standing up not just once in a while but for years and years and years to support our fighting men and women around the world and our veterans

here at home. We thank you for your time and special commitment to the men and women who serve our country. We thank you. (Applause) It is an enormous privilege, a very high honor to receive the Dwight David Eisenhower Distinguished Service Award, but particularly from my in the arms of VFW. Someone said that Dwight Eisenhower was the embodiment of the reasonable patriot. He was the soldier and the General and the President who found no glory in war, but understood clearly that we are all called to serve as long as we call ourselves free.

Eisenhower, like another famous General by the name of George Washington, believed that freedom's greatest companion was fellowship, unity, everyone pledged to freedom's cause, everyone gets protective or the need of everyone in this country is freedom's beneficiary.

Dwight David Eisenhower believed that whatever it takes to protect our freedom, we must not engage what he called the day search for absolutely security. He understood that in a democracy, in a free land there is no such thing as perfect security.

I think we all can harken back to the days of the Cold War in the '50s and '60s. Remember the civil defense drills, and in case of nuclear attacks, I remember as a child to hide under our desk at school. I remember not being very good at Physics, even when I grew up, but back then I didn't realize it wouldn't have done us much good, but it seemed the right thing to do at the time.

The country was engaged in being prepared. We understood the nature of the threat of the Cold War. It was about our company that nuclear warheads were aimed in our direction. We did whatever we could to protect ourselves and ensure that the freedoms we enjoyed would be preserved for future generations, the school districts, the counties, the cities, the states and federal government, the diplomat military.

We did whatever it took to be prepared. It was really important to all that throughout the entire Cold War, we went about our daily lives as well. We went about the business of enjoying the many liberties associated with these freedoms, of making the most of our freedoms, and at the same time we were building the strongest military in the history of the world.

We, simultaneously, spite of that threat, built the strongest economy in the world as well. The same will be true of us today. Historians will record that years from now. Nearly four years ago, when tragedy struck the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, the brave citizens and soldiers plagued 93 when their family and friends were lost and the enormity of the task set upon us, we said as a nation simply and rightly let us begin. As a nation, we have demonstrated again that we are resilient, we are innovative, we are focused, we are resolved, and at the end of the day we will prevail.

We went to work, we began to fight the 21st Century against our standing. All the will, all the will maintaining the way of life, liberty and opportunity that has come to be called America. History has recorded that when America is challenged, we do not shrink from the task or the reality of the challenge. We persevere. We ultimately prevail.

The explanation may be quite difficult for our enemies to understand, but it is very basic to all of us in this country. Very simply put, Americans do not and will not live in fear. We live in freedom and we will never let our freedom go. (Applause)

Over the years, this realization has become somewhat troublesome to our enemies, rogue nation and terrorism, that the wealth net does not exist for them at our borders. They see in the past few years that America has bolstered itself and its infrastructure.

They see fire fighters and first responders in the law enforcement in the community, training sites everywhere, training that can be thrown at us. We receive the bravery of the strongest most capable of military on the earth and the spirit of a country reflected in the resolve and steadfastness from the Private on the front lines to our Commander-in-Chief.

So terrorists know there is much they do not see in this country in very visible security measures spread out in our country and the world, the smart technologists and the intelligence of law enforcement capabilities and materials that linger around among and on top of everything that terrorists attempt to whisper, and they try to do.

I am sure that at the end of the day we prevail because we will discourage to detect and rehabilitate terrorists until their methods and their means and motivations wither into the dark recess in which it all belongs, wither in oblivion.

Throughout my life, ladies and gentlemen, I have been privileged to witness the level of commitment that veterans and active duty personnel and citizens everywhere have brought to the effort to keep our nation secure and free. I have witnessed a level of service beyond self that has been evident to me in every advantage point of my adult life.

The Secretary of Homeland Security is a member of the President's Cabinet. I saw a nation that went from unprecedented belief to unprecedented guard. We took the battle to the terrorists, we struck them in their safe havens and their training camp

We ran the Taliban out of a country that is free, and we began to confront those nations that support, fund and equip terrorists. Then home, men and women a different kind of uniform, the badges and the pins and the patches of Homeland Security quickly stood up in the department and became an agency in a hurry.

We immediately began to bolster and build security throughout the country. We pushed our perimeter out and reduced the vulnerability that was on September 11th and analytically by those that could be exploited in the future. We looked as our chemical market grew dramatically and, of course, the skies overhead. Nothing was beyond our scope of analysis and review. The result is that a nation is safer and more secure than it had ever been in history.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is certainly more work to do and America will get it done. We will continue to be safe and secure in the position we enjoy, the liberties and freedoms that all of you in this room have given a great deal of sacrifice fighting for it.

As Governor of Pennsylvania, my role includes serving as Commander of the National Guard, and I saw young men and women willing to serve in the farthest reaches of the world, just to keep their fellow citizens and families and communities throughout Pennsylvania, and everywhere around their country, around their state and country, safe and free.

As Congressman, I could never forget witnessing the powerful annual testimony and compelling advocacy of the VFW's leadership when

I served on the Veterans Affairs Committee. I remember some of those soldiers, some of those highly-decorated soldiers, gentile and sometimes ailing soldiers, occasionally speaking with fervent voices clearly with no holds barred this message to the Congress when it came to the names of disabled veterans and their families. As soldiers, we will always remember deeply the bravery of all those heroes around us, the buddies who came home and those that did not.

Like all of you, when it comes to time in combat, we don't dwell on it, but we certainly can draw from it. In war, there are times of controversy as we saw in Vietnam and as we see today. There are times when we just can't all agree. I believe that is inevitable in time of war and clearly inevitable in a democracy, difference of opinions that existed ever since the group of individuals decided to break free from an empire world by a king and declare this country free and independent as well as accountable to its citizens.

Nevertheless, upon the North Ridge of Concord, to the scorched earth of the Western fronts, to the ravens of Guadal Canal, to the incline of Porkchop Hill, and the Mekong Delta, and the seas of the Persian Gulf, and the earth of Kosovo, and the terrain of Afghanistan and the streets of Iraq, many, many soldiers, millions have fought the courage to fight the cause of freedom. Many soldiers fight at this very hour in areas that very same cause. General Eisenhower once said, "Whatever America hopes to bring to pass in the world must first come to pass in the heart of America."

As I have seen, as you have seen, that it is strong and it is brave and it is ever-present in the men and women of our armed forces. (Applause) As former Governor of Pennsylvania, I return to the Memorial Service regularly honoring victims of Plane 93.

I remember on September 11, 2004, a young soldier who approached me and guided me with the arm of his mom. The soldier has lost his sight while serving in Afghanistan. I had this marvelous conversation. Yet he told me, "Sir, if I could get my sight back, I would go back."

Blessed are generations of soldiers. This country has been blessed with generations of soldiers that have had that spirit and devotion and courage. So political disagreements aside, may we always, and particularly at this very moment, salute each and every one of our servicemen and women. Let us honor those who stand in harm's way, and let's support them and pray for their comfort and safe return.

Tonight, I add my salute to the VFW for your wristband campaign to support our troops. I proudly join you tonight wearing this red ribbon, to stand with you for those overseas. With all due respect, we have a guest here from Russia and South Korea. We think your men and women are the finest soldiers in the world.

Here in this hall of thousands, and in the nation of millions, our connections to one another run deep. That is the way of veterans, that is the way of American citizens, and that is the way Eisenhower knew America would always be.

So, I thank you again for honoring me with the Eisenhower Award and I share it tonight with all of you. Many of you carry the scars that are a permanent reminder that freedom isn't free, and many of you

have friends who paid the ultimate price.

We never forget that. We vow never to let terrorists destroy what you have built with your courage, the freest, greatest, most treasured place to call home, the United States of America. (Applause)

I thank you for your friendship over the years, for your fellowship, for your extraordinary service an for the unyielding honor that each of you as Veterans of Foreign Wars continue to bestow upon your blessed country. May God continue to bless all of you. Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the assembly extended prolonged standing ovation.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for those truly inspiring remarks. Let's get him back in government somewhere. What do you say? (Applause)

Mr. Secretary, with this award co an honorarium from the Veterans of Foreign Wars for $15,000. You have very kindly and graciously asked us to refer half of that to the Coast Guard Foundation, which we will, and the other half to the Blinded American Veterans Foundation, which we will. Thank you for that gracious and generous thought. (Applause)

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for attending the banquet this evening, and you have made it a special evening tonight. Please take this word back to your Posts and Districts. Please ask them to consider attending the next great National Convention August. (Applause)

Now, I will call upon our National Chaplain, Theodore Bowers, for the Benediction.

BENEDICTION

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: Our Heavenly Father, we ask for your benediction to rest on us this day as we conclude this session. As you have graciously preserved our Nation through the years and have led us in wondrous ways, grant that we may be worthy of our high calling as a Nation.

Make us reverent in the use of freedom, just in the exercise of power, and generous in the protection of we and women who direct our Nation that they may guide it wisely and well. Grant that in all our duties, your help; in all perplexities, your counsel; in all danger, your protection; and in all sorrow, your peace.

Bless us all, O Lord, as we go forth and attend to our wellness until we gather again. Amen.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. This concludes our program. Goodnight and we will see you at the business session at 8:00 a.m. in the morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 9:00 o'clock p.m.)

FIRST BUSINESS SESSION
TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 2005

(The First Business Session of the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Sergeant-at-Arms, please prepare the room for today's session.

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

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, please be seated. We will welcome you to Tuesday morning's session, jam-packed with activities. It is a wonderful morning and some very critical and special annual awards that this organization presents will be given.

First, I would like to call for his update report, our Committee on Credentials, Dave Butters.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 22, 2005, the total delegates registered with Credentials, 9,513. Total Department Commanders, 46. Total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 27. Total National Officers, 38. That is for a grand total of 9,624. Assuming a 100-percent vote of all registered delegates, a simple majority would be 4,113. A two-thirds majority would be 6,417.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Chairman Butters, for that update.

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO GEORGE D. KIM

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my privilege to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to Mr. George Kim, who recently retired as the Community Relations Officer in the Office of Public Affairs for the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces-Korea.

This award is presented in recognition of his extraordinary professionalism, responsiveness, and knowledge in providing outstanding support and assistance to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for nearly two decades. His work with numerous national officers who have visited the Republic of Korea, and especially his great efforts on behalf of the Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration, has helped VFW leadership gain a much better appreciation and awareness of the mission and

activities of the United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and U.S. Forces-Korea.

George, on behalf of our 1.8 million members, I am proud to recognize you for your many significant accomplishments, and I commend you on a job always well done. We will sincerely miss your professionalism and expertise. Thank you so very much. Let's welcome George Kim, comrades. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: This citation reads: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Gold Medal of Merit and Citation awarded to George D. Kim, Community Relations Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Headquarters United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, United States Forces-Korea.

"In recognition of his extraordinary professionalism, responsiveness and knowledge in providing outstanding support and assistance to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for nearly two decades. It is through his professional skills, broad experience and understanding of the needs and issues of all our organization of the VFW with mission and activities of the Headquarters under the United Nations Command and the United Forces-Korea.

"On behalf of our nearly two million members, I am indeed proud to recognize and commend him for his many significant accomplishments.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the Official Seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 23rd day of August, 2005.

"Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - GEORGE D. KIM

COMRADE KIM: Good morning. Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, Past Commanders-in-Chief, other distinguished guests and the VFW leaders and members from the 50 states and elsewhere around the world:

I am indeed greatly honored to be with you today to receive the VFW's Distinguished Gold Medal Award. I am overwhelmed. I will cherish this award forever. During the last 32 years of my 48 years of federal service, I was assigned to the Public Affairs Office of the Headquarters of the United Nations Command and the United States Forces-Korea.

My duties and responsibilities include the planning and coordination of visits to Korea by VFW's national leaders and escorting them during their official visits to observe firsthand America's diplomatic and military interest in Korea. The itinerary for the VFW Commander-in-Chief included discussions with the United States Ambassador and with the Commander of the United Nations Command, who is also the Commander of the United States Forces Korea.

These meetings where the highest American leaders in Korea were followed by comprehensive briefings for them. One of the highlights of their visit was the briefing and tour of the joint security area located in the DMZ that separates North and South Korea.

At this location your Commanders have seen North Korea and

its Communist soldiers at very close range, and the visitors at Homong Chin always feel nervous when being stared at by the head of these soldiers.

North Korea maintains the second largest army in the world. It is about twice as large as the United States Army and poses a very real threat to South Korea. The VFW leaders learned a lot about the important contributions to security and stability provided by about 35,000 United States soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines serving in Korea.

All of you can be very proud of the outstanding military men and women serving our nation all over the world. Their presence in Korea has prevented North Korea from attacking the South again as they did in 1950.

In addition to the visits to the Korean Memorial Museum, your leaders visited the national cemetery to place a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Your leaders also call on the Korean War Veterans Association to exchange views, information of interest and benefits.

They meet with the members of the Post District No. 3 in Korea. All of you can be very proud that the VFW is the only active United States veterans organization in Korea conducting a full range of community service, patriotic activities that your great organization is famous for here at home and abroad.

During their visits to Korea, the Commander-in-Chief always conveyed clear messages of support for the past and present members of the armed forces of the United States, and provided information on the wide variety of projects and activities by the great members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. All of you can be justly proud of the great humanitarian, patriotic and public service by VFW and its members.

Commander-in-Chief Furgess, thank you again for honoring me today. To the VFW and its great members, thank you for all that you do for past and present members of the armed forces and for your communities. You help to make America great in every way. Thank you. Have a great conference. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Mr. Kim, you know it is traditional in retirements for the gold watch. It is our honor to present you this Veterans of Foreign Wars very special Bulova gold watch and this exclusive VFW writing pen for your future work. Thank you so very much. (Applause)

The Adjutant General has a special message also, comrades, if you will bear with us at this moment. John Senk, Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief, and good morning, my comrades. I have been given the singular honor of presenting our Commander-in-Chief with his convention bell, gavel and his official badge for the convention.

Please bear with me one second while I present them to him. Commander-in-Chief, last but not least, let me present you with the gavel for your convention. Use it wisely but with discretion. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO REPUBLIC OF KOREA ARMED FORCES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Adjutant General, and thank you, comrades. This is a treasure. It works. Thank you.

Comrades, it is now my privilege to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to the Republic of Korea Armed Forces. World War II ended 60 years ago this month, and with it came the end of 40 years of foreign occupation. But little did anyone know that that new war would soon erupt on the Korean peninsula, one that would last three years and bring death to millions of soldiers and civilians on both sides.

Our relationship with the Republic of Korea was one borne of battle, to protect innocent and freedom-loving people against tyranny.

That relationship continued into Vietnam and into the first Gulf War, and now into Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

All of us who remember serving with ROK forces in Vietnam and other places know of their valor, their humanity and their can-do attitude, no matter the task.

I am confident that today's generation continues to bring great honor to their fathers and grandfathers who served before them.

It now gives me great pleasure to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.

Accepting the Major General Kwon, Haing Keun, the Defense Attache for the Republic of Korea Embassy to the United States in Washington, D.C. General Keun. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to Republic of Korea Armed Forces for their stalwart support of liberty and freedom for all the people of Korea and their steadfast loyalty as a true ally of the United States of America. Their strong discipline, fierce determination, and resolute courage makes them a formidable force and earns them the utmost 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 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief Furgess and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, a very special greeting for Major General Keun this morning. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MAJOR GENERAL KEUN

MAJOR GENERAL KEUN: Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to extend my special thanks to John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief of the VFW, James Mueller, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief and Gary Kurpius, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and John Senk, Adjutant General, and the senior members up here.

Also, my personal thanks to Robert Wallace, Executive Director, Leroy Andrews, Director in the Washington office, and all of those who are involved in the presentation for this award. Thank you very much.

It is indeed a great honor for me to receive this award, the Commander-in-Chief's Gold Medal of Merit on behalf of the Korean Armed

Forces. I am really pleased, because this organization is recognizing our endeavors as allies of the United States in preserving freedom of the Republic of Korea and to the free world.

As allies to each other, the Republic of Korea Armed Forces and the United States Forces fought the Korean War together shoulder by shoulder under the same flag five decades ago against the invaders. We fought the Vietnam War together to defend the freedom three decades ago. We fought the Gulf War together to preserve peace and justice.

We are sending our troops to Afghanistan and Iraq to help establish the democratic societies. As you know, the Republic of Korea is the third contributing country now in Iraq. There are more than 3,000 troops there. The Korean Armed Forces are actively participating in this throughout the world for the cause of stability under the reconstruction.

As indicated by the award I received this morning, I can tell you that we, the Iraq and U.S. forces, stand strong together as allies and as friends in the air or in the valley, over the ocean, in the gutter of the battlefield. Both forces, men and women in uniform, are sharing the same values for the free world.

Yesterday, General LePort, Commander of the U.S.F.K. Combined Forces Command announced the annual Rock U.S. Combined Exercises. That is two weeks long. The government-sponsored military exercises to landscape the capabilities of both forces in the Korean Peninsula. I am proud to tell you that the Korean Armed Forces are ready to fight together with you anywhere needed.

Before ending my words, I would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to Korean War veterans present here. Korean people always keep you in mind. God bless you-all and God bless the United States of America, the great nation. God bless the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the great organization, as well as all of you here, the great people. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Major General Keun. My comrades, I want to do something now that is not planned. If you served in the Korean War or if you served in Korea at any time, please now stand as a group and be recognized. Thank you for that service. (Applause) That is a great turnout. Thank you so much.

Next, comrades, is a very special added attraction, if you will. One of our nation's most popular Korean War veterans is with us this morning, unannounced. We are honored by his presence. He is retired. His service to his country is without blemish.

He has continued to serve by being active in veterans issues both in Washington and around the world. He has written a wonderful book called "Hazardous Duty", which I had the honor to convey with a book presentation in Iraq just a couple of weeks ago on his behalf to General Casey and others.

For his brief comments this morning, please make welcome General of the United States Army Retired, General Singlaub.

GENERAL SINGLAUB: Thank you very much. I appreciate that warm welcome, but it is most important that we recognize the contribution that has been made to our security by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Korea. For those of you who have returned to Korea, you

will know that an economic miracle has been created there.

When we left in 1953, most of the cities were piles of rubble. I can remember going into towns when the tallest item in the town was the antenna on my Jeep. But that recovery has been made possible by the fact that the Armed Forces of the Republic of Korea not only came to this country to train the leadership, but they adopted one of the most important concepts of a professional armed forces.

That is your promotions are dependent upon what you do, what you know, not who you know. That policy was implemented during the war, after the war, and so when an officer rose to the top ranks he had already demonstrated a lot of leadership.

The president of the country took those top people and put them in charge of schools, of building trades, in building great oil distribution facilities, and the country has recovered at a rate faster than any other war torn country in the world.

It is because of the armed forces and the great professionalism they have shown. As the Commander-in-Chief has mentioned, they have been our most staunch ally in our conflict in Vietnam, in the Gulf War, and today they stand with our soldiers, sailors and airmen in Iraq. So this is a great thing. It is a great honor for me to be able to participate in this ceremony and to say that the recipient, the one who is receiving it on behalf of the Republic of Korea, is a dear friend, General Keun. I congratulate him. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: General John Singlaub, one more time. (Applause) Thank you, General. I hope Mike Myers is close by with the VFW Foundation. Mike, will you come up for a special award. I have carried this halfway around the world for you.

As Mike is coming forward, when I was in Iraq, the 3rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, Aviation Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, asked me to present this flag, which is flown at one of their base camps. This flag is simply freedom throughout the world and flown on a combat mission by members of the 3rd Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Division, Aviation Brigade, by the "Tiger Sharks."

It was flown in Afghanistan during Operation Freedom. They flew a 64 Delta Apache to ensure that freedom can be enjoyed by all peace-loving people. Mike, this is a very special award to you from these active-duty Apache pilots to the VFW Foundation. Thank you, Mike. (Applause)

COMRADE MIKE MYERS: Thank you, comrades. I will make this real short. The Foundation gets e-mails from Iraq every day asking for things that our troops don't normally get. Just to give you a briefing on what we have done since Baghdad was taken over, with our partner at Wal-Mart, we shipped 31 pallets of Baby Wipes, and that was requested by the troops because they couldn't take a shower. So, the VFW was responsible for the first shower of our troops, basically, in Iraq.

Second of all, partnering with Operation Iraqi Children, and I am sure this has something to do with this award, the VFW has assisted in delivering 300,000 school kits to our civil affairs units to give to the children of Iraq. According to the journals that have contacted us, it is the number one program in Iraq because of the VFW. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, this morning, com-

rades, we have a special presentation. Please give a warm welcome to Mr. Jim Chancellor.

PRESENTATION BY JIM CHANCELLOR

COMRADE CHANCELLOR: Good morning, Comrades, Ladies and Friends:

Thank you very much for allowing me to share a couple of minutes with you. The first time I spoke to you was 21 years ago. It was in Chicago and Billy Ray Cameron was our National Commander-in-Chief. At that time I urged our organization to take down any and all roadblocks for the Vietnam veterans.

At that time our organization was run primarily by veterans from the big war, the great generation, the real war they like to call it. After seeing "Saving Private Ryan" and working with these courageous World War II veterans, it would be hard for me to dispute that in any way. But I knew then as I know now, as I stand before you in Salt Lake City, that we must reach out to all veterans.

Later on in another presentation, I believe it was to Bob Wallace, I talked to you about Douglas MacArthur and his quote about old soldiers, they never die. I told you he was absolutely correct, that they don't die, that their souls and their spirits live on, and that we are all connected, that we are all one.

Later on in another presentation, I talked to you about Flander's Field. I reminded you of the poppies and how they grew. That tale tells of how the torch is passed from generation to generation by us, the veterans. I did remind you that we were all the same.

I spoke of a freedom warrior. I told you we all share the zest and the fire and the love of country that has kept us free.Today, our love of country is strong, our commitment to freedom is steadfast. Whether you are a hawk or a dove about war, we know, comrades, what it takes to remain free.

We know the sacrifices that our young veterans and their families are making today and we must reach out to them. Our fight today is the same as it was 21 years ago, but a little different. Our role as an organization is the same as it was 21 years ago today, but again slightly different.

We must encourage involvement from our young veterans through our encouragement and leadership. We must seek them out and lead them. We must speak to them, but we must also listen to them. We must be united together. We must be united as one toward the common goal.

If we are not united, we are divided. Comrades, we must be both teacher and students to our young veterans. If we only tell them what we have done in the past, it will be difficult for our organization to grow into the future. How can we guide them, how can we help them and teach them if we do not hear them?

The American Veterans' Collection motto is, "I know, I understand and I care." I would like the VFW motto to be similar, except I would like for it to read, "We know, we understand and we care" because everyone here knows about war. We all know about war. We understand what young veterans go through. We searched and searched for some of the same answers. This organization truly cares about our young sol-

diers, their families and their future.

Now, on to the presentation. Our Commander-in-Chief served in Chulai with the Americal Division as an Intelligence Officer. You have heard this many times during the last couple of days. He served with the Tennessee National Guard for 23 years, 28 years of service. What I want to tell you about our Commander is he has always stepped up. He has always sought out and he accepted the leadership role in our organization. That type of leadership and dedication will be hard to replace.

It gives me great pleasure now to present this beautiful ring to the American Veterans Collection, to somebody without a shadow of a doubt exemplifies the true meaning of our purpose and mission at hand: "We know, we understand and we care." Comrades, this is presented to John Furgess. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Jim, and rest assured, comrades, I will wear this beautiful ring with pride the rest of my life. Thank you so very much. (Applause) It is a very special honor, Jim.

PRESENTATION OF THE VFW AVIATION AND SPACE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I am now pleased to present the 2005 VFW Aviation and Space Award to the C-17 Globemaster III aircraft, which is produced by Boeing.

The first Saturn off the assembly line did not go to a customer, but the first C-17 did, and in its short ten-year history on active service, the C-17 has become the most flexible and reliable military airlift aircraft to ever be produced.

It can transport the largest military hardware strategic distances, yet it is flexible enough to airdrop equipment and personnel, and is nimble enough to operate from unimproved air fields.

Boeing has delivered 138 of the 180 contracted aircraft, but there is a high probability the total buy could exceed 220 aircraft.

Accepting the award is Retired Air Force Lieutenant General Ron Marcotte, Vice-President of Boeing Airlift and Tanker Programs, from Long Beach, California. The General flew in Vietnam as an Air Weapons Controller, and he commanded a B-52 wing during Desert Storm. He was the Vice-Commander of Air Mobility Command when he retired in 2002.

Please join me in welcoming General Ronald Marcotte from Boeing. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Aviation and Space Award awarded to Boeing C-17 Globemaster III.

"In recognition of his outstanding support and involvement in numerous contingency operations, including flying troops and equipment to Operation Joint Endeavor, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"In the year 2000, the C-17 completed the longest paratrooper airdrop mission in history, flying more than 8,000 nautical miles from the United States to Central Asia, spending more than 19 hours in the air. The inherent flexibility and performance of the C-17 improves the ability of the total airlift system to fulfill the worldwide air mobility requirements 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 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - GENERAL MARCOTTE

GENERAL MARCOTTE: Thank you very much for that kind introduction. And good morning, VFW. On behalf of the more than 6,000 dedicated Boeing men and women who ensure the world's finest airlifter is designed, produced and supported in a world-class fashion, and thousands of more from our 800 supplier partners in 42 states across the great country, thank you very, very much for this great honor.

The C-17 is regarded around the world as the most reliable and capable airlifter the world has ever known. That is a testament to this team and key to our continuing to produce more and more C-17s for our nation and for our war fighters.

The VFW 2005 Aviation, Space and Technology Award is a visible and tangent reminder that the C-17 continues to earn its strong reputation every single day. Everyone in this room remembers the tragic events of September 11, 2001. You may also recall the global war on terrorism began shortly afterwards, on August 7th, 2001.

Every single day since that day, C-17s have flown combat missions. That is 1,416 consecutive days now that the C-17 has supported Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. There is no question that the C-17 is vital to our war fighting mission, but it is much more than just a military machine.

Because of its unique ability to carry enormous carloads and long or short fields, the C-17 leads the way on humanitarian relief missions as well. When the Tsunami struck Southeast Asia last December, the C-17 delivered more than 2.4 billion pounds of these supplies.

In the early days of the conflict in Afghanistan, the C-17 dropped more than 2.4 million meals, humanitarian operations so desperately needed. The C-17 helped save lives with aero medical capability. The C-17s continue to fly into combat zones and dirt strips, land cargo and troops, and pick up casualties and fly them to major hospitals in the U.S. and Germany.

This mission combines the C-17's unique tactical and strategical abilities with its air medical system, with more than 27,000 air medical patients thrown out of U.S. Central Command on the C-17 and other aircraft. There has not been one single death en route. The C-17 truly is a new global air standard.

It is the only airlift capable of both tactical and strategic missions and the airlift of choice, obviously, for the global war on terrorism. In short, the C-17 gets it done. Thank you all very, very much for this wonderful recognition, and God bless America. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, General, for those comments. It is such a wonderful aircraft. Most of you may know from your personal experiences, but I had a rare privilege of flying that C-17 simulator at McChord Air Force Base last fall. As an old Army guy, I don't know

what word to use other than I was overwhelmed.

I bounced it down the runway, yes, but it was so authentic. You could punch in the graphic computer any air field in the world, and there it is right in front of you. One million accident-free hours. What a great aircraft. Let's hear it one more time for the C-17 and the Boeing Corporation. (Applause)

General, with this award comes an honorarium of $5,000, which you indicated will go to the Employees Community Fund, Boeing Corporation, in California. Thank you so much for your presence today. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO THE DEFENSE POW/MIA OFFICE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my pleasure to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office in recognition of their untiring efforts and dedication to account for the 88,000 Americans who are missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars. DPMO is the U.S. Government's lead policy organization for the rescue of Americans who are isolated, captured, detained or otherwise missing in a hostile environment, and for the recovery and identification of the remains of those who never returned from foreign battlefields.

Since 1993, the research and government-to-government negotiations conduced by DPMO have set the stage for successful investigations and recovery operations around the world.

These men and women work silently yet tirelessly to ensure the return of our missing personnel.

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of the VFW and our Auxiliaries, I am proud to recognize and honor DPMO for what it does daily for fellow service members, for their families and for the United States of America.

Accepting the VFW Gold Medal and Citation on behalf of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office is Adrian Cronauer, the Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs. Mr. Cronauer served in the Air Force from 1964 to 1965 with Armed Forces Radio Saigon and, as most of you probably know, his story was depicted in the 1987 movie, "Good Morning, Vietnam."

Please welcome a fellow Vietnam veteran and a Life Member of VFW Post 1503 in Dale City, Virginia, Adrian Cronauer. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "VFW Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, U.S. Department of Defense.

"In recognition of their untiring efforts and dedication to account for the 88,000 Americans who are missing and unaccounted for in our nation's wars, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office is the U.S. Government's lead policy organization for the rescue of Americans who are isolated, captured, detained or otherwise missing in a hostile environment, and for the recovery and identification of the remains of those who never returned from foreign battlefields.

"Since 1993, the research and government-to-government negotiations conducted by DPMO has set the stage for successful investigations

and recovery operations under extremely arduous conditions in some of the most austere and hazardous locations on earth.

"On behalf of our 1.8 million members, I am proud to recognize and honor the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office for what it does daily for fellow soldiers, for their families and for America.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." It has been signed by John Furgess, Commander-in-Chief, and John J. Senk, Jr., Adjutant General.

RESPONSE - COMRADE ADRIAN CRONAUER

COMRADE CRONAUER: Commander-in-Chief Furgess, VFW Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Honorable Jerry G. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Personnel Affairs, I accept this Gold Medal and Citation honoring the men and women of the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office, or DPMO. We are most gratified that the leadership and membership of the Veterans of Foreign Wars would recognize in this way the dedication and commitment to the fullest possible accounting by DPMO's men and women.

You know better than most how the U.S. Government holds the mission to be one of its top priorities, and its continuing and sincere support from organizations like the VFW that keeps our mission moving forward.

In all corners of the globe, with more than 600 people actively engaged in this mission, make no mistake about it, our commitment is to bring them home. May God bless you, the great nation we all serve, and the men and women still unaccounted for. Please remember them in your prayers. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Adrian knows this, but I want to repeat it for the audience. The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Officers for many years now have traveled back to Vietnam to go out in the fields where these recovery operations are actually being conducted day after day, year after year, with very little fanfare. Those visits are greatly appreciated by those men and women doing that work.

Jim Mueller has referred to it, I have referred to it and Gary has referred to it, and so many Past National Officers remember those occasions for the rest of their lives. Adrian, this organization puts the priority of accounting for those missing very high in our order of business.

Please take back to Secretary Jennings our support, our best wishes for his healthy recovery and for continued success in DPMO operations around the world. Thank you very much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF VFW GOLD MEDAL AND CITATION TO JOINT POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, it is now my honor and privilege to present the VFW Gold Medal and Citation to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command from Hickham Air Force Base,

Hawaii, in recognition of their untiring efforts and dedication to return missing and unaccounted for Americans from our nation's wars.

JPAC carries on a proud tradition established by the United States Army Central Identification Laboratory in 1973, and Joint Task Force-Full Accounting in 1992 to keep the military's promise to never leave a comrade behind.

From glaciers and jungles to oceans and deserts, the 425 military and Defense Department civilian members of JPAC operate under extremely arduous conditions in some of the most austere and hazardous locations on earth.

The unit has suffered personal loss while conducting these operations, but their mission to obtain the fullest possible accounting of our nation's 88,000 missing Americans continues unabated on a daily basis.

The VFW leaders have visited Vietnam every year since 1991, with periodic visits to Laos and Cambodia. We have met with United States and host governments to discuss and stress the importance of the full accounting mission to the families of those missing and to the VFW membership.

For the past four years, our officers have participated in working at the recovery sites. We know how difficult the mission is, but we also know how important the mission is for our nation, and that's why the VFW has so much appreciation and gratitude for the military and civilian members of JPAC.

On behalf of the 2.4 million members of the VFW and our Auxiliaries, I am proud to recognize and honor JPAC for what it does daily for fellow service members, for their families and for the United States of America.

Accepting the VFW Gold Medals and Citations for the Headquarters and its three detachments in Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, is the new Commander of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, and the newest Life Member in the VFW, USA Brigadier General Michael C. Flowers, who is a veteran of Grenada, Desert Storm, Haiti and Kosovo. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "The VFW Gold Medal of Merit and this Citation awarded to POW/MIA Accounting Command, Hickham Air Force Base, Hawaii.

"In recognition of their untiring efforts and dedication to return missing and unaccounted for Americans from our nation's wars to their families, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command carries the proud tradition established by the U.S. Army Central Identification Lab in 1973, and the Joint Task Force Full Accounting in 1992 to keep the soldier's promise to never leave a comrade behind. "From glaciers and jungles to oceans and deserts, the 425 military and Defense Department civilian members of JPAC operate under extremely arduous conditions in some of the most austere and hazardous locations on earth.

"Even though the unit has suffered personal loss in their search and recovery operations, their mission continues unabated to obtain the fullest possible accounting for our nation's 88,000 missing Americans.

"On behalf of our 1.8 million members, I am proud to recognize and honor the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command for what it does daily for fellow soldiers and their families."

It is signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant

General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - BRIGADIER GENERAL MICHAEL FLOWERS

BRIGADIER GENERAL FLOWERS: Aloha. Let me try that again. Good morning. How is everybody doing? Okay.

Commander-in-Chief Jim Furgess, Distinguished Guests, Members of the VFW:

On behalf of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilians of JPAC, we want to thank you very much for this award. We very, very much appreciate the recognition. Before I go on, is Johnny Webb in the building, my senior advisor? Johnny, there he is.

I think many of you know Johnny. He is one of the reasons why I am standing up here today. He is a great representative of the men and women that we have out there in JPAC.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's greet Mr. Webb this morning. Stand up, Johnny. (Applause)

BRIGADIER GENERAL FLOWERS: As many of you know, we have currently JPAC members in Europe and soon we will have teams in South Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Hawaii. As I said in my remarks earlier this week, there is no more noble service than to return our heroes to American soil and to honor them for the sacrifice they made for our country.

There is no greater satisfaction than providing answers to their families and their comrades. They have waited so long and so faithfully for the return of these men. The people of JPAC and our nation are committed to this effort and we will continue to search for answers no matter where and how long the search takes.

John, when you adopted JPAC last December as a unit, it was like hitting the lottery for us. I look forward to another great year with our relationship with the VFW. Again, from all the members of JPAC, thank you. God bless America until they are home. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, General Flowers. These National Officers will tell you we have met some wonderful people in this Joint Command. There are now four detachments worldwide as mentioned. General Flowers is a graduate of the University of Kansas. Where is Kansas this morning? He is a Jayhawk. He makes his home when he can get there in Florida. Where is Florida? They are right here. He is a great American. General Flowers, thank you, sir.

Now, Adjutant General John Senk, come forward. I have a special presentation unannounced, unknown about by him. We departed for Iraq on 30 July. His parting words were to bring me some sand back. I thought I could do better than that. I could get sand in my backyard, I guess, and tell him it was from Baghdad. What I did bring John back is a token of my appreciation for his service, and I don't know if he will ever get to Iraq himself one day, but maybe he will. I got this off a vendor, and I know you can't see it. But it is various denominations, folding money of the old Saddam Hussein regime that they are selling now as souvenirs. On the back is this beautiful new flag of a country that is quickly developing a new-found love for democracy.

John, I want you to have this as a token of the first VFW visit to Iraq.

(Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, I would like to thank you very much, but I would have been happy with sand, because the sand is probably worth more than the paper this is printed on. Thank God to our troops, that's true.

Thank you, Chief. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF THE HONORABLE JAMES NICHOLSON, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, we have another very special guest on the podium this morning. It is now my privilege to introduce the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Jim Nicholson. He is a graduate of West Point and served eight years as an Army Ranger and paratrooper, spent 22 years in the Army Reserve, where he retired with the rank of Colonel.

He is a Vietnam combat veteran, awarded the Bronze Star and the Combat Infantryman's VIP. He was an attorney and successful real estate developer in the State of Colorado for a number of years before getting in the political scene. He served four years as the Chairman of the Republican National Committee before his appointment as the United States Ambassador to the Vatican.

Now as Secretary Nicholson, he leads the second largest department of the federal government, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. He is responsible for leading more than 220,000 employees in managing a budget of almost $70 billion.

To say the challenges that come with his position are difficult is a supreme understatement, because the only reason his department exists is to fulfill a grateful nation's promises to its military veterans, past, present and future. If any of you ever thought that keeping your families and co-workers happy was difficult, try providing health care and other benefits to 25 million military veterans.

A Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, comrades, I am honored to present to you a fellow combat veteran, the Honorable Jim Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Secretary. (Applause)

REMARKS BY SECRETARY JIM NICHOLSON

SECRETARY NICHOLSON: Good morning, everybody. Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, for that warm and generous introduction. My greetings to Adjutant General John Senk and Executive Director Bob Wallace, who I see a lot. I don't see her here, but I want to greet her as the National President of the Auxiliary, JoAnne Ott, and my greetings to all the distinguished leaders of the VFW and my fellow veterans, ladies and gentlemen.

As a member of the VFW, it is an honor and a privilege for me to be here with you today in Salt Lake City. Not long ago, John Furgess and I both attended a meeting along with Bob Wallace with the President in the White House. Later we joined in the Roosevelt Room to see Teddy Roosevelt's Congressional Medal of Honor.

I can tell you it was an inspiration to be in the presence of President Roosevelt's Medal together with his Nobel Peace Prize. No other President has received both. The VFW deserves much of the credit for seeing to it that Teddy Roosevelt received the Medal of Honor.

You know what some of you may not know about Teddy Roosevelt, you know he was a great sportsman and a conservationist, but he was also a pretty darn good golfer. That makes me think of my favorite Vatican golf story.

As John said, just six months ago returned from being the Ambassador to the Vatican. There was this elderly person that had worked all his life in the Roman Correier, which is the staff department for the Pope, and all he did was work and pray, get up and celebrate mass, go to work. But he had one outlet in life, and that was golf. He just loved to play golf.

When he retired, the staff took up a collection and they bought him a set of golf clubs. He couldn't wait for his first day of retirement. He went out to this famous old Corsack place south of Rome. He teed up the ball and got out his Big Bertha Calloway, and took a wide swing and struck the ball well and hit it quite a ways, and then it took a sharp turn, sliced, went over behind two trees.

He walked down there, but he could see he had an opening between the trees and he could see the flag on the green. So he had this vision that he could still strike the ball, get it on the green and get a par, two putts. So he took out his number three wood and he took a mighty swing and struck it real hard, but it hit a tree and it came back and hit him in the temple, and he fell over and he succumbed.

Well, having that kind of life, he ascended quickly and St. Peter took a real interest in this and he came out with his proverbial clipboard. He said, "Well, Monsignor, how is your golf?" He said, "How is my golf? Your Grace, I got here in two didn't I?" (Laughter)

As a fellow soldier, I can appreciate John Furgess' admiration for Teddy Roosevelt. It can be summed up in Roosevelt's declaration in a Fourth of July speech that he once gave. He said a man who was good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a standing leadership.

There is no doubt that John Furgess shares President Roosevelt's philosophy. John has worked hard to ensure that our nation's veterans get a square deal, and we are grateful for his outstanding leadership. Thank you, John.

I would like to congratulate Jim Mueller and his selection as our next Commander-in-Chief. I got acquainted with Jim a few months ago in Oklahoma City at the Golden Age Games. I look forward working closely with you, sir.

I want to thank Bob Wallace for his valuable leadership as the Executive Director that he has been doing since 2001. He has been influential in obtaining needed funding for the VA and making sure that veterans receive the quality care they deserve from the VA.

I also want to extend my congratulations to John Senk for the terrific job he has done as Adjutant General. I want to wish John all the best that life has to offer as he prepares for his retirement. He has tendered to me an invitation to come to Kansas City and go fishing, and there are

some days that is very tempting, so I might show up on your doorstep.

In stepping to fill his large shoes is a man I have gotten to know very well, "Gunner" Kent. So, I know that the VFW is going to be in very capable hands and I know "Gunner" will bring the same competence and enthusiasm to the VFW that he brought to the VA.

Filling his shoes I know will be and is being done by a man at the VA now who is one of your former National Commanders as well, George Cramer. We are appreciative for the good work of George as well. By the way, when George was the National Commander, which is in '93-'94, that was the year that the VFW and the VA entered into our agreement to have the Golden Age Games.

So, once again, it is a pleasure to be with all of you people, your distinguished leaders. It is probably no place like Salt Lake City where the local NBA team is named after the whole state instead of just a site. This is the first convention I have attended of the VFW, so permit me to take a minute or two to introduce myself just a little bit more.

I was born in a small town in Northwest Iowa. It had 99 people when I was growing up. It now has 68. When I was a freshman at West Point, I got teased, in fact, I got teased the whole time about this little town and it was so small. Two of my classmates say if we ever graduate from here, I want to see that place.

By the grace of God, we did graduate, and they kept their promise and came out for a week, and sure enough they saw that what I said was the case. There were only two signs, and both signs said "resume speed." My family, unfortunately was very poor. My dad lost the farm in the Depression, and then took up drinking seriously and really reduced my mother and us seven kids to pretty dire poverty at times. It was difficult.

But my mother had great faith in God and great faith in our country, and she held the family together. So today I feel extremely privileged to serve as a member of the President's Cabinet, a former Ambassador, and as a joyous husband of 38 years and a proud father.

What gave me and millions of young men and women like me the opportunity to succeed was the United States Army. In my case, I received a college education, for the only price that my family could afford, free. At West Point, I learned the meaning of General MacArthur's words to the corps, duty, honor, country.

Those three hallowed words reverently dictate, I think, what you ought to be, what you can be and what you will be. I have tried to live by that code. My experiences at West Point shaped my ability as a soldier and as a man. They made me want to serve my country, they made me appreciate my country, which has given me so much.

As the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, I again have a wonderful opportunity to serve, to give back to our nation and to its most prized citizens, its veterans. In particular, I am lucky enough to lead the Department that is the keeper of President Lincoln's promise to care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow and his orphan.

It is my honor to fulfill this charge as our nation's principal advocate for those who bear that honored title of American veteran. You know, there is an old saying, "A friend is someone who knows all about you and likes you anyway." Well, the VFW and the VA, I know, are old friends.

They are friends who know a great deal about each other and like and respect each other. The VFW has always been an advocate, not only for the veterans but for the VA itself.

I may be new to this relationship, but I know this: We at the VA can only succeed if we work hand-in-hand in partnership with you, and with the other Veterans Service organizations. (Applause)

The VFW leaders and its rank and file have always stood four square in support of the VA's mission. I am here also today to thank you for that support. This year, we, the VA, celebrate our 75th anniversary. President Hoover signed the legislation in 1930.

So this makes us the younger brother in our relationship as the VFW celebrates its 106th National Convention here in Salt Lake. As the oldest congressional combat veterans organization, I say happy 106th Convention and congratulations.

Let me tell you a story about two brothers I once knew. They were spending the night at their grandparents' house. At bedtime, the two boys, as they always did and were trained to do, then knelt down to say their prayers. But the youngest one began praying at the top of his lungs.

"I pray for a new bicycle, I pray for a new watch and I pray for a new DVD," just yelling. The older brother looked over and nudged him and said, "Why are you shouting? God is not deaf." The little brother looked at him and said, "No, but grandma is." (Laughter)

Well, I am not deaf either, although my wife thinks sometimes I am. But I am not. I know that the VFW is concerned about the status of our budget for fiscal year 2006 and beyond. I know that you and your members are concerned about timely access to health care, world-class health care, benefits for veterans and their growing workload at our facilities.

I know that you want disparities and disability claims awards reduced, and our national cemeteries to be maintained as national shrines. I hear you, I agree, and I am taking action. So let's begin by talking about health care. I am proud to say that today the VA is creating a health-care system worthy of the sacrifices that you have made for our nation and for all the men and women who are privileged to serve.

In fact, just yesterday, in the Washington Post, on the front page, and I am not making this up, on the front page of the Washington Post there was a very complimentary article about the VA hospital system. Earlier this year in an in-depth investigation by the Washington Monthly, the author wrote that ten years ago Veterans Hospitals were in a deep crisis.

Then he went on to say today's warriors are returning to the nation's best care. Today's VA is producing the highest quality care in the country. VA's turnaround points the way toward solving America's health crisis. I am proud to say that article was entitled "The Best Health Care Anywhere." It was talking about our VA health-care system.

Just last month, and I know many of you saw this because it was on the cover of U.S. News and World Report in their annual best hospital issue. They entitled it "Military Might." Today's VA hospitals are models of top-notch care. It went on to tell the story of Dustin Martinez, who is a Navy veteran, whose case baffled the doctors in the private sector, but who was quickly diagnosed and cured by the VA's Palo Alto Medical Center. "I was fortunate I was a veteran," Martinez said, "otherwise, I

don't think I would be here today."

Our health-care mission is not just about where we provide care, but how well we provide that care. We measure the kinds of things that matter. How easily veterans are able to access our care. How satisfied they are with the care we provide and how well we are able to restore them to the highest level of functioning.

We have used these measurements to set rigorous standards for care that we provide, standards that enable us to demonstrate that the care we offer is truly outstanding. I can say that because I really didn't have anything to do with making it that way, but I know that it is true.

We now head the nation in 18 out of 18 health-care quality indicators for disease prevention and treatment that are directly comparable with other health organizations that publish similar data. That's not just bragging, that is the opinion of Rand Corporation, the non-profit foundation which published those results in the "Annals of Internal Medicine."

Our computerized record system provides a single integrated application to health-care providers at all of our hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient clinics, which are now over 850, and even in now our readjustment counseling centers. Through this system, we can update a patient's medical history, review any test results, submit orders and access patient's health-care information in any center or clinic in the United States.

No other health-care system in the world can make that claim, and that makes me very, very proud that 220,000 plus employees of the VA are making our goals of excellence into a reality. Let me thank you and all the members of the VFW for your continued support of our health-care system and especially for helping the better the lives of our nation's veterans.

Your organization's tireless work helps lead the way in diagnostic, rehabilitation, continuing education and new technologies to improve the lives of millions of veterans and resulting non-veterans. So, on behalf of all veterans, I thank you, the VFW.

But, of course, providing the veterans with quality health care is not the VA's sole mission. From compensation and pensions to education, to home loan mortgages and homeless programs, to vocational training, benefits delivery figure prominently in our mission.

You-all know what a good news and bad news joke is. Well, my wife is an artist and she tells the story about one of her fellow painters whose husband received a visitor while she was out. The good news he told her when she returned was that the visitor asked him if the value of her painting was likely to go up after she died. He said, "Absolutely." He bought every one of her paintings. The bad news was that he was her physician. (Laughter)

Now, I know there are concerns within the VFW about the disparities and compensation and pension awards between facilities. I share those concerns and I do not minimize their importance. I am taking swift and decisive steps to address this problem, and I will not be satisfied with any answer that does not completely restore excellence, parity and confidence in our system.

The good news is that we have made more than 1.4 million decisions on disability claims last year. While our inventory of claims

went down by 100,000 in the past three years, and the average processing time for claims was reduced by nearly one-third while the quality improved significantly, but the system is not perfect. It does not yet satisfy me. I suspect it doesn't satisfy you. But we are making progress.

Finally, there is the third main leg of our service to you, our veterans, and that is our VA cemetery system. Now, 1,800 veterans pass away every day. Now, the VA is conducting the most ambitious hospital expansion project since the Civil War. Five new cemeteries will be added to our 120 existing cemeteries. Six others are in the planning stages, and by 2009 we will have nearly doubled our capacity.

I mentioned the younger brothers and older brothers earlier. Last year, our National Cemetery Administration earned the highest consumer satisfaction rating ever achieved by a public or private sector organization in America. That was 95 out of a hundred. That is almost perfect. (Applause) Imagine that.

So, I am going to brag again a little bit. This time I am going to brag about my brother, my big brother, Jack, who was then the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs when they got this phenomenal rating. I am proud of what he did and I am very proud of all our cemetery employees who do make our cemeteries the national shrines that they are.

We have made great strides in many areas in our department, and I suspect that together the VFW and we are going to be able to continue to make progress in the months and years ahead. But everything we have done so far will matter little if we do not meet the newest challenge we are facing, we, the VA.

That is to ensure that the returning combatants from Operation Iraq and Enduring Freedom receive the level of care they have earned through their service and their sacrifice to us. To date we have provided health care to more than 100,000 of them.

We have coordinated the transfer of many seriously-wounded veterans from military treatment facilities to VA Medical Centers. We have office and office of seamless transition bringing together the health care and benefits experts within the VA to foster and coordinate the transition of these men and women from active duty to civilian life, to veterans.

We now have active duty Marine and Army officers helping you staff our seamless transition office, so that we are better at handing over these people, these wonderful heroes at a very delicate time in their life. We have established four trauma centers, which provides coordinated health and rehabilitation services to active duty members and veterans who have experienced severe injuries during their service.

We are extending our support and our services to the families of veterans in these centers by including them now in the recovery process. By working with local supporters we provide family members with housing and other assistance, to help them cope in distant cities near the hospitals.

We also need to be certain that the young men and women who put their lives on hold to go to war are given every opportunity to join or rejoin the American work force. It is unacceptable that almost one in five of these recently-separated veterans, age 20 to 24, today are unemployed.

So, we at the VA, in fact, I was just discussing this with Bob Wallace before coming up here, we are developing a strategic partner-

ship with you, with the governors, with national employer associations and our sister agencies in the government.

We are preparing to launch a national initiative to help recently-separated veterans to obtain suitable jobs so they can begin or restart their civilian careers. All recently-separated veterans who can and want to work should have a job, and I intend to help them find one. (Applause)

I have been to Iraq since I became Secretary just over six months ago, and I have seen firsthand these men and women in action. I have visited them at Walter Reed and Bethesda many times, and in our policy trauma centers. I am inspired by their struggle and I will not let them down.

All of us at the VA are grateful to the VFW for your support as we help these new heroes recover, restore and rebuild their lives. We have the funds to accomplish the many missions that we have to undertake. We must have them. Last month the President submitted to the Congress an amendment to the administration's fiscal '06 budget.

He asked for nearly $2 billion more on top of an already record-setting budget. This is on the heels of a previous request that has been granted for over $1 billion additional funding with the current fiscal year. As the President told us yesterday, his administration has increased VA funding over 50 percent in his four and a half years in office. He and I appreciate the support we have received in this from you, the VFW, and from our supporters in the Congress.

The VFW and Auxiliary excel in another area of support that we really appreciate, and that is your volunteerism. With more than 19 million volunteer hours devoted to work in the community, with youth programs, VA medical centers and nursing homes, your record of volunteerism is an example for all to follow.

I want you to know that the VA is very proud to have partnered with the VFW and the Auxiliary in sponsoring the Golden Age Games now for 11 years. We look forward to continuing this partnership with you in the decades to come The dedication of your volunteers to our veterans is priceless.

Last year, members of the VFW and Auxiliary joined nearly 100,000 volunteers who contributed 13 million hours of service to the VA, a contribution equal to that of 6,200 full-time employees, which would have cost us over $220 million. The dollar value is only a small part of that total work.

Through programs, through your Adopt a Unit program, the Operation Uplink phone cards and the local assistance for returning veterans and their families, the VFW continues to demonstrate its strong support for our troops.

I want you to also know that I share in the President's view and the support for your strong efforts for a constitutional amendment to protect the American flag. In June, as you well know, the House of Representatives voted to ban flag desecration. The President has asked the Senate to do the same and yesterday during the President's speech Senator Hatch, who was sitting next to me, reminded me that they only need two more votes in the Senate. Let me close with this. I am proud and privileged to lead the Department that is the keeper of America's long-standing promise to do the very best that we can for those who served and sacrificed for us. We are as committed to our older veterans from the trenches of World War II

as we are to our youngest heroes from the streets of Baghdad.

I know that while wars have beginnings and endings, the battle to properly care for those who fought never ends. In these dangerous times, I ask that your thoughts and prayers be with the troops in the field, our brave young comrades now fighting terrorism throughout the world, fighting to suppress those people who as John Paul, II, used to say to me "are killing in the name of God." God bless our troops and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Mr. Secretary, thank you for that presentation, your first before a VFW National Convention. I know it won't be the last. You bring strong predictions to that arena. Teddy Roosevelt also told about the plan in the arena, Mr. Secretary.

You are the veterans advocate in a wonderful arena. You know the VFW will continue to speak out loud and clear and we want you to know that we appreciate access to you, the Washington office, the Veterans Posts around the world. It is a great team and we look forward to the future fighting for our veterans of the United States. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

INTRODUCTION OF TERRANCE O'MAHONEY, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL HIRE VETERANS COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is now my privilege to present Mr. Terrance P. O'Mahoney, the Chairman of the President's National Hire Veterans Committee.

In 1997, then Governor George W. Bush appointed him to the Texas Work Force Commission, where his emphasis on veterans' issues led to the passage of the Job for Veterans Act, and to more than 98,000 veterans being hired within his state in one year.

In 2004, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao named him to the President's Committee, where he has continued to champion veterans' preference in the work force. Please give a big VFW welcome to the Chairman of the President's National Hire Veterans Committee, a former Marine Corps pilot, Mr. T. P. O'Mahoney. (Applause)

REMARKS - TERRY P. O'MAHONEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL HIRE VETERANS COMMITTEE

MR. O'MAHONEY: It is great to be here. When I first talked to Bob Wallace, I asked Bob what exactly he wanted me to talk about. He said about ten minutes and no longer, and that is all you can have. It is great to be here. I just happened to be out in Hawaii with the Legion, and it was great to join you last night.

I will tell you the VFW throws one heck of a party. I will tell you that. It is quite obvious that President Bush, Secretary of Labor Chao and Secretary of Veterans Administration Jim Nicholson are committed to ensuring that our veterans are welcomed back in the mainstream of America when they return from serving our country.

It was interesting that the Secretary talked about Teddy Roosevelt, and when he made the comment that if a man is good enough to shed his

blood for his country, he is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards, that is exactly what the Jobs for Veterans Act is about, giving veterans a square deal.

It became law in November, 2002, and the highlights give veterans, in some cases spouses, prior to service in the Department of Labor Job Training Program. Section 6 of the Act established the President's National Hire Veterans Committee, and it sort of formed our mission is to press upon employers the value of hiring a veteran and then using the state job matching system, another means to make that connection.

The Committee recognizes that businesses are customers and the veteran is our product. One thing we have determined is that hiring veterans is not goodwill, it is just good business. The Committee has 21 members, with a broad mix of business, labor, state and federal officials, and 15 of the members are veterans. Two are Marines. We have Jim Barney from the Department, Jay Vargess that works for Secretary Nicholson in the VA, and Nick Bacon, who is in the construction business in Arkansas are all members of our Committee.

I must say I have never met three more dedicated, giving, caring men than the three I have just mentioned. Fellow VFW member Jim Myer is a member of our Committee. We also are represented by the Small Business Administration, the Post Office and the Office of Personnel Management.

Ten members represent businesses, both large and small, including Home Depot, which you all know last year hired 16,000 veterans. General Motors is represented, Boeing, Regions Bank and Medco Health. The Committee has established a national marketing program to identify the veterans and the preferred candidate for employment.

We have a designated Web site, which is www.hire veterans.org. We serve as a portal force for employers and veterans alike. The Web site is a centerpiece of our campaign and offers a variety of information to like employees to veterans and veterans to employees.

In conjunction with the Web site, we have a national campaign that focuses on business decision makers. There are managers and business owners. We have advertised in HR magazine, Business Week, and a variety of Internet job ports. Two effective items that we have been a color wrap for Business Week magazine.

The cover wrap is an outside program mailed to executive leaders of Business Week. In our first issue, it contained an interview with Gore, including Bob Lutz, a former squadron friend of mine. Also Jackson Moore, the President and CEO of Regions Financial Corporation, Bob Nardelli of Home Depot and Mike Attery at the Heart Financial Services.

I want to emphasize we are promoting veterans and the key employees, and encouraging employees to hire veterans first. I can assure you that our message is being heard. I would like to just give a few activities and accomplishments we are quite proud of.

We have reached 4,000 key executives and human resources managers through our advertising efforts. We have placed over 11 million banner ads on the highly Web site of monstar.com, career.com, lot jobs and the Society of Human Resources Management.

We have reached 170 CEOs that comprise the very powerful

business round table forum. We have reached some 406,000 individuals, business owners and organizations using direct mails promoting the Hire the Vets message. We have continued conferences, work groups, job fairs and gatherings in all 50 states.

We have garnered the support of state governments that has a veterans movement. Thirty-six governors have issued these proclamations, and we are on line to have all of the governors issue the proclamations this year. These activities clearly reflect positive efforts.

Let me talk to you about the bottom line results. First, the number of employer job openings posted with the one-stop system increased significantly just one quarter directly following the launch of our campaign. Secondly, the veterans' unemployment rate has dropped from 4.6 to 3.7 percent in the two quarters directly following implementation of our hire vets first effort.

If you recall, at the beginning I stated our mission was to raise employer awareness as to the value of hiring veterans by the one stop and being able to go ahead and facilitate that employment. The results directly correlate to our mission and provide strong evidence to businesses, indeed is carrying our hire vets first message. Let us address our plan. I think you have seen the logo "Hire Vets First." If your eyes are really good, you can see our little pin here. I know all the VFW folks love pins. Some of you guys look like South American Admirals with all the pins you have. We will make some of these pins available to you after this meeting.

I hope you have seen our key logo. It is being used in advertising and Web sites for business and other venues. We want to get this image across America so everyone will recognize and support it. For instance, if you are in Madison or Milwaukee, Wisconsin, we have our logo on the buses that are running through those two cities. We got that done for free.

I think the Army puts out $46 million for their Army, and we were able to get ours on for free. You have to look fast, because that goes down the line at about 330 miles an hour. So catch it when it is sitting still.

Why are we doing all this? Well, annually, Americans spent $17 billion training our armed forces. The Committee looks to harvest those skills and qualities that are learned in the military, and that are so necessary to compete in the business world.

When I was the Labor Commissioner for the State of Texas, employers wanted trained or trainable people. They wanted mature, responsible, reliable workers and leaders as a foundation to build their business. That is exactly what the veterans give them. It is the right thing to do.

We talk a little bit about performance measures in Washington and every place we go, and there is one performance measure, which the Committee has. We want every veteran who wants to work to have an opportunity to have suitable work.

I want to tell you a little story that when I was again at the agency in Texas, the region had a retreat in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The retreat leader was a guy named Gordon Graham. Gordon had been in the banking business, but he wasn't too good at it.

You see, he was a bank robber and kept getting caught, and he wound up doing 17 years in the Washington State penitentiary. Somewhere along the line, he figured out that he could make more money

being a facilitator than he could robbing the bank, and the food was better.

So, he told the story about a United automobile worker who had retired and took a lump sum payment, and he went to Las Vegas to make his money. Lo and behold, he went to Las Vegas, went to the crap table and he lost it all. In those days, you used to have to pay to use the facilities.

So he went to the men's room and he didn't have a quarter, and he asked this guy, "Can you loan me a quarter? I need to use the facilities. I will pay you back. Give me a business card." The guy gave him a quarter. He goes over and the door is open.

He went in and came back out, went to the slot machine, put the quarter in, pulled the lever and won the jackpot. He took that back to the crap table, won all his money back plus another $10,000 and got the heck out of Dodge. He went back to Detroit and he was very successful and he was telling this writer the story and he said, "You know, I always wanted to thank that guy."

The reporter said, "Well, you have his business card. Why don't you go ahead and find him." He said, "No, I don't want to thank that guy. I want to thank the guy that left the door open for me." (Laughter) That is what we want to do for the veterans.

We want to leave the door open for the veteran who has had his life on hold to protect our nation successfully, to resume his life at home. We want to leave that door open for the veterans to participate in the growing economy that their service has sustained.

We want to leave the door open for the business to meet the demands of global competition with the skilled workers built around the veteran. We want to leave that door open for communities to grow and prosper because of the leadership, talent and the spirit of the men of our armed forces. You see, for our country, it is the right thing to do.

I want to tell you another little story about an injured Army Sergeant, a guy named Arthur Kalus, who had his leg blown off in March, '03. He was at Walter Reed Hospital and one of our disabled people talked to him and he expressed a desire to go back to Manhattan, Kansas. I don't know why, but he wanted to go back to Manhattan and work.

We got him a job with Lear Sigler. He didn't have any tools. So Mat Tools has been very friendly to veterans. Mat Tools said we will fix him up with a tool kit. Well, they gave him a $13,000 plastic mechanics tool kit that had everything. They are going to do that each quarter for the next year.

Further, Mat Tools is going to award a distributorship with $145,000 and veterans probably will be able to select that from the New York Times Job Fair in November. It is those kinds of employers that are stepping forward and helping our veterans now.

We all have a stake in this thing: The VFW business, workers, one-stop centers, educational training facilities, our military and families all desire to improve their lives and acquire something worthwhile. I ask your assistance to the initiative and spread our message.

You see for all of us it is the right thing to do. Thank you for inviting me. Have a great conference and I really appreciate your attention. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. O'Mahoney. On behalf of our nation's veterans, we appreciate the Committee's outreach

for veterans seeking employment, and the VFW prioritizes that every day.

Comrades, at this time I want to welcome back to the podium our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius from Alaska, who has been excused the last two days attending the funeral of his mother in Minnesota. We welcome you back. You are doing exactly what you should be doing and we are proud to have you back here.

Secondly, comrades, I would be remiss if I didn't thank you and at the same time congratulate you for your conduct these last several days. This has been somewhat a threatening situation with peace protesters. I think the officials in the City of Salt Lake City, both security and law enforcement, have handled that situation very well.

Those of you who I have knowledge of that have been interviewed by the media, both the newspapers, radio and television, your statements have been forthright. You speak from the heart, which is exactly what we expect you to do, and we appreciate that conduct very, very much. Let's just continue that route the rest of the week. Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF AMERICANISM AWARD TO MR. DICK MORRIS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: As the National Chairman of the World War II Fund Raising Committee for the National Funeral Directors Association, NFDA, Mr. Morris spearheaded a drive that raised over $5 million for the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Although some members of the NFDA were doubtful that the goal could be reached, and told Mr. Morris that "it couldn't be done," he soon proved them wrong.

In order to reach their pledged goal of $5 million, 16,000 Celebration of Freedom kits had to be packed and sent to a network of funeral directors across the nation. Mr. Morris hoped to enlist the help of 400 volunteers to assemble and mail the kits, but on the day of the event 1,213 people from his hometown of El Dorado, Kansas, arrived to assist him. In less than four hours, the group put the kits together and mailed them to funeral homes across the country.

As a result of his efforts, the NFDA was the fourth largest contributor to the World War II Memorial Fund.

As a funeral director, Mr. Morris works closely with families of deceased veterans to ensure they are familiar with VFW services. He believes strongly that no veteran should be laid to rest without the American flag-folding ritual and presentation.

Because of his inspiring and tireless efforts, we are honoring him with the VFW Americanism Award. Please welcome Mr. Dick Morris. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Americanism Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Dick Morris.

"In recognition of his undying support of veterans and their causes, as evidenced by his leadership in raising over $5 million for the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., as well as his continuous

efforts and compassion for all veterans in need. His love of country, unwavering spirit and advocacy for our nation's armed forces, 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 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - MR. DICK MORRIS

MR. DICK MORRIS: All I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you. I am so humbled to be standing before this group of men and women today. You are my heroes. Wow! Because of your sacrifices to our great country, I can stand here and receive this award.

This is amazing. Yes, I raised a lot of money for the World War II Memorial, but that wasn't hard. It was the right thing to do to recognize those people. I was very instrumental in building another veterans memorial in my hometown, just recently dedicated. It wasn't hard to do, because it was the right thing to do.

Yes, I started the United We Care Program to honor soldiers who are serving in Iraq, and we go out and help the families and the ladies or men left behind with duties like mowing their yard, taking care of kids. You know, it is not that hard. It was the right thing to do.

God has blessed me in so many ways. He has blessed me with a very understanding family. He has blessed me with wonderful friends like Lewie Cooper that sits up here on the stage with me. He has blessed me with the wonderful company called Morris Services. They allow me to go out and do these things.

This company is run by a man named Mel Payne. We both share the passion and the vision for helping others and making this world a better place to live. God has shown me so many times that when you give of yourself, you get so much more back in return.

I understand with this beautiful medal I am receiving a $5,000 check. That is unbelievable. I decided to take that $5,000 check and match it with my own $5,000, and you are probably wondering what am I going to do with the money. I was reading in one of the veterans magazines that 30 percent of the nation's homeless are veterans.

I also read that 30 percent are children under the age of 18 years of age. With this check you are giving me and this matching fund, I set up this non-profit called "Let's Help the Homeless." You know, it is the right thing to do.

When I was reading over this list of people that had received this award over the last 50 years, I don't know if you have ever seen the list, but I was just amazed. There are people like Herbert Humphrey, Jim Doolittle, John Wayne, Senator John McCain, and I thought to myself, oh, I feel sorry for the next recipient, because he will be asked who in the heck is Dick Morris?

Well, I realize that God has opened another door to me. Because of this award, I am going to be able to go out and raise a lot of money for the homeless. I am going to be able to put my foot in the door of certain cor-

porations that I couldn't have done if it wouldn't have been for this award.

I can make you a promise right now that these statistics of 30 percent will be reduced before my mission ends. Right now, there is a CD. Do you all know what a CD looks like? There is a CD being made, and I have brought in a major recording artist that are going to be on this patriotic and gospel CD.

All of the profits that are made off of this CD nationally are going to help the homeless. Yes, you and I can make a difference in the world, but I need your help. I need your contacts and I need your prayers. Again, thank you, thank you, thank you. May God bless you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A great American, ladies and gentlemen. Dick, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, this award does bring with it a $5,000 honorarium, which you have donated to "Let's Help the Homeless Foundation." Thank you so much for your generosity.

MR. DICK MORRIS: Thank you, John.

PRESENTATION OF 2005 VFW ARMED FORCES AWARD TO UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, if there was ever a special award, this next one is. The mission of the United States Army Special Operations Command is to organize, train, educate, man, equip, fund, administer, mobilize, deploy and sustain special operations forces to successfully conduct worldwide operations as directed.

The men and women of this command are vital to the defense of our nation and dedicated to the cause of maintaining freedom and liberty.

Please join me in welcoming Command Sergeant Major Michael T. Hall, accompanied by Master Chief Robert Edwards and Chief Master Sergeant Howard J. "Jim" Mowry, representatives of the Special Operations Command to accept the VFW Armed Forces Award. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Armed Forces Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to United States Special Operations Command.

"In special appreciation for the men and women who plan, direct and execute special operations in the conduct of the war on terrorism in order to disrupt, defeat and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the United States, its citizens and interests worldwide. The command's energy, focus, skill and determination to take the fight to the enemy is the key to America's ultimate defeat of global terrorism, and earns the command 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 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - SERGEANT MAJOR MICHAEL HALL

SERGEANT MAJOR HALL: Thank you very much, and good morning. I don't know how they lined the signs, but it is not by importance, or the State of Ohio would have been up front here. I hope we

have plenty of Sergeants-at-Arms, because the football season is getting ready to start and you need to keep Michigan away from us.

It is truly an honor to be here among so many heroes and great Americans. It is an honor to accept the 2005 VFW Armed Forces Award on behalf of General Doug Brown and the men and women of the United States Special Operations Command.

This is your business session, so I thought it would be appropriate for Chief Master Sergeant Howard Mowry and Master Chief Robert Edwards from the Naval Special Center and myself to be here, which is our combat in uniform. It is not just our military that is at work, it is our nation and our way of life that is at war.

It is great organizations like the VFW who have made it possible to walk down the streets of America in this uniform and to have your hand shook and say "a good job and we appreciate you." We have not always had that. Thank you very much.

There are units and individuals doing wonders in this global war on terrorism, and it is an honor for us to be singled out to be presented this award. When looking at the previous recipients of this award, it was truly humbling. We designated the Special Operations Warrior Foundation as the recipient of the $5,000 check that comes with this award.

For those of you who are not familiar with the organization, they provide the children of Special Operations Forces the college education that their fallen parent would have wanted for them. This foundation provides or identifies funding to cover the full cost of a college education, including tuition, room, board, books and supplies for the child of every Special Operations Forces warrior lost in training or in combat.

This organization and our casualties have been going on long before 9-11. It is hard to pinpoint when terror first declared war on America, but we in Special Operations have been fighting this war for at least 25 years. As we speak, there are thousands of Special Operations soldiers, sailors and airmen deployed overseas.

Most are in Iraq and Afghanistan, but they are also in 50 other countries, and while Iraq and Afghanistan are our main efforts, we continue to help those willing to help themselves in places like Columbia, the Philippines, South Korea, to destroy that which freedom-loving people around the world hold dear, and that is the right to choose.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are not easy times for our service members, our families or our nation. We sincerely appreciate what the VFW does to support them. I, like you, am proud and thankful for what they do. Special Operations Forces and every man and woman in uniform are humanitarians for our great country.

They are the living answer to the prayers of the oppressed worldwide. They are the nightmare of every coward who counts themselves a terrorist and every nation organization that would support them. So I am proud to be on the team of the mightiest military in history. Thank you very much. God bless you and God bless America.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I want you to see this standing ovation, Major. Thank you, comrades. Major, with this award carries the honorarium for $5,000 which you have designated for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. Best wishes for every success in the future,

Major, and to the good men and women in your command. Thank you so much. (Applause)

PRESENTATION TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS BY THE 2004-2005 DEPARTMENT COMMANDERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: My comrades and sisters, at this time Marty Miller, Past Commander of Alaska and the 2004-2005 Department Commanders have a presentation for Commander-in-Chief Furgess.

COMRADE MARTY MILLER (Department of Alaska): Thank you very much. Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Mueller and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Kurpius, our best regards. The fellow comrades out there, what an honor it is to stand here in front of everybody today. We have a special gift.

As you know, our Commander-in-Chief has kind of outlined that we are the Tough Riders. Could I have all the 54 Department Commanders to please stand up? The 2004-2005 State Commanders, the Tough Riders, please stand. Well, there is nobody in the building, Chief. They are not out there. There is nobody in there because they are tired of hearing about Teddy Roosevelt.

Speaking of Teddy Roosevelt, sir, we know you are a big fan and the 2004-2005 State Commanders, your Tough Riders, have decided to give you a little presentation. As you know, Teddy Roosevelt, we tried to get a stuffed horse that went up the hill, but we couldn't do it. But we found that Teddy Roosevelt was a big game hunter. He liked to hunt.

We also found that Teddy Roosevelt ran a party ticket when he was running for President called the Bull Moose Party. What I would like to do right now, Chief, is to present to you the 2004-2005 Tough Riders.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I have been ambushed, comrades. I know what it felt like to just lose control.

COMRADE MARTY MILLER (Department of Alaska): Most Chiefs get a gift for their desk. I would like to see where you are going to put this. (Applause) I talked to Phyllis and she said they will get it back to you. When you get back, you are in charge and that is no bull. (Laughter)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Marty, of all the Commanders, I once got in the war one time and after receiving an award, I said, "Gosh, I am speechless." I spoke for 30 minutes. I don't know what to say now. This is remarkable. Thank you. I am speechless.

Thanks to all the Tough Riders for a great VFW year. Thank you. You will never be forgotten. You will be in the history but will never be forgotten. This is a very special moment in my life and thank you to all those Department State Commanders. What a thrill. Thank you. I would say I have got just the place for that, but I am not sure I do.

INTRODUCTION OF SUPREME COMMANDER TOM TWEET OF THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE COOTIE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A trip to almost any VA Hospital will 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 their organization's 85th Supreme Scratch in Cincinnati in August, 2004.

Please welcome the Supreme Commander of the Military Order of the Cootie of the United States of America, Tom Tweet.

REMARKS BY MOC SUPREME COMMANDER TOM TWEET

MOC SUPREME COMMANDER TWEET: You know, I heard the Sergeant-at-Arms say the only appropriate hat to wear is the VFW cover, so the Chief gave me permission to wear my Supreme Commander's color as I address the audience. Thank you very much.

I have not read from a speech all year, I have shot from the hip. I have so many important things that I need to address this audience with that I am going to read so I don't miss out on the important things.

Commander-in-Chief Furgess, National Officers, Fellow Delegates and members of this great organization: I would like to bring to the 106th Convention the greetings from the Military Order of the Cootie, the Supreme Officers and the approximately 23,000 members who still are a major force in our great organization.

Of course, my personal greetings as the MOC Supreme Commander. I have been a member of the VFW and the MOC for over 30 years. I served my country in the United States Army Reserve, preserving the American way of life, and I continue to serve my country to do all I can to protect the right and integrity of the veterans.

We must preserve the one-time entitlements that are now viewed as benefits of the men and women who were asked to serve in our armed services. The Military Order of the Cootie has what we feel is a premier way for hospital work, concerning them smiling in beds of white, or as Abraham Lincoln said, "Care for him who shall have borne in battle along with his widows and orphans."

That seems ironic. I have heard that statement at least three times here this week. The goal of the Military Order of the Cootie is to assist the VFW in the new membership recruitment, and our 2004-2005 recruitment goal was 15,000.

Our chairman reported 14,927 new and reinstated VFW members, and I am sure that we have exceeded our pledge because as we all know recording is not 100 percent.

We logged over 627,321 hours and 2,471,000 miles driven with a cash donation to the VFW projects of over $580,215. Our hospital reports, and these are reports and not 100-percent accurate, but certainly less than the goals, the Cooties drove 4,010,230 miles and visited 1,113,408 patients on 32,880 visits, for a total of $6,397,554.46 in credits.

I might add that we don't have the Ladies Auxiliary here, but the ladies that fill in for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we, the MOC, which is the Military Order of the Cootie, received a letter last week saying there were 218,000 hours, making 34,461 visits to 701,800 patients in nursing

homes and in hospitals, for a total credit of the Military Cootie Auxiliary of an additional $1.1 million in gifts, food and cash donations. Again, this has been a wonderful year for our organization, and I am so proud to have been a part of it.

To Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Mueller, feel assured that the MOC and the MOCA will be there for you and the parent organization in 2005-2006.

Chief, as your year winds down, you can relax a little. Here is a shirt that denotes having fun while getting the job done. Thank you very much. (Applause) Now, I will put on my appropriate hat.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, let's hear it for the Cooties one more time. They really, really provide valuable service to this great organization. Boos are authorized. Thank you, Tom.

PRESENTATION OF "CONSECUTIVE YEAR OF MEMBERSHIP" CITATION TO DEPARTMENT OF ARIZONA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I know I have said this, and it starts sounding trite after a while, but it certainly is not meant to be. This is another special award. For 38 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. That is 38 years of continuous growth in the VFW.

Now, in recognition of those efforts, I would like to call on William Chagnon, the Immediate Past Department Commander of Arizona, to accept this "Consecutive Years of Membership Growth" citation. Congratulations to the Department of Arizona. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Certificate of Commendation awarded to the Department of Arizona.

"In recognition of 38 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 23rd day of August, 2005." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - COMRADE WILLIAM CHAGNON

COMRADE WILLIAM CHAGNON (Department of Arizona): I humbly accept this on behalf of the great State of Arizona. At this time I would like to ask all the delegates from the State of Arizona to please stand. (Applause)

This award belongs to you as with this hat I so proudly received this year. It is you that have earned it. It belongs to you and I thank all of the State of Arizona for what they have done for 38 years for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary.

A special thanks to two special Commanders-in-Chief, Allen

"Gunner" Kent and Bob Currieo, for your help. Thank you very much. My Chief of Staff, Billy Shidell, has done a great job and we have headquarters that is unequivocally one of the best of the 54 Departments. It is really you, Arizona, that have done this 38 years and Billy Shidell. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Will the whole delegation from Arizona please stand. Let's recognize them, comrades, 38 years of membership growth in the VFW. Thank you, comrades. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF AWARD TO COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS BY THE VFW POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We will now have a presentation from the Chairman of the Political Action Committee, Michael Wysong.

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

Thank you once again for the opportunity to give you an update on the VFW Political Action Committee. I continue to express the Board's appreciation for cooperation and support rendered to the Political Action Committee by the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General and the Executive Director.

With me this morning is VFW PAC Director, Sal Caprichio. I want you to know that under his direction the PAC has advanced the VFW agenda on Capitol Hill and has changed the face of the political landscape. We are now the sought-after endorsement because, veterans, you are making a difference.

The VFW Political Action Committee plowed new ground this last election cycle and significantly increased our political activism. Let me share with you some results of just a few of those initiatives. The production and distribution across the country of over 1,000 CDs with two "get out the vote" messages, not only helped turn out the veteran vote but the general public at large.

We contributed $284,000 in amounts ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 to select congressional and senatorial candidates in the November, 2004, general election. In the Senate, we endorsed 26 candidates and 25 were elected, for a percentage of 96.2.

In the House, we endorsed 328, and 324 were elected, for a 98.8 percent rate. Overall, 354 were endorsed and 349 elected for a 98.6 percent test rate. On a test basis, we targeted six races that were considered to be very, very close, and spent $82,000 airing positive radio advertisements to help our endorsed candidates.

Five won those close races by large margins, and one lost by a very slim margin of just 1,600 votes. This test program was a huge success and demonstrated that the VFW Political Action Committee can go into a congressional district and make a difference with their type of political advocacy and keep our supporters in congress.

As you can see, we are not afraid to tackle the tough issues and influence the outcome of elections to benefit all veterans. Because that is our charge, that is our mandate, that is our responsibility. With your continued help and support, we will always be victorious.

Our fund-raising activities are progressing at a steady rate. That is the direct result of your efforts and the generous donations of both the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary members. I thank you.

So, along with the tremendous work of our VFW and Auxiliary Political Action Committee Chairman at every level of our organizations, I can report to you that the VFW Political Action Committee is fiscally sound. Money is the engine that drives the PAC, and you were the fuel that drives that engine.

On behalf of the PAC Board of Directors, I thank all of you for all you do each and every day to strengthen the VFW Political Action Committee. We certainly cannot do it without you. We cannot do it without the steadfast support and leadership of the Commander-in-Chief.

So, it now gives me a great deal of pleasure on behalf of the VFW Political Action Committee Board of Directors to make a very special presentation to Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. Chief, this magnificent golden eagle is given to you in recognition of your outstanding and unwavering support of the VFW Political Action Committee. Thank you for all you do and for allowing me to serve this great organization. Thank you, Chief. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Now, I do have a special place for this. Thank you so very much.

COMRADE SAL CAPRICHIO: I do want to say a few things to the membership. Thank you for your support. The PAC is moving forward and we are getting stronger. The strength of our organization is money to act. We have right now $1.4 million in escrow, and we continue to support the people that support us, and we will continue to do so. Thank you so much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Sal, for your leadership. I know some Departments are doing better than others. So I challenge the '05-'06 State Commanders to put all of their hearts and soul in the leadership behind the Political Action Committee in your state. Comrades, it is so important. Thank you very much for that leadership. Thank you, Sal and Mike.

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE POST SERVICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The VFW National Veterans Service Committee established the Outstanding Post Service Officer of the Year Award to recognize one individual who takes those extra steps to serve veterans and their families.

This year's award is presented to Mr. John "Jack" Soraghan of VFW Post 2498 in Needham, Massachusetts.

Jack is a former Air Force officer and a Vietnam veteran who demonstrated an uncanny ability in his ability to positively, and in some cases, dramatically influence the lives of many of his Post's members.

His professionalism and dedication have earned him many outstanding awards, but none are as precious to him as the "thank yous" he receives from fellow veterans and their family members.

It is with great pride that I present to you this year's Outstanding Post Service Officer of the Year, Mr. Jack Soraghan, from the VFW

Department of Massachusetts. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "VFW Post Service Officer of the Year, 2004-2005, presented to John 'Jack' Soraghan, Post 2498, Needham, Massachusetts.

"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 of the United States, this 23rd day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - COMRADE JOHN SORAGHAN

COMRADE JOHN SORAGHAN: Thank you, Commander, for those kind words. Commander-in-Chief, Honored Guests, Members all, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this august body. I would like to introduce some people behind me, my wife, and also Ray O'Brien, an S.O. from Massachusetts, and Past Commander Robert Van Kirk from Massachusetts, and current Commander Mike Harness from Massachusetts. (Applause)

It is a distinct honor and privilege to join you at this 106th National Convention and to receive this distinguished award. I am truly humbled, grateful and appreciative. After my tour of duty in Vietnam and discharged from the Air Force, I embarked upon a career with the Veterans Administration in Boston. It was an enlightening experience.

It enabled me to serve those who gave so much in the defense of this country. I work with a cadre of dedicated people, including veterans' agents and national service officers. Those of us who have been in combat understand the meaning of stress, terror and the horror of war.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to support our troops and serve veterans in every way feasible. For those who forgot our wars, there should never be a lack of caring, gratitude and respect for those who fought our wars. We must continue to pressure Congress to fully fund the VA health-care system, which is under serious budget constraints.

We must insist that all veterans who serve honorably have complete access to health services. It is ludicrous at this point in time that our country does not fully fund VA health care, but yet when appropriation bills are made, some have a lot to do with providing free medical care to illegal aliens and others who never served or defended America.

It isn't too much to ask that the appropriate health care be provided to our war veterans. Is it too much to ask? We are not talking about exorbitant budget-busting costs to fund VA health services. In fact, the vast majority of veterans receive very little health care.

Finally, I would like to leave you with these words. I think you have read them before. "It is the soldier, not the politician, who has given us a free democracy. It is the soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the soldier, not the editor, who has given us freedom of the

press.

"It is the soldier, not the bishop, who has given us religious freedom. It is the soldier, not the activist, who has given us freedom to demonstrate. It is the soldier who salutes the flag, whose coffin is draped by the flag and whose ultimate sacrifice allows the protester to burn the flag."

Thank you for listening and for the honor you have bestowed upon me. I salute all of you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: For Jack being singled out as the Outstanding Post Officer is such an honor. In the audience are Post Service Officers. Will you, please, stand at this time as a group and be recognized. That is all the Post Service Officers. Let's give them a round of applause, comrades. Thank you for that and dedication. (Applause) Thank you, Jack.

I am going to ask at the conclusion of the awards ceremony if the Chairman for General Resolutions will be prepared for his report. That is Bob Currieo, Past Commander-in-Chief, and National Security and Foreign Affairs, Chairman Art Fellwock, Past Commander-in-Chief, to be ready for their report. We will try to get rid of all our business and get back on schedule.

PRESENTATION TO OPERATION UPLINK BY MWR

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We are pleased today to have with us Master Chief Buck Hickman, U.S. Navy, the Senior Enlisted Advisor responsible for Quality of Life programs Navy-wide, and Mr. Bill Winters, for a special presentation to Operation Uplink on behalf of sailors serving worldwide.

COMRADE BILL WINTERS: Commander-in-Chief Furgess and members of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary:

I can't begin to explain to you the importance of Operation Uplink. As a retired sailor and retired chief myself, now working with the Navy MWR, Master Chief Hickman is the right guy to do that for you. He is the man that goes out on the point of the spear of Southwest Asia, the Pacific.

Wherever there are sailors that serve, he goes out there and he comes back to us and he tells us the needs of the sailors and their families. Two things that always ran at the very top are the ability to communicate, whether it be the Internet or via telephone. Operation Uplink has been a staunch supporter of that and has enabled us to support that effort Navy-wide.

I want to thank all the members of the Posts, all your fund-driving efforts. We couldn't be more grateful. So, these awards that we present here today to Commander-in-Chief Furgess are for you.

COMRADE BUCK HICKMAN: We would like to give you a donation for your program. Every sailor and Marine we have deployed really appreciates the Operation Uplink cards. They have improved their morale. This statue is of the lone sailor. Also we have a plaque. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Chief, these are very much appreciated. I am going to request that one each be displayed in our National Headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, and one in our VFW Washington office so folks will see it.

Alma and I would love to have it in our home in Nashville. It would not be seen by thousands, but when it is seen in Kansas City and Washington, it has much greater impact. Thank you so much for this. Thank you.

If our Post Officer of the Year would come back. Jack, I apologize for this oversight. That is well-earned, Jack. Congratulations.

I will call on Adjutant General Senk for the next presentation.

SIGNAL CORPS AWARDS PRESENTED TO GOLD LEVEL DEPARTMENTS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. We are going to ask those Departments that attained the honor of Signal Corps to come up and present themselves along back here. If your Department attained that award, please make your way up.

The Signal Corps Awards were created to recognize the Departments who are the strongest supporters of Operation Uplink.

The Gold Level Awards represent the elite among our Departments. Their donations of $50,000 or more includes all Posts and Auxiliaries, Districts, individual and corporation donations for that state.

This year's Gold Level Awards go to:

Department of California
Department of Minnesota
Department of Illinois
Department of Ohio
Department of New Jersey
Department of Texas
Department of New York
Department of Pennsylvania
Department of Maryland
Department of Michigan
Department of Missouri
Department of Florida
Department of Delaware
Department of Virginia
Department of Wisconsin
Department of Massachusetts
Department of Indiana

Thank you all for your efforts on behalf of Operation Uplink, military personnel and our hospitalized veterans.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, if I learned one thing in that week in Iraq, I learned a lot. Operation Uplink is just as important now as it ever was, if not more so. Please know that, please understand that. We need your help. This is a great effort this morning.

We have more announcements right now.

COMRADE DONALD CUNNINGHAM (Department of Maryland):

Thank you, Chief. What I have here are three checks to be presented later from the Department of Maryland VFW, $6,292. From the Ladies Auxiliary Department of Maryland, $6,319, and from VFW Post 6027, in Northeast Maryland, a check for $5,000. Thank you, Chief. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Where is North End Post,

Boston Massachusetts? Here he comes. Let's give this comrade just a moment to make his way down the aisle. I think his effort is very much worthy and appreciated. North End Post, Boston, Massachusetts, Past Chief, is that you?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: That is me, sir. I am Quartermaster.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Past Commander-in-Chief from the North End Post, Boston, Massachusetts, let's welcome him for a very special announcement. How is that for an introduction? The North End Post is going to make a very special presentation later.

It is not for Operation Uplink, but it is for another very special project. Paul will announce it just a little later. Right now, let's give all the Signal Corps one more round of applause as a group. (Applause) Thank you, comrades. Every non-commissioned officer, every officer, every enlisted person that I talked with in Baghdad and Iraq talked about Operation Uplink. Comrades, you have had fabulous success with that program. Please keep it up. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO JOE L. RIDGLEY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Our next awardee this morning needs no special introduction to this audience. He is well-known, recently retired as our Quartermaster General. I am going to ask our present Quartermaster General to come up and read this very -- gosh, I hate to say special, but it is, very special award at this time to our Quartermaster General, Joe Ridgley.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL MAHER: "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Joe Ridgley in appreciation and grateful recognition of 29 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States as a dedicated employee, fulfilling the position of Administrative Assistant for Accounting, Director of Life Membership and Purchasing, Director of Emblem and Supply, Assistant Quartermaster General, and ending his VFW career as the organization's Chief Financial Officer, Quartermaster General.

"His commitment to the objectives of the VFW, along with the professionalism of which he performed his duties, are in 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 23rd day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration." It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and the Adjutant General. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE JOE RIDGLEY

COMRADE RIDGLEY: Thank you all very much. I appreciate it.

Commander-in-Chief Furgess, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Mueller, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Kurpius and my fellow comrades:

I thank you all for the support you have given me as I have served

as the Quartermaster General, and also my entire career with the VFW. I would like to also thank and express my thanks to the entire membership, even if they are not here, for allowing me to serve this organization for 29 years. Rest assured, Commander-in-Chief, the VFW's mission is so important that I will never stop serving this organization and doing whatever I can to assist the mission of this organization.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary, I pledge to you that same pledge. Thank you. Any person's success and continued success is a joint effort by many people. Life is a journey, not a destination.

Even though I have retired from this great organization that has done so much for our nation's veterans and the military, this retirement to me is not a final destination for serving this organization and doing other things. I will continue in other endeavors and I will try to do whatever I can for the future benefit of the VFW. Any accomplishments I have, though, are not mine alone, obviously. They partly because of Past Quartermasters General that took time to train me.

Most importantly, it is because of those who served with me, not for me, from the clerical, secretarial and administrative staff, the directors and managers who worked so hard for me. Thank goodness the people that worked with me are a lot smarter than I was. I was fortunate to be surrounded by very talented people.

In the secretary administrative positions, in my 29 years, I was fortunate to have five very capable secretaries or administrative or executive assistants. Out of those five, unfortunately, I believe there are three of those present today.

Thanks to Cindy Dusenberry, Sandy Eidemiller and Judy Richardson. If you will all stand, please. I would like to thank you for serving me in those positions. I appreciate it very much. It is those people like that that tend to keep you out of trouble and they have done that, I hope. I know they have and they have done a great job.

I also had the pleasure of working with tremendously talented leaders and managers and directors of the Quartermaster General's staff. Many of them are here today:

Larry Maher, Bob Green, Bob Crowe, Bud Cale, Bob Crider, Billy Wysong, Jim Liehrs, and others like Hank Ellison, I am proud to have hired

Guys like Brendon Killingsworth and Jason Haley, two young, smart guys in our Technology Department that ensure that the technology is there when we need it and the technology is there when you need it. You can thank Jason for making sure the member stats are ready for you when you need it.

Brendon keeps up the entire technology system. they are wonderful people. They have done a great job. Don't tell these guys that we are having problems on technology. They are making it happen. They are the future of our technology and the rest of the people are our future of the Quartermaster General's staff, and I appreciate all of them.

All of you that I have just mentioned, and many more, have been asked to go far beyond the call of duty to help me do my job and to help the organization do its job. Sometimes the only pat on the back you receive is the pat that you gave yourself. I appreciate that.

These jobs need to be done now without criticism from inside and out, and we discussed many times as a staff we would much rather be criticized for doing something than not doing anything. No one will make mistakes if you don't do anything. You have all gone through a very strenuous and difficult technology conversion with me, one that was and still is criticized by some for the time it took.

Through all your help, we completed it and we continue to improve it. It was the right thing to do for the organization and the successful future of the VFW. I did not feel like my journey as Quartermaster General was over until that important project came to an end and was done.

I felt like I couldn't retire until we completed that. I thank you all for all of your help in getting that done. Will all those that I have named, please stand up. Everybody that is here, including Kevin and all the other staff here. Sandra, will you stand, everybody that has helped me. (Applause)

Comrades, these are the people that any success we have had I give credit to. I guess I will have to accept credit myself for any failures we have had. But these people worked hard for me and I appreciate them very much. These folks, the directors and managers, I hope have always questioned my decisions, but the decisions we made as a staff together they stood by me and they were loyal and faithful. You have my everlasting gratitude, all of you.

I also want to thank all the Adjutant Quartermasters out there, past and present national officers that have supported what we have done to accomplish and move the organization forward. I appreciate everything, all the Past Commanders-in-Chief I have served with, the Adjutant Quartermasters and all you comrades. I appreciate you very much.

Finally, certainly in my mind, the most important, my wonderful wife, Judy. She has walked beside me during my Navy life and my deployment and my career at the VFW. She has raised my two wonderful children, Jason and Jessica, sometimes because of my business schedule without much help from me. I love you, honey.

Lastly, I want to thank God for always walking with me and in the tough times caring for me, to help me do the job that I needed to do. Comrades, please accept my sincere thanks and my gratitude for a wonderful career, a wonderful time in the VFW. I promise you that I will continue to help and I wish you all the success in your endeavors in the VFW. Thank you very much.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more applause for a special moment for Joe Ridgley as he retires as Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL HOME REPRESENTATIVES

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, one of the proud icons of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our Ladies Auxiliary is the VFW National Home for Children in Eaton Rapids, Michigan.The National Home for Children is a profound example of veterans helping veterans.

Today the home provides comfortable housing and a caring staff

designed to give families a safe nurturing environment.

This morning we are honored to welcome the Executive Director, Patrice Greene, Public Relations Director Barry Walter and the 2005 Buddy Poppy Child, Jacklynn Dickerson. Let's give them a warn VFW welcome. (Applause)

The President of the Board of the Home from the great state of Florida, John Hamilton. John.

REMARKS - COMRADE JOHN HAMILTON

COMRADE JOHN HAMILTON: Good morning. It is great to be here. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is an honor and a pleasure and privilege to be here to address this 106th National Convention as President of the Board of Trustees of the VFW National Home for Children. I bring you greetings and our gratitude.

Let me introduce our Vice-President of the Board Danta Hussey from Texas. Other members are Mel Garrett from New York, Louis Cooper from Kansas, Orville Gullickson, David Schmidt, Ron Stansley and Roger Taylor. Thank you for being here.

Chief, let me thank you for the job you have done for the National Home this year. You promised you would keep it in your heart and mine and on your tongue as you traveled, and you certainly did that, and so has the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary, JoAnne. Insight into the challenges we faced, social, political, economic environment has been an inspiration to all of us.

Chief, I want to thank you for satellite training in 2004. I understand that our incoming Chief is going to follow with that so we certainly appreciate that. We appreciate your attendance at the 105th birthday with our National President.

He has attended the special celebration of the National Home during his years as the chair. He advised the home many times. He truly has lived up to the VFW motto honoring the dead by helping the living.

I want to thank Adjutant General John Senk for his years of service he has given to the National Home. His advice and wisdom are muchly appreciated. Larry Maher, our new Quartermaster General, is now the Chairman, and I should know by now how to pronounce his name because I have only known him 35 years.

Larry, of course, is the head of our Finance Committee of the National Home. We task him with the job to look into better ways and secure ways to invest our money and hopefully get greater returns. He is looking at that as we speak.

Also, I want to thank our good friend you just honored, Joe Ridgley, Past Quartermaster General. What an asset he was to this home, to this Board. He is a great personal friend. He certainly helped me my first couple of years on the Board. Joe, I don't know where you are, but thank you, my friend, for all you have done.

I want to take time to thank the dedicated members who serve this Board in daily work for the benefit of the children of our home. I am delighted to bring the greetings of the staff and the VFW Home for the children you so generously support.

For over eight years, members of the organization have stood together keeping that promise to care for our veterans' children and their families, and we are certainly doing that today. On September 20th, we will dedicate or have the ground breaking of a new facility sponsored by the UAW Veterans Committee at the National Home, and then our soon to be Commander-in-Chief will be in attendance for that dedication. We look forward to that. We are a growing, vital institution. We have had some rough financial times as many of you have, as this National Organization has and your Departments have. Interest rates and things being as they are, it is tough. We are moving in the right direction. We are working on the deficit. It is getting under control and manageable.

We hope for the next year or two we will be back in the black and be able to report to you on a regular basis that we have a surplus of funds. We will make that happen There is no doubt in my mind that will happen.

Last, but not least, I want to thank my comrades in Florida for all the support you gave me over the years and helped me to be where I am today in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I appreciate that. I want to make a special comment and announcement here today.

In Florida, Jack Carney has been a long friend of mine and Past Commander-in-Chief from Florida, and we have spent many hours together. We have talked about the world as it is. I said, "Jack, if I were to be President of the Board, I am going to get something dedicated to you."

We had a meeting and we talked about it. We came up with a Boy Scout hut out and out. This is an outhouse. We had the sign made up that says John M. Carney Privy. We took a picture and we will have a little fun with that in Florida.

I want to announce at this 106th Convention the building adjacent to the Howard Vander Clute Administration House is the maintenance office. We are going to do some remodeling, decoration in there, and that building at our October meeting will be dedicated as the John M. "Jack" Carney Building. You know, Jack is certainly deserving.

We have a lot of people up here and you want to get to lunch, I know. Jack is the only individual I know that has served as sort of a National Home Board for six years, served as Commander-in-Chief and also served as Interim Director of the Home.

He is the only individual in this organization that has had that distinction. If you know the history of the National Home in the VFW, Jack went there under great difficult times. He spent almost a year of his time up there and virtually put that home back on the right track. We are proud of him in Florida and look forward to dedicating that home.

Chief, thank you again very much and the officers. I will leave you one last thought that our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief said at the last Board meeting. I wrote it down because I was inspired by the Chief. I am not looking for any jobs or accolades.

I don't need that brown-nosing, but it is worth repeating. He talked about the home and the running of the home. He said it is a value and well worth it. He said, "It says who we are, what we are and what our organization is all about."

My comrades, that is true. If there is anything greater than the National Home, I don't know what it is. If you have not been to the home, you need to go. If you look behind and see these young people

alongside sitting here, and you get a chance to talk to them and shake their hands, you will know what the National Home is all about.

There is one young man here that I saw that came to the home I think when he was three. I have known Michael 16 years, and I have watched him grow up since I have been involved in the home for many years. You know what, if it is one dollar or a million dollars, Michael is worth it. They are all worth it. Thanks for your help. God bless you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: John brings a lot of enthusiasm to that Board, not that they have not had it in the past, because they have. We are proud of his position there as President and Chairman of that Board. He does a great job.

Before Patrice Greene speaks as Executive Director, I am going to ask for a special presentation. We have Marty Miller from the Department of Alaska who is standing close by.

COMRADE MARTY MILLER (Department of Alaska): Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief from the great State of Alaska, and our Department of Alaska out there, the Ladies Auxiliary President this year, Corinne Sparry is from Alaska and myself as the new Department Commander, we took it on our charge this year to try to raise some money for the Children's Home as our special project.

Our special project, instead of them giving us gifts when we visited them, or anything, we wanted little donations. Well, at the beginning of the year, when it started out, it started out a little bit slow. We had a goal of $10,000, and we had already forwarded to the National Home $2,175.08.

I would like to present to the Children's Home another check, which has completed our endeavor, a check for $8,627.08, for a total amount of $10,802.08 from the great State of Alaska. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is a wonderful effort of the Department of Alaska. Let's greet Alaska. That is a wonderful Department, Marty. Congratulations. (Applause)

The Executive Director is Patrice Greene of the National Home for Children. She has done a remarkable job in a short period of time. The future is bright, comrades, with your help. We have challenged each District Commander to be responsible for raising $500. I started to say $5,000. That is $500 within your District. I know you can do it and many of you did it this year.

Jim Mueller, incoming Commander-in-Chief, has already challenged the present District Commanders, all across the organization, to be responsible for raising and sending to the Home $500 from your District, and we know you can do it. Please do it.

Let's make welcome our Executive Director for the National Home, Patrice Greene.

REMARKS BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATRICE GREENE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: Thank you so much, everyone. What a way to begin. Alaska, thank you. Thanks to all of you through your efforts through the years that have made your National

Home possible, that have made the opportunities available for children for over 80 years, children that grow up in the National Home to be fine upstanding patriotic citizens.

Commander-in-Chief Furgess, you have given the Home wonderful encouragement during your term of office and for that we thank you sincerely. I bring to you all the greetings and thanks of your National Home children and families and staff.

Commander-in-Chief, I would personally like to thank you for making the National Home such an important part of the 105th birthday of the VFW Home. That was the 29th of September, 2004. Your attendance at the National Home, along with National Auxiliary President JoAnne Ott, was the highlight for all of us. It was a beautiful time, a beautiful celebration and fitting, too, I believe, just like you would expect.

As a member of the National Home staff for over 15 years, I can tell you from my personal experience that during my tenure never has the VFW spirit of service to children been stronger than it has been over this past couple of years. We have seen children come to the Home with very difficult and sometimes heart-breaking stories, children who fell through the cracks and were not able to get help from overburdened government agencies.

I have had the privilege of seeing them get the best of love and care because of what you and your comrades and sisters have done. I have seen them grow up and be successful and happy adults with new families of their own.

The Home is visited with regularity by alumni of all ages, and just this past June we hosted a family reunion. Many came from all over the country, as far as California, Florida and Alaska, their moms and their dads, their grandfathers and grandmothers, and they are raising their children and grandchildren to be fine upstanding citizens of America.

They are so grateful for the opportunity that you and your comrades gave to them through your VFW National Home for Children. Do any of you here today remember alumni Matthew Lightner, the fine your Marine Staff Sergeant who spoke to you so eloquently a couple of years ago at the National Convention?

I am very pleased to give you an update today. Matt is currently serving in Iraq, and he and his beautiful wife, Susan, will soon welcome another child into their lives to join their daughter, Madison. I keep in touch with Matt regularly through the amazing e-mail that makes it so nice for the soldiers.

He asked me to tell you-all how proud he is to serve and how he thanks you-all for your service and for your commitment and your dedication to your country. He thanks you for the opportunity that you-all made possible for him. Just last week, I was able to get a video from him, the personal thanks to you-all.

You will be able to see it if you come tomorrow to our workshop at 1:00 o'clock. I think you will all appreciate seeing what he has to say to you. I hope you can come. We expect Matt to return from Iraq in another month or so and we are anxious to see him as you can imagine.

Please keep him and all those that are serving in your prayers. I know you do. We all catch ourselves from time to time taking things for

granted. But I can assure you that the children of families who have been helped by the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary over the past 80 years do not take you for granted, not for one minute.

A recent national census of America's children tells us more children are living in poverty than they were just five years ago. A State of Michigan audit report just last week showed that diminished government funds and fewer state social service workers have resulted in an increase of children living in foster care homes that do not have proper care and nutrition, dental care, health care.

That is not the case of the children living at your National Home, thanks to everything that you do. The support and the commitment of the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary has assured they have received the best of care. Through your National Home, you provide the light for the veteran's child to grow into a fine citizen.

Please continue to provide that light by supporting the National Home. We want to thank you for your service, your generosity and for your leadership, and for your love of the children of your VFW National Home. Thank you.

If you will indulge me for a couple of minutes, we have one of our child care mothers here today. She has been with us a long time and provides the children with the love they need. This is Mitzi Bodkey. Please come up. Let's give Mitzi a big hand because she is the one that actually does the job.

Mitzi is also in charge of the chorus. The chorus is here today and they will be singing tonight at the Patriotic Rally. I know you have seen them before and they will be wonderful this evening. I hope you-all join us for that. I will let Mitzi introduce her assistant and the rest of the chorus members.

MS. MITZI BODKEY: Thanks again for inviting us to come out. My husband and I have worked at the Home for 15 years. We have worked in the New York Two Cottage.

(Whereupon, the chorus was introduced at this time.)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: It is now my pleasure to introduce to you someone you have been waiting for, our 2005-2006 Buddy Poppy Child, Jacklynn Dickerson.

REMARKS BY BUDDY POPPY CHILD JACKLYNN DICKERSON

BUDDY POPPY CHILD DICKERSON: My name is Jacklynn Dickerson. I am ten years old and I live in the North Carolina Cottage at the VFW National Home for Children. I live there with my mom, Dorothy, and my two older sisters, Carol and Heather.

I am in the fifth grade now in Eaton Rapids. My favorite subjects are art and gym. Last year my teacher's name was Ms. Paynebacher. I want to be a nurse or a doctor when I grow up and I will help people. I like softball, gymnastics and cheer leading.

I showed at the Eaton County Fair in July, and we won second in showmanship and first in breeding. I also like to play basketball and riding my bike. I like living at the National Home because it gives us the environment, programs and the staff that we need.

My family won first place last year in the decorating contest. I have a friend named Jennifer from Michigan State University, who picked me up every Wednesday and we would go play games in the Community Center, and even sometimes go get ice cream in the park.

Both of my grandfathers are retired and served our country during the Korean War. They served in the Army and the Marines. Uncle Joe is retired now and served in Desert Storm. Uncle Mike served in the Marines for eight years. My Uncle Rick served four years and Uncle Jason served in the Army National Guard for seven years. My cousin, Jeremiah, is in the Air Force and just moved to Germany for four years.

I am proud to be the Buddy Poppy Child and represent the Home here today. I want to thank you and all the children thank you for your support. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREENE: We have a gift presentation, and we hope, John, that you will take a minute to open it up. I think he will enjoy it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I know you-all can't see this, but what a wonderful gift this is from the VFW Home. The first one we ever did as an organization, which was 29 September, 2004, the date of our Congressional Charter, which is 29 September. And you know the year, 1899.

I am so proud that the incoming Commander-in-Chief is going to continue VFW Day 29 September, 2005. Jim and Patrice, thank you for this. I am honored with these pictures of that very special occasion. I started out that morning in our organization's largest Post, Evansville, Indiana, with more than 3,000 members, and I closed out the day with this icon as we said, the VFW National Home for Children. Please help us, comrades. We need your help for that wonderful Home. Thank you so very much.

The Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief has just asked me if we could get started. We do this somewhat traditionally. You comrades know this. Let's pass the hat this morning and see what we can do before we break, because they need our help. If you have any folding money, we prefer no change, but if you have any folding money in your billfold, what you may want to donate this morning, I would ask you to pass it this way toward the center aisle and it will really help us when we pass this back up the main aisle.

This is spontaneous, but you do so well and we are grateful to you for this. We will ask Patrice, Barry, John and the children to please accept this with a token of our appreciation as we spontaneously donate to that great Home.

Our 2005 Buddy Poppy Child, Jacklynn Dickerson, is ten years old. Didn't she do a good job? That is our Buddy Poppy Child 2005. (Applause)

The Adjutant General has asked me to announce that we have decided to start the proceedings in the morning at 8:30 as opposed to 9:00 o'clock. Bear with us, comrades. We need that time in the morning. A lot of business of this National Convention is yet to be conducted.

We are not through yet today, but 8:30 in the morning. Please help spread the word. It is very important, because some of the comrades may not be in the hall at the moment. So if you would take that announcement back to your delegations in the various hotels, that we will

begin tomorrow morning at 8:30. Thank you so very much.

INTRODUCTION OF JAN SCRUGGS, PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We have two very important presentations left this morning. The first of those, I feel like he needs no introduction. He has worked day and night for years and with his efforts our nation's most visited memorial standing silent sentry in our nation's capital, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. 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. More than 40 million people have visited the memorial since its dedication in 1982. Many of you were there.

Representing the VFW at that dedication was the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the first Vietnam veteran to hold elected national office, and he is in our audience this morning, Past Commander-in-Chief from the great Department of North Carolina, Billy Ray Cameron. Let's greet Billy Ray Cameron, who was there when that beautiful memorial was dedicated. (Applause)

In Vietnam, Scruggs served with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and was wounded in action. In May, 1979, he launched the effort to build the memorial. Working tirelessly, he gained national support for the project.

His ongoing efforts are a great reflection of his love for his country and for all of those who served in Vietnam. Please join me in welcoming Jan Scruggs.

REMARKS BY JAN SCRUGGS, PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL FUND

COMRADE JAN SCRUGGS: Well, thank you, Commander. Distinguished Guests, Fellow Veterans, I am honored to be here today. The VFW has been a good friend for the past quarter of a century when we first worked together to build a memorial to honor those who served during the Vietnam War.

I am wondering how many people there know that the VFW was actually the first organization to give a contribution to build this memorial. Actually, a couple of years later, we made history together in 1982 when the wall was dedicated. We are very grateful for your help.

Of course, the Veterans of Foreign Wars has collaborated on other important historical projects, such as the Korean War Memorial in 1994 and the World War II Memorial dedicated just last year. Also, in 2003, you joined us in our effort to finally win authorization from the U.S. Congress to build the last structure on the National Mall, which will be an educational center to teach about the impact of the Vietnam War and to enhance the memorial experience for younger generations.

It is very interesting that many of the visitors visiting the memorial, about 40 percent of those visiting the memorial are less than 25 years of age. We could never have emerged victorious in this legislative battle without your support and your letters, your belief and the need for this.

Your patronage in all the projects we have mentioned today is testament to your spirit and your commitment to America's veterans communities. Some of you may remember that last summer I had the opportunity to stand before you in Cincinnati to tell you about the hopes and plans for this educational facility.

Now, it is named the Vietnam Memorial Educational Center. We will be telling you more about the center, which is our most important and ambitious undertaking since the building of the wall. In September, after a national competition that spanned nine months and attracted our nation's top architectural firms, we selected the brilliant team of Polshek Partnership Architects and Ralph Applebaum Exhibit Designer to design the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center.

They are recognized worldwide for their work and commitment to building this very powerful center to match both the excellence and emotional impact of the wall itself. They are created with some spectacular projects, including the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and the Center at Carnegie Hall.

In addition to our design team, we have selected the perfect location for the Memorial Center. While Congress gave the Memorial Fund the green light to build the facility, an underground facility near the wall, it was our job to choose an acceptable site.

I believe we have a presentation that you should be able to see to show you where that site is. After a ten-month study of potential sites conducted by experts in the field, we have selected the site that best preserves the sanctity and view of the memorial and the mall. It is just a couple of minutes walking distance to the memorial itself.

The next step is to actually get the necessary approval from the Commissions that have oversight in these decisions and everything is moving forward as things do in Washington, anyway. As the center takes shape, one of our most interesting challenges is to decide what will go inside of this center.

For that, we have formed an Advisory Board a year ago of veterans, historian, educators from across the United States. It is chaired by General Barry McCaffrey. Among the members are Mike George Malley, author Stanley Karnow and Mr. Joe Galloway, who served four tours of duty in Vietnam as a reporter and co-authored the book, the national best seller known as "We Were Soldiers Once and Young."

The group has provided some very important and valuable insights and opinions about the content of the two-hour exhibit designers. While exploring an exhibit for the center, I can tell you the prime focus will be to bring the men and women whose names are on the wall to life with some photographs, personal letters, biographical profiles, and some of the more than 70,000 items left in their memory at the wall, which you should be seeing on the screens right there. I don't believe that you are. Okay.

The center will teach lessons about the Vietnam War, the impact of the wall on our society, and the significance of patriotism, service and sacrifice. One of our goals is to spark interest in visitors to learn more about that critical time in our history, and to inspire them to think in broad terms about the impact of all military conflicts from our earliest

days in Iraq and Afghanistan.

By now you may be wondering how we plan to raise the money to build the Memorial Center. While Congress has given authorization for land for the facility, we need to raise the funds privately, probably $40 million to $50 million, and with grand breaking planned in 2007 to coincide with the 25th Anniversary of the Memorial.

To meet this goal, we have been laying groundwork for a national fund-raising campaign and putting together a very excellent leadership team that can raise the money and get the Memorial Center built as quickly as possible. Thus far we have a very stellar team. The chairman, the honorable chairman of our effort is General Colin Powell. I am proud to announce Christopher Saxse will be campaign chairman for the effort. Others include the chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, who will be assisting us with a December meeting.

So we intend to rally the troops for this very noble endeavor calling on corporations, foundations, veterans groups, and students as well to help turn the Vietnam Memorial Center into a reality. I know we can count on the VFW, and building the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center gives us a chance to do something quite extraordinary for our country electively and personally.

The Memorial Center will work in synergy and synchronized with the wall itself. So, the two will actually work together and we shall repeat history with the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I know you will be helping us with this effort just as you did 20 years ago, leading by example, leading all the other veterans organizations.

Before closing, I would like to report that the new million-dollar-plus lighting system that we have installed at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial looks quite spectacular. You can actually see it on the screens if everything was working as planned, but all 144 panels of the black granite memorial are now fully illuminated so when you next come to Washington, D.C., I hope you will be able to include an evening visit to the memorial.

I do want to thank you once again for your support, and on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund we have a baseball hat for Commander-in-Chief Furgess. It has been my pleasure. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Jan Scruggs has done a great job. Let's keep supporting this fund. This is very critical to our nation's history. Thank you, Jan, for all your dedication, leadership and hard work. Let me hear a round of applause if you have ever visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. (Applause)

REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON POW/MIA

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is Past Commander-in-Chief Gwizdak, Chairman of the Subcommittee on POW/MIA in the room? We will call for his report now.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GWIZDAK: I have one special award -- no. (Laughter) Commander-in-Chief Furgess, I am pleased to report that the POW/MIA Subcommittee of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee convened in Room 215 of the Salt Palace Convention Center at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, August 22nd, 2005.

Your instructions were followed. All members were present,

were accounted for and action was taken on the resolutions assigned to this Committee. I would like to thank the Vice-Chairmen of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Goldsmith from Michigan. Their expertise and extensive knowledge on this issue is most valuable in our discussions.

Also, I extend the Committee's gratitude and my personal appreciation to our Committee Advisor, Mike Wysong, Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs. We had a guest speaker, Mr. Adrian Cronauer, the Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense POW/MIA Office in Washington, D.C., and Brigadier General Michael Flowers from the POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii.

Each of them provided the Committee with an update on recent activities and initiatives of both headquarters, and of the personnel that are serving out of the Hawaii area and that are now on active search missions.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully deliberated each resolution. I will outline the POW/MIA Subcommittee's recommendations. If you or any of the delegates to this convention would like for a resolution to be set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed each segment of the report.

We had seven resolutions that were sent to the POW/MIA Committee. I will now read the resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommends for approval as submitted and/or as amended. It is important to note that the amended language in these resolutions only reflects updated information, technical changes, or minor grammatical corrections. The intent of the resolution has not been changed in any way.

Resolution 406 recommended, No Time Restraints for POW/MIA Accounting.

Resolution No. 407, To Establish a House Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs, was accepted as submitted.

Resolution 401, Support Public Awareness Projects; Resolution 402, Assist Vietnam's Recovery of MIAs as a Sign of Good Faith; Resolution 403, Support Former POW Slave Labor Claims Against Japanese Firms.

Resolution 404, A Full Accounting for Commander Speicher; 405, Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States. Comrade Commander and delegates, these are the seven resolutions that we have presented to our Committee and two of them were accepted as submitted. Five of them were accepted as amended. I move at this time that the delegates to this convention accept these resolutions and pass them.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLDSMITH: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have heard the motion and the second. Is there any discussion on any of these POW/MIA Resolutions? Those in favor of acceptance will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered. We will dismiss the Committee and thanks for a job well done. Let's thank the Committee, my comrades.

I believe in the interest of expediency, I am going to call on the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee first, and in the interest

of time ask Past Commander-in-Chief Art Fellwock of Indiana to come up and rented the Committee's report.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ART FELLWOCK: I am Art Fellwock, Past National Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee. Commander-in-Chief Furgess, this is my report to the convention on National Security and Foreign Affairs.

We convened in Room 251 at the Convention Center at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, August 21st, and your instructions were read and roll call was actually taken on all resolutions referred to the Committee. A portion of the Committee members were designated to participate in the POW/MIA Subcommittee.

For their support, wisdom and guidance, I would like to thank the Vice-Chairman of the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Ed Banas from Connecticut. The Chairman of the POW/MIA Subcommittee, Past Commander-in-Chief John Gwizdak from Georgia; and Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron from North Carolina, and Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Goldsmith from Michigan.

I also extend my gratitude and personal appreciation to our Committee Advisor, Mike Wysong, Director of the National Security and Foreign Affairs. A very special thanks is extended to the members of the National Security & Foreign Affairs Committee for their thoughtful deliberations and active participation in the Committee meeting.

At the National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee, we had two very special guest speakers, who traveled from different corners of the globe to address this Committee:

The Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee for the Republic of China, Minister Kao, and Mr. Gennady Shorokhov, Vice-President of the Russian Combat Brotherhood.

Minister Kao discussed the military cooperation between the United States and the Republic of China and thanked the VFW for its friendship and support for the security of their nation. Mr. Shorokhov spoke about the Combat Brotherhood and special bond and friendship that has developed between our two organizations.

Commander-in-Chief, the Committee carefully deliberated each resolution. I would now move forward to the National Security and Foreign Affairs recommendations. If you or any of the delegates to this convention would like to have a resolution set aside for discussion, please so indicate after I have completed this segment of this report before we take a roll-call vote.

I will now read the resolution numbers and titles the Committee recommends approval as written. Let me say it again. I will read the resolutions and the numbers of those resolutions that the Committee approved as written.

Resolution 409, Limit Foreign Ownership of U.S. Businesses and Properties.

Resolution 418, Monitor the Panama Canal Carefully.

Resolution 420, Retain Economic Sanctions Against North Korea.

Resolution 421, Tighten U.S. Policy on High Technology Exports.

Resolution 426, Strengthen Security at Department of Energy (DOE) Laboratories.

Resolution 428, U.S. Response to People's Republic of China (PRC) Actions.

Resolution 429, Support the Death Penalty for Acts of Treason, in War and Peace, Against the United States of America.

Resolution 431, Oppose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Resolution 434, Award Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Retroactive to March 3, 1946.

Resolution 435, Posthumous Award of the Medal of Honor for Rex T. Barber.

Resolution 436, To Require Pre and Post-Deployment Mental Health Screenings for Members of the Armed Forces.

Resolution 437, Military Vaccine and Antibiotic Availability for Homeland Security.

Resolution 438, Reconstitution of Reserve Component Units Returning from Deployments.

Resolution 439, Air Force Ground Combat Badge.

These are the ones that the Committee approved as written. Does anyone want any set aside? Hearing none, I shall make a motion that we approve the resolutions that I have just read.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have heard the proper motion and the second. Is there any further discussion? Those in favor then of accepting the resolution as approved as written will say "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: I will now read the resolution numbers and titles that the Committee recommended for approval, as amended. It is important to note that the amended language in these resolutions only reflects updated information, technical changes or minor grammatical corrections. The intent of the resolved has not been changed. Let me say that again. The intent of the resolved has not been changed.

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

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

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

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, Support for the Republic of Korea.

No. 416, Support for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

No. 417, Retain the Selective Service.

No. 419, NATO Enlargement.

No. 423, Increase the Defense Budget.

No. 424, Support Increased Ship Building for the U.S. Navy.

No. 425, Improve Military Readiness.

No. 427, Increase Military Base Pay.

No. 430, Maintain Pressure on Castro.

No. 432, Oppose International Criminal Court.

No. 433, Support Equity for Reserve and Guard Members. These are the ones that we approved as amended. Again let me say the intent of the resolutions was never altered. It was just some updated information or some grammatical corrections that we made in regards to it. Does anyone want any of these set aside? I shall make a motion that we approve the resolutions as I have read that are amended.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have heard the proper motion and second. Is there any further discussion? Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FELLWOCK: Finally, those resolutions the Committee recommends for rejection and the reason. We rejected No. 422, Protecting Americans from Ballistic Missile Attack. This was rejected in favor of 412, which we just approved, because 412 is more elaborate and more in detail. We rejected 422 for 412.

Resolution 440, Code Talkers Congressional Medal of Honor Medal. This was rejected because it was already law. It was Public Law 106-554, and this was passed December 21, 2000. So, this was rejected because it was already law.

No. 441, Tighter Border and Immigration Controls Needed. This was rejected in favor of Resolution 410, which you just approved, which was again more in detail. These are the three that we rejected. Does anyone want any of these set aside? These three will then die because there is no action taken on them.

Commander-in-Chief, that completes the report of the Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. That was a good Committee report, lots of hard work. I regret to dismiss the Committee now because I know they have worked so hard, but they deserve a break. I do dismiss that Committee now, Past Commander-in-Chief Art Fellwock. (Applause) Thank you, comrades, for the round of applause.

Under Veterans Service, our next Committee report, I believe Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer is with the Secretary. Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier, is ready for the report.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VETERANS SERVICE RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. Good afternoon, comrades. Commander-in-Chief Furgess, I report that your Convention Committee on Veterans Service Resolutions convened at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, August 21, 2005, with Chairman Cramer presiding.

Roll call was taken and preliminary matters were discussed. The Committee was divided into three Subcommittees to carefully deliberate on the 103 resolutions that were assigned. We added a new resolution, No. 703, submitted by the Commander-in-Chief, Requesting Additional Benefits to Veterans Children With Spina Bifida.

The Subcommittees were as follows:

Subcommittee 1, Medical Programs, Chaired by Kenneth Teague from Florida, and Vice-Chairman Robert Pratt from Wyoming.

Subcommittee 2, Employment, was Chaired by Paul Curtis from Indiana and Vice-Chairman Robert Price from California.

Subcommittee 3, Veterans Benefits and Entitlements, was Chaired by Thomas Hansen from Minnesota, and Vice-Chairman Ed Monserve from Georgia.

Before proceeding with the report, I wish to express my appreciation to Bill Bradshaw, Ex-Director of National Veterans Service, and Dennis Cullen, Director of National Legislative Service, for the valuable technical advice they provided to the Committee.

Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I will begin the Committee report by presenting those resolutions that the Committee recommends to be approved as written. I will then proceed to report those resolutions that were approved as amended, and finally I will conclude by presenting the resolutions that the Committee recommends for rejection.

If for any reason you and 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, beginning with 601, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 648, 650, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 665, 674, 678, 679, 693, 696, 698 and 703.

Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these resolutions.

COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have heard the proper motion made and seconded. Is there discussion on any of these resolutions?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): Commander-in-Chief, Kulikoski, Post 144, Department of Massachusetts. I move that we set aside 632 and 679.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: 672 and 679, with those two set asides, let's vote now to approve the others. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. Let's go back now to 632 for your discussion.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): No. 632 is Repeal of the Montgomery GI Bill Pay Reduction Provision. It seems to me as someone who went to school on the GI Bill and the College Fund, who has a small business, that this organization should not be advocating taking away a small contribution that a veteran can make with his own education.

I think this is a way a lot of men and women pull themselves up by their bootstraps. The incentive to go into the service to earn your own money for college and not being a burden to your family and a burden to loans on your future wives should encourage the people to join the mil-

itary. That is what I have to say on it, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I understand just the thumbnail is here, but 632 repeals the Montgomery GI Bill Pay Reduction Provision. That organization is against reducing those education benefits.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): I understand, Commander-in-Chief. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Are you ready to vote on that one? Let's take them one at a time. 632 is now on the floor for approval. Those in favor should vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The motion carries.

Let's take the other one, 679.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): Resolution 679, in my opinion, awards people or can award people for doing the wrong thing. If you are honorably discharged you are able to use your GI Bill, Army college fund, or whatever the service offers.

Under this resolution, any minor infraction or ineffiency, a very broad term in my opinion, and if you employ that term with the amount of people that don't actually use their GI Bill out there, you are going to penalize the rest of the people who do actively seek the money for their education.

I don't understand why we would want to reward somebody who had not been honorably discharged, did not do all they could to continue and finish their service in the way they were supposed to.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Vice-Chairman, do you want to respond to that?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Did you have time to read the intent at the bottom?

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): I did.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: I need some help from the staff here.

COMRADE BILL BRADSHAW: Under the Montgomery Contribution, you will notice the intent says that the member receives a "general" or "under honorable conditions" type discharge, which means they did not use the individual funds they contributed.

We are saying we don't see why the government should be able to keep those funds at the end if they did not use the GI Bill, himself or herself, why should the government keep those funds.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): May I response, Commander-in-Chief?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Yes.

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): The reason I rose and the reason I am speaking on this point is because other individuals who did not contribute to use those funds, and at the rate of $100 per month that you contribute up to $1,200, it is a very little contribution if in some way you manage to not get honorably discharged. I believe that contribution should be used by those who can use it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You make a very good valid point. It is just not provided by the Bill. It seems like we are both trying to help veterans, you by coming to the floor here and this Committee by trying to support this resolution. Any further discussion?

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE BOB PRICE (Post 2111 - California): I would like to remind everybody out there that general discharge under honorable conditions is an honorable discharge. That is based on the marks below 3.2. Anything other than that would be an 02B. Again, a general discharge under the law is an honorable discharge if under honorable conditions.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That is correct. What we want to do is for men of the armed forces who don't use that Bill and who pay a provision each month to be able to get that reimbursed. It has never been done. We will approach Congress to get this done, working with the Department of Defense. It is for the good of veterans as far as the Committee is concerned.

Any further discussion?

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): I appreciate the point and I understand the intent of the Committee and of the members. However, I do have to say, as a very young member and young Post Commander, I think this sends the wrong message.

I think that the small amount of money that a veteran can contribute toward his education should not necessarily be refunded if you change your mind later. You have ten years to use that mone for your education. If you take your oath, maybe you are under financial constraints at home, and maybe there is a problem, you decide you want that $1,000 back.

It can only hurt you, the veterans. Leave it in there for ten years and then maybe. That is not part of the resolution, Commander-in-Chief, and I rose to speak on this point. Thank you for your time.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Were you able to attend the Committee meeting?

COMRADE KULIKOSKI (Post 144 - Massachusetts): No, Commander-in-Chief. I was on a different Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I know it was discussed. The comrade makes a good point and the Committee has worked hard on this issue.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE CARL PRICE (Post 4931 - Ohio): I am Carl Price, Post 4931, Department of Ohio. Just for a point of clarification, when the people made those contributions they were serving honorably. This is the same as depositing your money in the bank, and that you get the money back. I go with the Committee's resolution and support the resolution. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DAN WEST (Post 3413 - Texas): National Commander-in-Chief, Dan West, Post 3413, Texas. As a young member, also a Post Commander, when I was honorably discharged from the military, I had paid into that fund and decided not to use that.

My money that I paid into that fund would have been very helpful in helping me raise my family during hard times. I stand in support of passing of this resolution. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, comrade. That is the Committee's intent right there. Are we ready to vote? We are voting on 679. Those in favor of the resolution will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. Let me thank the comrade, because I think he is

the youngest Junior Post Commander here.

Let's ask him to stand one more time. To take the microphone like that at his first National Convention, I greatly appreciate it. I know the Committee does.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, comrades. I will now read the resolution numbers that the Committee recommends for approval, as amended: 603, 623, 624, 630, 631, 639, 645, 646, 647, 649, 651, 657, 658, 659, 663, 673, 682, 684, 685, 689, 692, 697 and 701. Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's recommendation to approve these resolutions as amended.

COMRADE WILLIAM BRADSHAW: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A proper motion and a second have been made. Is there any further discussion? Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NIER: Thank you, comrades. I will now read the resolution numbers and the titles that the Committee recommends for rejection:

622, Work Force Investment act, rejected in favor of 689, as amended.

660, Permanency of VA Nursing Home and Non-Institutional Extended Care Services Under Public Law 106-117 and the Use of Funding Without Fiscal Year Limitations, rejected in favor of Resolution 605.

Resolution 661, Entitlement to Nursing Home Care, rejected in favor of Resolution 605.

Resolution 662, Mandatory Funding for Veterans Health Care, rejected in favor of Resolution 610.

Resolution 664, Prescription Drug Benefit to All Eligible Veterans, rejected in favor of Resolution 630.

Resolution 666, Plus-Up Veterans Health Care as an Inescapable Cost of Going to War, rejected in favor of Resolution 601.

No. 667, Establish a Separate Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs. It has been accomplished. The budget has been separated.

No. 668, Property Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Recipients of Veterans Pension, rejected. A local issue cannot mandate state laws.

No. 669, To Have Veterans that are Court Appointed "Guardians" and Have Those Children in Their Custody be Recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a Dependent. That was rejected. We cannot legislate state courts. Guardianship laws differ from state to state.

Resolution 670, Support House Bill H.R. 831 to Increase the Allowance for Burial Expenses. This was rejected in favor of Resolution 646, as amended. No. 671, State Veterans Home Loan Program, rejected in favor of Resolution 635.

Resolution 672, Support for VA Paying Full Cost of rejected in favor of Resolution 619.

Resolution 675, Extended Home Loan Program to Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf, Bosnia, and Other Post 1977 Veterans and Opposing Provisions of the "Tax Simplification" Plan That Would Eliminate

Veterans Housing Benefits, rejected in favor of Resolution 635.

No. 676, California Veterans Board Federal Budget Proposals to Reduce Federal Aid for State Veterans' Homes and for Daily Care of Veterans In State Homes, rejected in favor of Resolution 619.

677, VA Care for Reservists and National Guard was rejected because it has already been accomplished.

Resolution 680, Compensable Evaluation for Service-Connected Hearing Loss Requiring the Use of Hearing Aids, rejected in favor of Resolution 647.

No, 681, Tricare Prime rejected. That is a local issue pertaining to an individual state.

Resolution 683, Revert Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Grants to Staff Based Grant, rejected in favor of Resolution 607.

Resolution 686, Homeland Security, rejected in favor of Resolution 621.

Resolution 687, Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation, rejected in favor of Resolution 602.

Resolution 688, Employee Protection in Employment for Treatment at VA Facilities. It was rejected because Executive Order 5396 already covers the issue.

Resolution 690, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Eligibility was rejected. It currently already allows for it.

No. 691, Support Job Protection for Service Connected Disabled Veterans Requiring Visits at VA Facilities. It was rejected. It is covered by Executive Order 5396.

Resolution 694, Support Improvements of Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Performance Standards was rejected. Support is already being done.

Resolution 695, Apportionment of Disability Compensation in State Divorce Courts. This was rejected. We can't legislate to State Courts.

Resolution 699, Oppose Any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative Program, rejected in favor of Resolution 628.

Resolution 700, Requiring the Veterans' Employment and Training Service to hire Veterans, rejected in favor of Resolution 628.

Resolution 702, Restore Oversight of Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) Programs, rejected in favor of Resolutions 628, 682, 697 and 701.

Commander-in-Chief, no motion is necessary to reject these resolutions. They are automatically killed unless someone from the floor moves for approval on a rejected resolution.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there further discussion on those to be rejected? Thank you, Vice-Chairman. That was a good report. I think it impressed the comrades, those still here, of the hard work that goes into the report. I will dismiss the Committee with my great thanks. Let's move into next the Committee on General Resolutions, Past Commander-in-Chief Bob Currieo, Chairman.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: I am Bob Currieo, Past Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the General Resolutions Committee. Our Committee met Sunday afternoon under the able leadership of our Vice-Chairmen, Past Commanders-in-Chief Ray Sisk, Ray Soden, John Smart and Norman Staab.

There were 20 resolutions. I will read the resolutions that the Committee recommended for approval, or approval with amendments, as amended.

Resolution 303, National Museum of the United States Army, recommended for approval as amended.

Resolution No. 307, Desecration of the U.S. Flag. This is to support the amendment, too.

Resolution 310, Request for Increased Awareness of the Federal Flag Code. It was recommended for approval.

Resolution No. 317, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center. It was recommended for approval.

Resolution No. 318, Assist Returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Veterans to Secure Employment. This one was recommended for approval.

Resolution 319, Support Air Force Memorial. You don't have that and may not have it in your packet.

The next two are resolutions that came in very late and they deal, as I said, with the support of the Air Force Memorial, and Resolution 320 Supports the Construction of a New Those were both approved, with amendments.

The amendments on those resolutions that we read, were the amendments including the funding of our approval. In other words, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, if you adopt the Committee report, will approve and support and endorse these museums and memorials, but any funding must go through the proper procedure and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and approved by the Council of Administration.

With this report, those are the resolutions approved and those approved as amended. Commander-in-Chief, I move to accept the Committee's report.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SODEN: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Those are the resolutions approved and approved as amended. Is there any discussion? Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: We had three

resolutions that dealt primarily with the Ritual, and those resolutions are 304, 311 and 312. Those are going to be referred to the National Committee on By-Laws, Manual of Procedure and Ritual.

The resolutions that were recommended for rejection, and I will just read the numbers are: Nos. 301, 302, 305. Now, 305 is rejected, not because we are opposed to the creation of an Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial as such. The resolution itself is unclear to the Committee of the intent.

Therefore, we requested that the sponsoring Department come

back with a resolution much clearer, and we could even consider it before this convention adjourned, or they could bring it back next year.

Resolutions 306, 308, 309, 313, 314, 315, 316. All of the other resolutions were rejected primarily except 301 and 308. All those other resolutions were rejected because they were not veterans issues. Nos. 301 and 308 deal with the correction of the omission on the World War II Memorial.

Many felt the Roosevelt speech ended with "so help us God" should have been included. The inscription on that memorial did not reach that portion of the Roosevelt speech, or it could be included. Therefore, those resolutions are recommended for rejection. Of course, no motion is necessary on the rejections.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there any discussion? Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE MATTHEW MIHELCIC (Post 7984 - Illinois): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Matthew Mihelcic, Post 7984, Illinois, a member of this Committee. I move that we accept 305, as an amendment since we would like to discuss that.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: 305, as amended.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: What was the amendment? I remember we talked about that.

COMRADE MATTHEW MIHELCIC (Post 7984 - Illinois): May I talk to that? The problem in the Committee was the actual name of the memorial, and the second Whereas clause, Line 3, it was called the Fallen Heroes memorial. We did talk to the sponsor.

The Fallen Heroes Memorial Foundation, Incorporated, and a recommendation to change the word "Memorial" to "Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial" which is the actual name on the resolution itself, that appeared to be the major problem in Committee.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You will need a second to your motion. Let me pull that one back out. Is there a second?

COMRADE LEON BARNES (Post 7796 - Illinois): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I was not in the Committee and I did not have the benefit of the discussion, but let me just hasten to add from the platform that the VFW National Magazine and the current issue does encourage our comrades to call for an Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial as soon as possible. Don't wait 10, 20 years, 50 years, like some of these other memorials.

So what is happening, while this momentum is gaining, it may be several different thoughts on how best to do that memorial. It may be that with the passage of some more time that memorial may not be the best memorial. So we are just not in a position of endorsing one over another at this time. Even though they are willing to change the name, that still may not be adequate for this organization to get behind at this time.

Do you see the logic in that?

COMRADE MATTHEW MIHELCIC (Post 7984 - Illinois): Comrades, I understand your logic. However, in the Committee that did not come up. That was not mentioned at all. We discussed the name being the major problem. We actually voted on this and approved it, and then we pulled it back because there was discussion over the name.

We left that Committee meeting believing if the foundation that was pushing this would be willing to change the name, that we would be willing to bring it up on the floor. It was our Department that brought this up in order to get the publicity started so we wouldn't have to wait 30, 40, 50 years.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, again, had I been in the Committee, I would have made that report. Again, like I said to the comrade earlier, you make a good point, but for the purposes of the 106th National Convention I think the Committee is saying we just don't want to yet get behind a specific memorial for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. One day that will come to pass. It just may not be this design.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: I just want to echo the words of the sponsor. Your Committee did recommend approval of this resolution and was ready to come forward. The question that came up after approval was the naming of the memorial.

We had questions about going back to the sponsor of that and bring it back to this Committee. I want you to know your Committee did wholeheartedly support this overwhelmingly.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: Why don't I clarify this by reading the title of the resolution.

Resolution 305 is Support Creation of Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial. The Be It Resolved states: "Be It Resolved, that we fully support and endorse the mission of the Fallen Heroes Memorial foundation to create the Fallen Heroes Memorial."

So what the Committee was concerned about was this going to be an Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial, or a war memorial for fallen heroes, which could include heroes of our other nation's wars. This was the question that came up.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It sounds like there is more interest than I thought in that effort. The Fallen Heroes Foundation is willing to change the name, which is what the Veterans of Foreign Wars has requested.

COMRADE MATTHEW MIHELCIC (Post 7984 - Illinois): That is correct. The actual Be It Resolved line they would be willing to change to foundation to create the Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: That change, the Committee members tell me, changes everything. So now we are prepared to vote. It sounds like we have a lot of support to do that. Is there any further discussion on it?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE LEON JOHNSON (Post 6772 - Ohio): The only problem I have with it, and this is Leon Johnson, VFW Post 6772, Ohio, is those are not the only combat zones that there are people over there fighting in. I am in full support of a memorial for those troops over there fighting for our freedoms. It is just that the label Iraq and Afghanistan leaves us a little short.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Again, that is a good point. Thank you for bringing that forward. Nothing will be done on this issue, I don't think, without the approval of the Congress, unless it is a whole independent memorial like the Vietnam Memorial. So we are a long way from fruition, but this is a good first step. It sounds like the organization does want to support that effort.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE WAYNE THOMPSON (Post 5061 - Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Wayne Thompson, Judge Advocate General, Post 5061, Department of Colorado. I rise in support of the resolution, although I would like to offer an amendment. I would move that we strike the second "Whereas", where it refers to the Fallen Heroes Foundation, strike that as part of the amendment, and amend the resolved to read, "Be It Resolved, by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States we fully support and endorse the creation of an Iraq and Afghanistan war memorial."

It is more generic and it doesn't necessarily endorse the fallen heroes but endorses the concept of the work to establish a memorial.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The Committee says that has already been done. If it has already been done, then we don't need the amendment.

Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE HOWARD HAZEN (Post 2967 - California): I am n the Committee, and what he said is true. We did not want that paragraph in there. They took care of it. I am in support of Resolution 305 at this time, too.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: All right. So we are pulling that out with a lot of support, comrades. Thank you. Are we prepared to vote or further discussion? Those in favor of the resolution will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. Thank you, comrades.

We will dismiss the Committee and thank them for a lot of hard work. Thank you very much.

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE ROY MEARES (Post 10400 - North Carolina): I am Roy Meares, Department Commander for North Carolina. On Resolution 311, I understand that has moved to another Committee. That Committee has been dismissed. I would like action taken on that, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: All right. 311.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: The reason this was submitted to the National Committee on By-Laws is because it would have to be done by the By-Laws Committee to make it in the form of our qualification for membership. It will be referred to that Committee.

COMRADE ROY MEARES (Post 10400 - North Carolina): Will it be back next year?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: Probably next year,

COMRADE ROY MEARES (Post 10400 - North Carolina): Is there any way to take action on that today?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: Probably not. It is up to the Chief, but it probably should be next year. When they meet during the year, the Committee meets, this will be included in their packet.

PARLIAMENTARIAN BURNHAM: Since it requires a by-law amendment and the Committee has referred it to the By-Laws Committee, it can't be acted on here because in order to amend the By-Laws a notice has to go out to all the Posts prior to the convention. So it would not come up before next year's convention.

COMRADE ROY MEARES (Post 10400 - North Carolina): Thank you, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thanks for the question.

Now, Microphone No. 1, Past Commander-in-Chief John Moon.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: Here we go. I am John Moon, a delegate from Post 2873, Ohio. At this time I would ask that Resolution No. 315, Positive Changes to our Burial Flag, be set aside and move adoption of Resolution 315.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Do you have a second? I am sure you do.

COMRADE MATTHEW MIHELCIC (Post 7984 - Illinois): I second the motion.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: The reason I ask this is to give me the reasons that you have for having this motion rejected.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: The reason it is rejected, this resolution, and let me read the Resolved. It is Positive Changes to our Burial Flag. It says, "Be It Resolved, that we suggest that a standard size flag of 5' x 9 1/2' be approved and manufactured or altered to remove the metal grommets and reduce the thickness and size of the bunting."

The Committee felt that the grommets allowed individuals, if they were with a burial flag, many donate them to various organizations, could be used to hoist on their flagpole. Without the grommets, it could not be hoisted. That was the reason the Committee rejected it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: If we were to suggest to you that maybe we allow the grommets to remain on that flag, could we then alter or change this resolution, and then would it be passed as amended?

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: You may remove that statement about the grommets.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MOON: We ask for an amendment that we take the grommet section out and ask that it be amended and therefore passed. The real reason behind this, Commander-in-Chief, through the chair to you, Bob, is that we are having so many problems with various sections of the country that are making these flags, that none of them any more are coming out the exact sizes necessary.

When it goes to these various Departments, down to the Posts that are folding the flag for services at the grave site, they are coming up a little bit short or a little bit long. Unless you have one crew and one crew only from the Post that is folding flags for the burial, you are going to see a lot of embarrassment that comes about, because you will have a lot of red showing and at times you will have a lot of white showing when you go to tuck that flag.

When I spoke to the individuals from Louisiana that brought this about, I went back home and started folding some flags in our living room at home, and we did it at the Post, and we went to one of the funeral homes and tried doing it with different individuals in my Post or with the funeral director, and those people from Louisiana were not kidding. It is happening.

So we are having some problems without having a chance to really have someone come in and look at it close. Some people are correct when they say the flags are not being properly done. Leave the grommets on and get this passed and go on to get a proper burial.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Chief. That is a

good point. We have a motion before you to amend this resolution.

PARLIAMENTARIAN BURNHAM: We need a second for that.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CURRIEO: I will second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Now, we have agreement. Is there any further discussion? Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN KUBIN (Post 9021 - Michigan): As a member of the General Resolutions Committee, I was one of the persons that asked this be rejected, the removal of the grommets. We have an amendment that the grommets remain, and I fully support this amendment.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you very much. It sounds like we have agreement. Thanks for bringing it up, Past Commander-in-Chief Moon. Any further discussion? Those in favor of approval will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

Now, we are voting on the original motion that Chief Moon has amended. Those in favor will say "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. Thank you once again, comrades. The Committee is dismissed.

We have a couple of announcements, comrades. I asked Past Commander-in-Chief Jack Carney to hold over his report until tomorrow morning. It is important. We will get to it tomorrow morning. We just could not get it in today. Be sure and support our workshops that are listed in your Convention Program booklet. They have worked very hard to put those on.

Before we dismiss, I want to stand corrected. I did not dismiss the General Resolutions Committee. Something may come up before we adjourn our convention. So, if I misstated that, I do want to correct it now for the record. That Committee is not dismissed.

(Convention Announcements.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The Chaplain had to leave to attend his workshop at 1:00 p.m. I will call on the Sergeant-at-Arms to close this session.

(Whereupon, Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the assembly in the Salute to the Colors.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Closing Ceremony has been conducted.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We will stand in recess.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 1:15 o'clock p.m.)

SECOND BUSINESS SESSION
WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 24, 2005

(The Second Business Session of the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, at 8:00 o'clock a.m., with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief James Mueller presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I call this 106th VFW National Convention back to order. Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the room and Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Whereupon, National Sergeant-at-Arms Hoffman led the Convention in the Salute to the Colors and the Pledge of Allegiance.)

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

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, National Sergeant-at-Arms. I would ask anyone that has a cell phone to please turn it off at this time.

This morning the Commander-in-Chief will make his official visit to the Ladies Auxiliary. We have a lot of business to do this morning. The first order of business, I would like to call for the report of the Credentials Committee, Comrade Dave Butters, for his report.

REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): As of the close of business yesterday, August 23, 2005, the total delegates registering their credentials are 9,864. The total Department Commanders, 50. The total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 27. Total National Officers, 38. That is for a grand total of 9,979. 9,979, divided by two, plus one, would give you the simple majority.

Commander-in-Chief, this is the final Credentials report for the 106th National Convention.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, Dave. Comrades, very shortly, within probably the next 15 to 20 minutes, we will have a visit by the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary and we will interrupt our meeting at that time. We do not have our recipients to receive the awards at the present time.

The first award we will give away is the 2005 VFW Emergency Medical Technician Award.

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, again assuming a 100-percent vote of the registered delegates, a simple majority will be 4,990. A two-thirds majority will be 6,653.

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO DAN PESTINGER

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Our next

awardee is being presented the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his many years of enthusiastic service to the VFW.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Daniel J. Pestinger.

"In sincere appreciation and grateful recognition of over 17 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a dedicated employee, in the position of Assistant Director of Membership - Field Recruiter. Over his tenure, his outstanding efforts and abilities brought to the organization over 30,000 new and reinstated members. He was also instrumental in the formation of hundreds of new Posts, many of which are still with us today, standing testament to his work. His unflagging 'get it done' attitude, coupled with his vast appreciation for the goals and aims of the organization, has been truly in keeping with the highest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

"In Witness Whereof, we have here unto set our hands and the official seal of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this 24th day of August, 2005." This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - COMRADE DAN PESTINGER

COMRADE PESTINGER: Good morning, VFW. You know, I have probably been in a hundred thousand homes around the country, and working with multitudes of veterans, and I have never been nervous like I am right now. Having been in front of America's heroes is just amazing.

I would like to introduce to you my girlfriend of 30 years. Many of you already know her from past conventions. She has been my girlfriend for 30 years. She has taken care of my business. She has been the love of my life all that time. She has helped through the hard times and good times.

I would like to thank the Chief, the Senior Vice, the Junior Vice, and everybody on board here, and everybody at National Headquarters. I came on board in 1984 as a new Post Recruiter. I never ever thought that I would receive such a prestigious award. It is the greatest thin that has ever happened to me in my life. I have to thank Joe Ross. He was the Director of Post Development. He is the one that brought me on board. He was a strict disciplinarian, but he did his job very well. Those of you who know Joe Ross, he is very, very sick now. You might try to give him a call. He lives in Las Vegas. He needs a boost.

Howard Vander Clute, Past Adjutant General, was very, very instrumental in keeping the program going and the new Post development and the membership program going. We miss him. John Senk, John had been a friend of mine for 20-some years. Jim Rowoldt, the Membership Director, he brought me back on board in 2000-2001. He was a very good friend of mine.

The National Headquarters girls, all the secretaries up there, what I found when I was on the road, that I didn't go through the Directors if I had a problem. The girls up there got things done for me quicker than the Directors could ever do. I am very appreciative of all the secretaries up there.

Most of all, most of all, you comrades who taught me what the Veterans of Foreign Wars is all about. I especially have to thank you for teaching me how to recruit, and you and I being a team. We recruited by

knocking on doors, a table in front of a grocery store or Wal-Mart, or on a military base. This Distinguished Service Medal also belongs to you, although I will retain custody of it. (Laughter)

Thank you so very much for being my friends, for working for me, for being part of America's history. God bless you, God bless the VFW and God bless America. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I can tell you I have personally worked with Dan. He knows how to recruit. We need more people like him. Dan, thank you for your outstanding leadership that you have given to this organization in stewardship.

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO SIDNEY DANIELS

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Our next awardee is Sidney Daniels, who is being presented the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to the VFW.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to Sidney E. Daniels.

"In sincere appreciation and recognition of 20 years of loyal service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars as a dedicated employee serving as a VFW Claims Officer, Assistant Director Veterans Benefits Policy, Deputy Director National Legislative Service, Director Veterans Employment and Director VFW Action Corp. His service on several private and governmental panels, including the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities enabled him to advocate for our nation's veterans with pride and distinction.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - COMRADE SID DANIELS

COMRADE DANIELS: Good morning. I want to thank the VFW family for 21 years. I started with the organization back in 1985 as a Claims Consultant and advanced through the ranks eventually holding the position of a Consultant, Director of the VFW Action Corps, Deputy Director of Legislative Services, and I finished up my career as Assistant Director for Veterans Benefits Policy.

The 20 years I spent with the VFW will always be special to me. We had many proud moments. You sent us to Washington, to be an advocacy for the organization, and advocacy is what we did. I think we did it very well. We had many successes over the years, and that will always be a part of me.

I am especially privileged to have served with three Past Commanders-in-Chief, starting with Past Commander-in-Chief Cooper T. Holt, followed by Past Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers, and the cur-

rent head of the Washington Office, Bob Wallace.

I have made many friends over the past 20 years with the VFW. That will always be a special part with me. I look forward to activism with my Department, the District of Columbia. I thank you for all the support over the years. Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF 2005 VFW EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Our Washington Office will not be the same with Sidney not being there anymore.

Annually, the Veterans of Foreign Wars presents its Emergency Services Award to an individual for outstanding contributions to the community in the field of emergency services.

We are pleased to present this year's award to an individual who is dedicated to serving the community.

In addition to being a paramedic with the Howard County Department of Fire & Rescue Services in Maryland, Butler also serves as the leader of a tactical medic group that provides assistance for Howard County's SWAT Team, and leads the county fire department's Honor Guard.

Captain Butler's dedication to the Emergency Medical Service is exemplary. His many awards and honors are a testament to his commitment to duty and those he serves.

Sponsored by VFW Post 7472 in Ellicott City, Maryland, please welcome the 2005 recipient of the VFW Emergency Service Award, Captain John Butler.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Emergency Medical Technician Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Captain John S. Butler, Emergency Medical Technician, Paramedic, Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

"In grateful recognition of outstanding service as a Fire and Rescue Service Paramedic in Howard County, Maryland.Through 12 years of service Captain Butler has shown time and time again his willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. Whether through risking his own safety to assist others or by taking part in numerous volunteer and service activities, Captain Butler consistently personifies the idea of selfless service.

"Captain Butler's combination of ability, compassion and willingness to teach others has earned him the admiration and respect of his peers and the public he serves, and it is these qualifies that are truly in keeping with the finest goals and traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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RESPONSE - CAPTAIN JOHN S. BUTLER

CAPTAIN BUTLER: Thank you. I will try to avoid a cliche "I was just doing my job." It is really hard to avoid that cliche, because that is just

what is going on here. I am honored to be recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and I accept this award in recognition of all the service providers out there, police, firemen and paramedics. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Captain Butler, on behalf of the VFW National Organization, please accept this honorarium for $1,000.

CAPTAIN BUTLER: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2005 LAW ENFORCEMENT AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Each year, the VFW presents the Law Enforcement Award to an individual for outstanding service in the field of law enforcement.

This year's recipient is Officer Peter Koe, a member of the Indianapolis Police Department. He was sponsored by VFW Post 1587 in Indianapolis.

Officer Koe has proven himself to be an outstanding police officer in every situation, earning many awards and commendations. His distinguished record of service describes incredible actions of bravery, courage and valor throughout his many years of service.

In 2004, he received the Indianapolis Police Department's Medal of Honor, the highest award given to an officer by that agency, for ending a shooting spree in which he and two fellow officers were wounded. Despite his wounds, Officer Koe maintained his remarkable composure and poise throughout the entire incident. As a result, no further injuries occurred, and medical aid for the wounded officers was dispatched quickly.

Please welcome Officer Peter Koe of the Indianapolis Police Department, the VFW 2005 Law Enforcement Award recipient. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Law Enforcement Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Officer Peter Koe, Indianapolis Police Department.

"In recognition of outstanding bravery, heroism, and dedication to duty displayed through his actions on August 18th, 2004. Disregarding concerns for his own safety, Officer Koe came to the aid of fellow officers involved in a brutal gunfight with a heavily armed gunman.

"Three of the officers were wounded, one ultimately died as a result of his wounds. Despite his own serious gunshot wound and other injuries, Officer Koe was able to advance on the gunman and wound him.

"When ordered to surrender, the gunman drew another weapon and fired at Officer Koe. The exchange of gunfire that followed resulted in the death of the gunman with no further injuries to the officers involved.

"Officer Koe then, still without regard to his own injuries, directed medical assistance to his wounded comrades. Officer Koe's courage, selfless action and devotion to his fellowman are in the finest traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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RESPONSE - MR. PETER KOE

MR. KOE: Thank you very much. I have to say this is a great honor for me because of who you all are. I have to explain that. When I was younger as a boy, I idolized veterans. I didn't follow music, I didn't follow sports figures, I was always drawn to people's grandfather or their uncle that had these stories.

The difference was those stories were true. So on that night that I am being honored for, I got a small glimpse of what maybe you guys have gone through in various countries in different times. What is so interesting, and you know this better than I do, the finger of history is fickle. You don't get to pick what you join in or not.

I did serve the country in the United States Marines for six years, and I was anxious for a fight, but it was not to be. Those were the Reagan years. We won the Cold War hands down without a shot being fired because of efforts of men like you that came in different decades.

I would like to send out my honor and respect for the veterans of the Great War that are here. I know some are here. I saw one or two in my hotel. I am talking specifically about World War II, not to isolate any of the other engagements. But as a boy reading about Taiwan, reading about Saipan, reading about Normandy, listening to Allen, a friend of mine, who is a B-16 gunner, it is your example which allowed me to do the things that I needed to do that night for the right reasons.

So, in accepting this, I would like to say thank you, you who are in my eye the highest honor of citizens in this country and the soul of this country. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, here is an honorarium for the 2005 Law Enforcement Award of $1,000. Thank you for what you do for our country. (Applause)

MR. KOE: Thank you. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE JAMES C. GATES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD TO BILLY WAYNE PATTERSON

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: It is now my distinct honor to present the prestigious James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award to Billy W. Patterson, Veterans Employment Consultant Supervisor at the Employment Security Commission/Joblink in Goldsboro, North Carolina.

As an Employment Consultant Supervisor, Mr. Patterson supervises the employment staff in providing services to eligible veterans. His motivating approach to the day-to-day operations in a changing environment is results-driven.

Senior members of the North Carolina Security Employment Commission routinely seek his advice with confidence and trust.

Mr. Patterson has devoted more than 35 years in serving the veteran community in North Carolina. His knowledge and experience have propelled him to the forefront in being the primary contact for veterans issues, resulting in an exemplary relationship with local business groups and veterans' organizations.

Mr. Patterson's efforts have not gone unrecognized inasmuch as he is the recipient of numerous awards and citations.

I now present to you an individual whose efforts have made a positive impact on improving the lives of veterans, an Army veteran of the Vietnam War and Life Member of VFW Post 9959, Billy Patterson. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Veterans of Foreign Wars James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award presented to Billy Wayne Patterson, Local Veterans Employment Representative, Employment Security Commission/Job Link, Goldsboro, North Carolina.

"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.

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RESPONSE - COMRADE BILLY WAYNE PATTERSON

COMRADE PATTERSON: Fellow Veterans, I am glad to be amongst you today. I feel like I am at home. I have served 21 months in Vietnam, and I feel like I am a part of this great crowd here that has served our nation. It is with great honor that I accept this award for distinguished service.

I would like to thank you, the veterans of this nation, that give so much to keep our nation free from tyranny and unjust ways of the foreign countries that have been fighting against us. It is a great honor that I accept this award today.

I appreciate it, and I would like to also thank my fellow veterans representatives and disabled veterans representatives throughout the nation that work hard to work with you when you are ready to transition out of the military into the non-military side of the work force.

We have been there for you to help you with your unemployment, job training assistance, referral to supportive agencies to work with you. It has been an honor to serve you these past years, and it is a very honorable James C. Gates Award that you have bestowed upon me. I hope I can live up to partially what James C. Gates stood for. Thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we would like to present you with this honorarium of $1,000 for the James C. Gates Distinguished Service Award. (Applause)

COMRADE BILLY WAYNE PATTERSON: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF 2005 SCOUT OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: The next award is presented to John K. Bodylski, Scout of the Year Award.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Scout of the Year Award is given to a scout who has demonstrated citizenship in school, scouting and the community. Sponsored by the VFW Department of California, Eagle Scout John K. Bodylski, of Santa Ana, has been selected the recipient of the VFW National Scout of the Year Award for 2005.

John is an exceptional 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 has a strong sense of citizenship and moral values.

He is an award-winning percussionist and a cadet commander in the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary, Civil Air Patrol, Squadron 68.

John is a videographer with his own company and was inducted into the National Gallery for America's Young Inventors after placing first in the "What a Great Idea" National Invention Competition.

John's Eagle Scout Project commemorates the first American astronaut to die in space flight. A historic marker in a remote section of the Mojave Desert now marks the crash site of Major Michael Adams' X-15.

More than 100 people attended the unveiling of the monument, including representatives from NASA, former X-15 pilots and members of Major Adams' family.

All of these accomplishments prove John to be an exceptional example of today's youth. As the recipient of the Scout of the Year Award, John receives an eagle trophy and a $5,000 scholarship.

Please welcome a truly unique young man, the winner of the National Scout of the Year Award, John K. Bodylski. (Applause)

RESPONSE - JOHN BODYLSKI

MR. BODYLSKI: Wow. Okay. This is a pretty big deal for me, because it is not every day that you get to go somewhere and have everything paid for, your trip paid for, have a real nice hotel room paid for and your parents invited and everyone treats you well and take you to dinner.

The VFW has really treated me well and it is an honor to be here. There are a few people I would like to thank and a few groups I would like to thank for this. One is, when we first got here I had a little letter in my hotel room that said to call this person.

His name was Steve VanBuskirk. He has been extremely nice to us. He has taken us to dinner, made it really hospitable around here. He is the Youth Program Director. Sam Hunter is the National Scouting Director. He has also been very nice, came to dinner with us last night.

Captain Caskey, he is from California, I don't know how many people know of him, but he has been with me for this whole process. He has been kind of pushing me, hey, we think you might have a chance at this, so he has been really encouraging.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of California has stood behind me and pushed me to the next level. Thank you, California. The Orange

Post in California, I believe they are District 2, they are the actual Post that sponsored me. Boy Scout Troop 323, that is the troop I have been in ever since I started scouting, and everything I have learned with scouting has been with that troop.

Actually the way I heard about it is through one of the dads in the troop. His name is Chuck Stanfield. It is weird calling him that because I am so used to calling him Mr. Stanfield. He actually told me about it. He is a veteran. He said, "I think this is really something up your ally." He gave me the paperwork. The Civil Air Patrol Squadron 68 is the continuing education and leadership for me. They have been a great support to me.

Then, finally, and certainly not least, my parents who have been here a couple of times and put up with me. Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2005 VFW FIREFIGHTER AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: The next award to be presented is the VFW Firefighter Award. I am pleased to present the VFW Firefighter Award to an outstanding firefighter from Canton, South Dakota.

Larry Braaten, who is sponsored by VFW Post 3164 in Canton, has served the Canton Volunteer Fire Department since 1978. He has participated in numerous training classes, including EMT, certified firefighting, water rescue and farm extrication, as well as being a member of the Canton Ambulance Association for many years.

In the early hours of April 7, 2004, the Canton Volunteer Fire Department responded to an alarm at a house that was engulfed in flames. Neighbors indicated that four children, located on the first and second floors, were still in the burning house.

Dangling into the house through a broken window, and unable to see because of the extensive smoke and heat, Braaten searched for the children by touching the floor.

Because of his heroic actions, one child was found and brought to safety averting yet another fatality.

The very essence of this award is to recognize a firefighter who demonstrates outstanding character, devotion to safety and community, and an understanding of the plight of others. Larry Braaten is that firefighter.

Please join me in welcoming our 2005 Firefighter of the Year, Larry Braaten. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Firefighter Award, Gold Medal and Citation awarded to Larry Braaten, Volunteer Firefighter, Canton Rural and Volunteer Fire Department.

"In recognition of his outstanding service as a firefighter with the Canton Rural and Volunteer Fire Department, Mr. Braaten stands out as a shining example of selfless service and heroic action as given by firefighters throughout the nation.

"In the course of more than 20 years of service to his community, his actions have earned him the admiration and respect of his peers and the public he serves and truly display the fine traditions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

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RESPONSE - MR. LARRY BRAATEN

MR. BRAATEN: First of all, I would like to thank the VFW for promoting an award of this nature, and then bestowing this honor upon myself and the past recipients. This is the second year in a row South Dakota has received this award. One of the decisions I made about 30 years ago was to become a volunteer firefighter to help my community where I could.

As a firefighter, you always have the fear that you will be called to a situation like this that we had on the morning of April 7, 2004, and if it happens you hope and pray you have the fortitude to do what you have trained for and volunteered to do.

I know some people say that it took a real hero to pull that child out of that burning house, but I feel anyone would have done the same thing under these circumstances. Furthermore, I believe it is not heroism. I made a decision many years ago to be a part of an organization that trains for and is charted to perform these types of duties.

This was not an act of bravery on one's part, one or two individuals, but the entire volunteer fire department and the police department to support their community every day of every year. I would like to thank VFW Post 3164 and the Ladies Auxiliary of Canton, South Dakota, the State Department of the VFW and Ladies Auxiliary and the National Organization, which includes all of you wonderful people out there today.

I would also like to thank the entire community of Canton, the Canton Volunteer Fire Department for their support in this award. A special thanks goes out to my family. My daughter, Amy, and my son, Ken Braaten, accompanied me here. Also Robert Bredson is here as an officer from my local fire department. They have all done so much for me.

I would also like to thank our soldiers who are fighting today in foreign lands. This is an award that I will cherish the rest of my life, especially knowing that we made a difference in our community. Thank you very much.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Larry, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I would like to present you with an honorarium as the recipient of the 2005 VFW Firefighter Award of $1,000. (Applause)

MR. LARRY BRAATEN: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL
LARGE EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: It is my honor to present the VFW Large Employer of the Year Award to DynCorp International from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Dyncorp's operation at Fort Campbell provides aviation maintenance, logistics, and hazmat support for the U.S. Army Guard and Reserve Units. This company has provided an exemplary model for the hiring, promotion and retention of veterans, particularly disabled veterans.

DynCorp is a veteran-friendly workplace with veterans making up the great majority of its work force of 1,051 employees. More than over 90 percent of its employees are veterans, and 88 percent of the 383 new employees hired last year were veterans, many with service-connected disabilities.

DynCorp recognizes the special skills and discipline veterans bring to the work force and has taken every opportunity to tap into the resources and knowledge of this special group of citizens.

DynCorp's hiring record is an inspiring example of a company that recognizes the skills and abilities that veterans acquired in military service and bring to the civilian work force.

Accepting the Large Employer of the Year Award is President Joe Becker. Please give him a warm welcome. (Applause)

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Large Employer of the Year Award presented to DynCorp International, LLC, Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

"In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a 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 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by the Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. JOE BECKER

MR. BECKER: Good morning. On behalf of DynCorp International, we proudly thank the Veterans of Foreign Wars for the National Large Employer of the Year Award.

DynCorp International would especially like to thank Mr. John Furgess, National Commander-in-Chief, Tennessee State Commander, Mr. Ron Cameron; Mr. Kenneth Trane from the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program; Clarksville Office of the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce, Mr. Kenneth Langford. And also Post 1160, the Commander who nominated us for this award, and Mr. James Magill, Director of Employment Services, who assisted us in the preparation to be here today.

Words cannot express our thanks to the countless veterans across the country and those in this room who have served our nation. We at DynCorp International are extremely fortunate to have so many veterans among our ranks. The experience these skilled professionals bring to the table has been the cornerstone of our ability to serve the U.S. military around the world for 53 years.

Now, as much as ever, we are seeking to hire more veterans to work at Fort Hood, Fort Campbell, and in Iraq. We prepare damaged weapon systems and handling the latest in aircraft survivability modification to active components. Reserve and National Guard aircraft is among our nation's top priorities in supporting the international war on terrorism.

We ask that you continue to assist us in recruiting veterans that possess the technical skills needed to do this work, who want to continue to support the war as part of his civilian sector. With your help, we will

be back here next year.

DynCorp International is honored to donate this award to the headquarters and headquarters company, 101st Aviation Brigade Family Readiness Group Fund. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: On behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, we present this honorarium for National Large Employer of the Year for $1,000. I will tell you that next year one of my main points in my program is hiring veterans. We thank you for what you do.

MR. JOE BECKER: Thank you, sir. (Applause)

NATIONAL SMALL EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: It is now my honor to present the VFW Small Employer of the Year Award to L3 Communications from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. L3 Communications, founded in 1997, provides specialized communications and support services throughout the world.

Ninety percent of its 230 employees are military veterans, with a third of them being disabled veterans.

The managers at L3 Communications recognize the work ethic and expertise veterans bring to the workforce and clearly support the hiring and career advancement of our nation's veterans.

Accepting the Small Employer of the Year Award for L3 Communications at Fort Bragg is Mr. Randy Cochran, Director of Army Programs.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL LeFEBVRE: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, National Small Employer of the Year Award presented to L3 Communications, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

"In recognition and grateful appreciation for meritorious service in effecting a 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 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

RESPONSE - MR. RANDY COCHRAN

MR. COCHRAN: Fellow veterans, it is indeed a privilege for me to be among you Americans of character and honor and to accept this significant award on behalf of our employees at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I appreciate the hard work of our employees who have made it possible for our nomination.

Our operations provides vital logistical support to Special Operations forces stationed at Fort Bragg. What you may not know is today many of our employees are in Iraq and Afghanistan serving alongside servicemen and women who are prosecuting the war on terror. Our employees share the same hardships and dangers as those warriors, just as they did when they were wearing the uniform.

In closing, I would like to say we hire veterans for two important

reasons. First, as you know, they make great employees. They are loyal and dedicated and work until the job is done. But more importantly, we hire veterans because we believe it is the right thing to do.

Giving employment to Americans who sacrifice so much for their nation is the least we can do for them when they take off the uniform. Again, I thank you, the VFW, for this award. God bless America and its veterans.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Randy, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I would like to present to you this honorarium in the amount of $1,000 for receiving the National Small Employer of the Year award. We thank you for all you do. (Applause)

MR. COCHRAN: Thank you.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: I will relinquish the chair to Commander-in-Chief Furgess.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, thank you for presiding in my absence. I had a very wonderful visit, comrades, with the Ladies Auxiliary, such a great organization as you well know.

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE LADIES AUXILIARY

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We are honored now to have the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States in our presence this morning to come forward so we can greet her and give her the opportunity to bring greetings from the wonderful Ladies Auxiliary.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the National President to the podium.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let me hear it one more time as our National President approaches the podium. (Applause) Please be seated, comrades. What a great honor it is at this time to have the privilege to introduce to you a lady that has worked so hard for so many years at her Post, District, Department and National levels of the Ladies Auxiliary.

Her theme this year "Symphony of Service", it just seemed to echo all across this great organization, not only in these 50 beautiful states, but all around the world and the foreign departments overseas. She has traveled extensively. Each and every visit she has impressed those comrades and those ladies with her spirit, her professionalism, and her sheer love of our organization.

Please make welcome the National President of the Ladies Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. JoAnne Ott of Ohio. Let me hear it, comrades. (Applause)

RESPONSE - LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT JoANNE OTT

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT JoANNE OTT: Thank you. Good

morning. What a pleasure it is to be with all of you today, and to thank you for what you have done for the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary. The Auxiliary has accomplished great feats this year, and I know that it is because of your support.

We reached the goal of $3,012,000 plus dollars in our cancer aid and research program. (Applause) Thank you. Back before the June convention started, we were four hundred some thousand dollars behind, and I know if the representatives from Iraq, and to those that were recently wounded in Bethesda Naval Hospital.

I told them how proud we were of them and they thanked me for our support and our love and our encouragement. I knew if I walked away from those facilities that this country was in good hands. I have said this all year, there is not a night that I don't go to sleep, no matter how tired I am, that I don't say a prayer for those who have served this country and those who are serving now.

They are giving us the freedom that so many take for granted. They are serving our country with pride and dignity. I don't think we will ever be able to thank our veterans enough, but I want you to know that just because I am going out as National President does not mean that I will not continue to support our veterans and their causes.

As many of you know, I am the proud daughter of a World War II veteran, and I have said this many times. I love him as my dad to the end of the earth, but I respect him as a veteran. He has given me my eligibility into this great organization, and he sits among the best of the best. That is all of you.

So, I want to thank you again for everything that you do. I want to thank you for being who you are and what you are. We work together as a team, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies Auxiliary, and during this "Symphony of Service" and "Celebration of Service" year, we have made it count.

I feel like I hold a title; that is all it is. I am the liaison for everyone in this great organization. I have had opportunities that I will never ever forget, going to Korea, going to Germany, placing wreaths at cemeteries overseas, Veterans Day, December 7, Pearl Harbor. Those are all things that will remain so dear to me.

But as I placed those wreaths and saluted those that have gone before, you can't help but remember that they have given their lives for us. John and I want to say thank you for allowing me to come in today. Thank you for being you. Thank you for being my Chief.

I think we have had a great year together, and I know that the VFW and the Ladies Auxiliary will move forward and we will continue to break those goals each and every year, and this organization will do nothing but get better and better. Thank you all. God bless each and every one of you, and God bless this wonderful country. Thank you.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Joanne, for those wonderful remarks, heartfelt remarks. At this time it is just a great honor for me to present to you a personal love gift from the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, JoAnne. Thank you for all you have done this year and for all that I know you will do in the future. Thank you

so very much. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT OTT: Thank you, John.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: As an added bonus, Alma and I have a little personal gift winging its way to you and Steve in North Lawrence, Ohio. Hopefully, it is there when you get home. Comrades, one more time for our National President. (Applause)

LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT OTT: Thank you all. (Applause)

PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, we are honored to recognize the Montgomery, Alabama, Career Center as this year's National Employment Service Office Award.

The Alabama Career Center excels in providing both quantity and quality in services to veterans from Montgomery and the surrounding area. This past year alone, the Career Center registered 30,000 individuals for employment services of which 3,200 were veterans.

The Center's staff referred over half of the registered veterans to listed job openings or developed job openings for specific veterans in the Montgomery area.

Alabama is among five states operating the vocational rehabilitation and employment five-track employment program.The Montgomery Center is working closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop and implement this national pilot project that provides employment and training for wounded service members prior to their release from active duty.

The Center strives not only to place veterans at their highest earning potential, but assists them with short and long-term goals that lead to rewarding careers.

Here to accept the National Employment Service Office Award for the Alabama Career Center is its Director, Mr. Herschel Henderson. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States National Employment Service Office Award presented to Montgomery, Alabama, Career Center, Montgomery, Alabama.

"In recognition and appreciation for meritorious professional employment service rendered to 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 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. HERSCHEL HENDERSON

MR. HENDERSON: Good morning. I came here to accept the award for the great State of Alabama, but the praise should an employment service to assist veterans returning from war to find employment. That law is what we act on.

In our agency, each and every day we treat it as Veterans Day, and this helps us make do of all the things we do and create new ideals,

innovative ideals and servicing our employees returning from war. Thank you for your creations. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. Henderson. This award does carry an honorarium of $1,000, well-deserved and well-earned. Congratulations.

MR. HENDERSON: Thank you so much.

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY HEALTH-CARE PROVIDER AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, this year we are honored to present the VFW Outstanding Community Health-Care Provider Award to Ms. Nada Fleming of Cleveland, Ohio.

Ms. Fleming is a charge nurse and team leader at the Cleveland Metro Health System in Cleveland, Ohio, and is responsible for clinical orientations for new employees.

ada's love for her patients goes outside the normal scope of her duties. It is those little touches that make her loved and adored by everyone. She has never turned away a veteran who needed her compassionate understanding or assistance.

Ms. Fleming retired as a Commander for the U.S. Naval Reserve after 21 and a half years of service. She was activated during the Vietnam War and was also deployed to Bahrain during the Gulf War. She is an active member of Seven Hills VFW Post 7609 in Ohio.

In addition to her grueling schedule of working as a nurse, Ms. Fleming somehow finds the time to speak to students at her local elementary and junior high school, and gathers supplies for women stationed in Iraq.

Besides being active at work and the VFW, Nada is very involved in her community as a member of the Community Response Team. She is always willing and able to help others when situations arise.

Now, you can see why I am honored to present this year's VFW Outstanding Community Health-Care Provider Award to

Ms. Nada Fleming of Cleveland, Ohio. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding Health-Care Provider of the Year Award, 2004-2005, presented to Nada R. Fleming. "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 Community Health-Care Provider of the Year.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MS. NADA FLEMING

MS. FLEMING: Good morning, everyone. I am a little nervous about being here. I have enjoyed my time, and I feel it is an honor to even be here amongst everyone. We are all veterans and we are all volunteers, and all of us have worked hard in supporting each other and

doing what we can to help others and educate others.

So, I feel awkward receiving this because I enjoy what I do. I want to thank Commander-in-Chief Furgess, and I want to thank the Board, the Committee members, for selecting me. I want to thank Ohio for selecting me as well. Most of all, I want to thank my unit in Seven Hills, which is Post 7609. Without them, I would not have had all this extra opportunity to volunteer and help those who needed help.

Once again, thank you so much for allowing me to be here. I support all of you and I know that each one of us work together to support each other. Thank you again. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you very much. This award carries an honorarium for $1,000, which the comrades know it is well earned and well deserved. Congratulations to you. (Applause)

MS. FLEMING: Thank you very much.

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING VA HEALTH-CARE EMPLOYEE AWARD

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Each year the VFW provides national recognition to a VA health-care employee for exemplary service to veterans and their families. This year's recipient of this prestigious award is Mr. William LaBelle, who serves as the support clerk for the Patient Escort Program at the Sacramento VA Medical Center.

Mr. LaBelle started his career as a volunteer and was hired by VA to manage the Patient Escort Program in June, 2001. He works with approximately 20 volunteers transporting patients to and from their clinical and diagnostic appointments. The cardinal principle of his program is "to provide timely transportation for patients with compassion."

He is also responsible for transporting medical specimens, records and supplies when needed throughout the hospital.

Additionally, Mr. LaBelle also oversees the maintenance and scheduling of all government vehicles assigned to the hospital.

As an amputee, Mr. LaBelle does not let his disability interfere with his ability to perform his duties. He is a respected role model for other hospital employees and a master in customer service. His pleasant demeanor and personality are first rate.

His willingness to serve others is his calling card and he proudly serves as an inspiration to other disabled veterans.

It is with great pride that I present to you this year's Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee of the Year recipient, Mr. William LaBelle, from the Sacramento VA Medical Center in Sacramento, California. (Applause)

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee of the Year Award, 2004-2005, presented to William V. LaBelle.

"In special recognition of your individual achievements in support of the programs and purposes of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States a the Outstanding VA Health-Care Employee of the Year. "In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and

attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - MR. WILLIAM LaBELLE

MR. LaBELLE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief Furgess, and thanks to all of you Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary for inviting me to Salt Lake City for this prestigious honor. I would like to say a special thank you to my supervisor, Chief of Volunteer Service, Juanita DeLuna, who, along with some helpful information from Willie Williams from Post 11025 in California, composed the letter that ultimately led to my being selected VA Health-Care Employee of the Year. As a matter of fact, Juanita made the trip to Salt Lake. She is here. Thank you, Juanita.

I am very proud to be here today representing the Northern California health-care system, especially the facility I work in at the Sacramento Medical Center, located in Nathan, California. A little over two years old, it still seems like new.

The employees have the state-of-the-art equipment and state-of-the-art technology, with top-notch doctors and nurses. It is a great place to work, but I couldn't do it without the time donated by all the terrific volunteers. Once in a while I ask them why they like to volunteer their time to a person, and the main reason, "It makes me feel good to be able to help a patient."

These are not just any patients, these are patients that are veterans and that is why it works. Once again, I would like to thank all those instrumental in allowing me to be here, to have the privilege to accept this most distinguished award. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Mr. LaBelle. I know you will keep up that good work. This award does carry with it an honorarium for $1,000. These comrades know it is well deserved and well within your realm of accomplishments. Keep up the good work. Thank you, sir. (Applause)

MR. LaBELLE: Thank you.

PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING HEALTH-CARE VOLUNTEER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, the National Veterans Care Committee of the Veterans of Foreign Wars has established an award recognizing an Outstanding Health-Care Volunteer of the Year. This award is presented to one volunteer who was nominated by his or her VFW Post for taking those extra steps in providing exemplary service to veterans and their families.

This year's award is presented to Mr. Robley Rex of VFW Post 8639, in Louisville, Kentucky. Mr. Rex is a VFW volunteer at the Louisville VA Medical Center. Mr. Rex is a World War I veteran, and for a man who is 104 years old, he demonstrates over and over again that age has no limits when serving veterans.

He visits the sick and lonely at the VA Hospital and brings joy and smiles to the faces of his fellow veterans. Mr. Rex travels to visit with those who are shut in due to their age or disabilities and is determined not to let any veteran go unseen.

All year long, his smile is seen at the medical center and he amazes the staff and patients with his relentless energy, sense of humor,

pride in his country, flag and fellow man.

I am proud to present this year's VFW Outstanding Volunteer of the Year Award to Mr. Robley Rex, from Louisville, Kentucky.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: "Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Outstanding Health-Care Volunteer of the Year Award, 2004-2005, presented to Robley Rex.

"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.

"In Witness Whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and the official seal of The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, this 24th day of August, 2005."

This has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr. (Applause)

RESPONSE - COMRADE ROBLEY REX

COMRADE REX: I salute you. I have reduced my speech to a few words. I want each of you to listen carefully to what I have to say: loyalty to your family; loyalty to your comrades; loyalty to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, will end up with you standing like me receiving this prideful honor. Thank God for the VFW. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I know Mr. Rex doesn't care about this, but this honorarium is for $1,000, is made payable to a great American World War I veteran, 104 years old, Robley Rex, of Louisville, Kentucky.

COMRADE REX: Thank you very much. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF TONY ORLANDO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Last evening at the Patriotic Rally, entertainer Michael Chain announced that any revenues from the CDs that were selected here would go towards the VFW's Unmet Needs Program. I am proud to announce this morning that he is donating to that great program to help families of deployed veterans, $1,310. Let's hear it for Michael Chain. (Applause)

Now for a very special presentation, I am going to call on Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera to make this very special announcement.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SPERA: Comrade Commander-in-Chief and Comrades: Ten years ago, I was approached with an idea for a new program for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. That program has now become the Patriotic Pin. It is a program that I am very proud of, one that is growing year after year.

My Post a few years ago decided we would sell our property, and we took the money from that sale and we put it in a charitable trust, and this morning my Post Commander and several of the members of my Post are here to make a presentation to the Commander-in-Chief.

We now have a prize that is presented in that program in the name of North End Post 144. We are now presenting to the Commander-in-

Chief a check for $32,000. (Applause) We will now have a $7,500 second place prize in the name of the North End Post 144. Thank you very much to my comrades and to all of you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: This check may not show up very well in the back, but I guarantee you it reads $32,000 for the Patriotic Pin. One more round of applause, my comrades. (Applause) Thank you so much.

INTRODUCTION OF PAST COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, comrades, at this point in time it is just a great honor to recognize some individuals who were here not only in this session but in most every session that their time allows at the Post, District, Department and National levels, our Past Commanders-in-Chief. Please recognize each of them as their name is called

Right out of the chute, the Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief, who is excused today because he had to return back to Washington for his training with the National Cemetery System, but let's recognize Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief from Connecticut, Ed Banas. (Applause) Past Commander-in-Chief Billy Ray Cameron, North Carolina. Of course, we are going in alphabetical order now. From Florida, John M. "Jack" Carney. From Illinois, George R. Cramer.

James R. Currieo from our organization's largest Post, Department of Arizona, Sierra Vista, Arizona. Arthur J. Fellwock, from Indiana. James N. Goldsmith from Michigan. John F. Gwizdak, Robert E. "Bob" Hansen, Walter G. Hogan; the silver-haired golden-tongued orator, Cooper T. Holt.

Also somewhere excused due to health problems, and we wish them a speedy recovery: Rich Holman and Clyde Lewis. Let's greet our Past Commanders.

We also have Allen F. "Gunner" Kent, John W. Mahan, John E. Moon, James E. Nier, Clifford G. Olson, Jr., Thomas A. Pouliot, Larry W. Rivers, Ray Sisk, John W. Smart, R. D. "Bulldog" Smith, Jr., and I left my heart in San Francisco, Ray Soden of Illinois.

We also have Paul Spera, Norman G. Staab, and also excused due to a personal conflict, an anniversary celebration back home, John J. Stang. Also here is John F. Staum, Robert E. Wallace, Dr. John Wasylik. I believe that is the group. Will they all stand one more time and let's greet them as a group. Thank you, all Past Chiefs. (Applause)

I overlooked Past Commander-in-Chief Pete Walker, and I know he is here in spirit. We hope he can join us again at another National Convention. Let me hear it for "Pistol Pete" Walker. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL SERGEANTS-AT-ARMS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Sergeants, please present yourselves behind me. My comrades, at this time you see standing behind me our Sergeants-at-Arms. Let me take this opportunity to express my personal appreciation to a group of comrades we see annually at our National Convention and our Washington Conference.

They come to the conventions, they are up early in the morning

and the first ones in the hall. They arrange for 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. In fact, I don't think we pay you anything, do we? It is obviously a labor of love for them. I am sure that everyone recognizes that they do one outstanding job. (Applause)

It is my privilege to introduce to this body the National Sergeant-at-Arms.

From Post 6240, Department of Kansas, Barry Hoffman. Barry has been a Sergeant for 18 years. He is a retired colonel with the National Guard, and is a military analyst with Northrup Grummann, Missions System Sector. As I mention your names, comrades, step forward.

Next is Keith McDonald. He has been a Sergeant for 12 years. He is a member of Post 2275 in California. He is retired from the United States Navy and he is a Past All-American Post Commander. That is Keith McDonald.

Gary Barringer, Post 9134, has been a Sergeant for ten years. He is a Past Department Commander of North Carolina. He works as a technician for the North Carolina National Guard. Gary Barringer. (Applause)

This next gentleman has been around since dirt. Joe Schirmers has been a Sergeant for -- are you ready for this--43 years. Joe is a member of Post 4847 in Minnesota. He is retired from the Great Northern Railroad and has over 46,000 hours of volunteer service at VA Hospitals. (Applause)

The next Sergeant to be introduced is a Vietnam veteran, who served with the United States Navy. He has been a Sergeant for five years. He is from the Department of Florida where he retired from the St. Petersburg Police Department after 25 years. This is Ed Villuame. (Applause)

Another member has been a Sergeant for five years. He is a former Air Force Sergeant from Wilmington, Massachusetts. He is a Past All-State Post Quartermaster, a Past District Commander, and County Council Commander. In 1982, he was selected by the National Organization as a Young Veteran of the Year. He has been with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority for 21 years and is presently a Senior Controller. That is Bryan O'Brien.

The newest member, Jim Galen from Michigan, has been a Sergeant for four years. He was a Past All-State Commander, a Quartermaster for 17 years, and is employed as an assembly technician for General Motors.

I happen to think the prettiest of the Sergeant-at-Arms we have is Joy Ausman. (Applause) Joy has just recently gotten married. Joy comes from the great State of Minnesota. I tried to hire Joy and she turned me down. She has been a Sergeant for nine years, a member of Post 1720, and is Past District Quartermaster. Joy is also a member of Ladies Auxiliary to Post 4012 in Northville, Minnesota. She is an Environmental Health and Safety Manager for Forest Products in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Joy is married and has two children. (Applause) Don't you agree she is the prettiest Sergeant? (Applause)

My comrades, 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 every one 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.)

PRESENTATION OF VFW DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL AND CITATION TO JOHN J. SENK, JR.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, we are down to two awards, but two very special awards. Our next awardee is being presented with the Distinguished Service Medal and Citation in recognition of his many years of committed service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. I am honored to read this citation.

"Distinguished Service Medal and this Citation awarded to John J. Senk, Jr.

"In sincere and grateful recognition for over 27 years of exceptional service to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as a dedicated employee, fulfilling the position of Director, Research and Development, Director, Post and Program Development, Director, Post Services and Buddy Poppy, Director, Administrative Services, Assistant Adjutant General, Administration, and ending his VFW career as the organization's Chief Executive Officer, Adjutant General.

"His commitment to the objectives of the VFW, along with the professionalism and integrity with which he performed his duties, is in 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 24th day of August, 2005. Approved by the National Council of Administration."

This has been signed by me as Commander-in-Chief John Furgess. Comrades, please join me in welcoming Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

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

RESPONSE - ADJUTANT GENERAL JOHN J. SENK, JR.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, comrades. First of all, I would like to have my lovely wife join me. This is my heart, my soul and my rock. I know, comrades, that each of you had your own reason for going into the military service. For me, it was the only way I knew to get a college education and escape the poor coal mining community where I grew up in Pennsylvania.

I learned a great deal in the Navy. I did see a good portion of the world and I have so many memories of that service. Like all of you, some good, some bad. When I got out of the Navy, I went to college, graduated and proceeded with my goal to make a million dollars before I was 30. Somehow I never made that.

Somewhere along the line, over 30 years ago, my Uncle Tom, a Past Commander of the Post, asked me to join his Post 335 in Cranford, New Jersey. His enticement was to play pool for the Post in tournaments. Of course, how could I refuse. I loved playing pool and was pretty darned good at it in those days. Now, I am not saying I never hustled a game, but I was good.

Little did I know when I took the oath to the Veterans of Foreign Wars that its service to veterans would become my life's work and

my life's passion. I worked through my Post, being its first Vietnam veteran Commander and the first Vietnam District Commander.

I led some of the older members kicking and screaming into new ways of serving veterans. I remember one day when I was out at the New Jersey State Convention, I heard then Commander-in-Chief Ray Soden standing on the steps of the Aquarius Hotel singing. He had a wonderful voice. I thought to myself, I could never be the Commander-in-Chief. I can't sing.

In 1978, I was asked to leave my home in Cranford, New Jersey, to come to Kansas City and work at the National Office. Julian Dickenson was then the Adjutant General and the Commander-in-Chief was Eric Sandstrom. I was appointed the National Service Rep.

Now, I did not have a very realistic view of Kansas City. I really did think I would be seeing indians and cowboys and cows. That first summer, when I came out to interview, I don't know if I should embarrass my friend or not, but Larry and Mary LeFebvre took me to the theater, the Starlight Theater in the Park. It had to be 120 degrees.

I came dressed in a suit and a tie, which I probably sweated down two sizes and thus began my real career with the VFW. It has been my passion, my dream, and my life to serve you, my fellow veterans, and I must tell you I couldn't be more proud to do any other work.

I remember shortly after I began my work in Kansas City I was called to Julian Dickenson's office and we sat and were talking, and he said to me, "John, one day you may be sitting here as the Adjutant General." I about had a heart attack. I could never achieve that honor, I thought. I just wanted to be able to move up to a Director some day.

Well, I made it my business to learn everything I could about the VFW organization, about the best ways to serve veterans and currently serving military and their families. I had some wonderful teachers along the way. Ed Burnham, a dear friend, tutored me in the by-laws and procedures so well that I eventually helped write many of the by-laws that we follow today.

Julian Dickenson and Howard Vander Clute, each in his own way, taught me sometimes how to be and sometimes how not to be the Adjutant General. I remember the first day I came into my new office in Kansas City, a young lady came in and introduced herself, and she was going to be my secretary, Betty Franke, who has worked for me almost the entire time since then.

The support staff said, "Good morning, Mr. Senk." I told them then that we were going to be working together and they should refer to me on a daily basis simply as John, unless other people were in the office visiting. Then they could call me Mr. Senk. Mr. Senk was always known to me as my dad, a World War II veteran.

That is how I have always operated my office. Many people don't like it, but I did it the best way I knew how to do it. The staff and I have always worked as a team for the VFW.

Having come straight from the field, I was amazed when I reached the National Headquarters that they had none of the programs that many of the Posts operate in their hometowns, adopting needy families at Christmas time, operating blood banks.

Betty and I took on the responsibility of developing these programs at the National Headquarters, and I have worked with them ever since. In my 27-plus years working with the National VFW Organization, I have

faced many challenges, both personal and professional, but it was about two and a half years ago that perhaps the most unexpected and most critical challenge came to me.

I had not been feeling well for quite some time, but my doctors and I first attributed it to a lack of control of my diabetes, and then to sleep deprivation caused by sleep apnea. But there was something else, something no one could put a handle on until I made a trip to the Mayo Clinic and got the surprise of my life when the doctors told my wife and me that I had cirrhosis of the liver.

Cirrhosis, I thought I rarely even drink, but the doctors were right. I had developed non-alcoholic cirrhosis, probably from a combination of hereditary and side effects of medications I had been taking. Not only was I shocked to learn of this disease, but I eventually learned at some point in my life I would need a liver transplant to survive.

It seemed as though my whole world was crashing in. I went through some very difficult times emotionally. I had recently married this wonderful lady, and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her and many more years. I had lots of goals to still accomplish for veterans through my work as Adjutant General. I still had a son to finish raising.

Finally, with the help and support of doctors, family, friends, co-workers, and much education about cirrhosis, I realized my life was not over. I just had to make some adjustments and preparations to handle my medical issues and continue with the rest of my life.

I don't look at this as retirement, I look at it as a commencement, a commencement to the beginning of my new life. My doctors assured me that as long as I can fly with the medication and get enough rest, I could continue my career and my work for veterans.

Now, I am here to tell you that was much easier for them to tell me than for me to actually do. Take a rest in the middle of the day? Heck, somebody might think I was sick. At least I realized having a disease does not need to be kept a secret.

I knew that many of my comrades may be sharing similar medical conditions with me, that many veterans may be in need of organ donations just like I was, and that many, many veterans could be organ donors themselves. So I shared the knowledge of my medical condition with current and upcoming National officers and with my staff in Kansas City, and the Washington office. I was assured of their support and was encouraged to make the adjustments necessary to my schedule.

My wife and I collaborated in writing an article for the VFW magazine to raise an awareness of the critical gift every veteran has an opportunity to give, that of an organ donation. I have continued my work. Oh, I have good days and I have bad days, but I have been blessed to be able to continue to work with the best staff I can imagine and for the best people in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

My poor staff, who have been so loyal and so dedicated to our purposes, I can't imagine even trying to do the job of Director, Assistant Adjutant General or Adjutant General without their help. Larry LeFebvre, who became his own student of the by-laws, who in those lonely times of having to make difficult decisions, has always been there as my confidential sounding board and advisor.

Jim Rowoldt, whose tenacity and determination has brought the membership program successfully through its beginning years, rebuilding years. Vanessa Kane, you need to thank for making your National Conventions such a wonderful experience.

My senior secretary, Betty Franke, who takes care of all the assignments for National officers, scheduling and travel arrangements, and last but certainly not least, a person who took over as my executive administrative assistant when I became the Adjutant General seven years ago, Phyllis works tirelessly and unselfishly on your behalf. (Applause)

She works to accomplish our goals. She seems to sometimes know what I am thinking almost before I do. She works late nights. Let me tell you, comrades, for about the last two months Phyllis has been in the office late at night, works Saturdays, works Sundays, has not taken any time off. That is because of her love of veterans and her love to make sure that things go off right. My friend, my executive assistant, Phyllis Cale. (Applause)

I am not going to name them by name, but I ask all of you to please acknowledge these wonderful people, Larry, Jim, Vanessa, Phyllis and Betty, and the others on the stage behind me, and those who cannot be here today. (Applause)

Now, comrades, the second hardest time of my life. I still have goals I want to accomplish for the VFW, but as set forth in our VFW By-Laws, each Commander-in-Chief has the authority to choose his own Adjutant General. Now it is time for me to step aside to turn the reins over to my successor. This is not easy for me.

For 27 years this has been my life. This is for you who are not at the convention, those soldiers in the far reaches of the world facing death at this very minute. For those soldiers I met in airports and give a calling card and a welcome home coin to. For their families, who have kept their homes or been able to get medicine for sick children, because of our Unmet Needs Program.

For families whose children have presents at Christmas, because of the generosity of the VFW. For those kids who received college scholarships from the Voice of Democracy Program. For the veterans who have better health care for other benefits because of our legislative efforts.

For all of these reasons and more, I have dedicated my life to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Sometimes my family had to sacrifice so I could do that work. but I hope they understand. I hope my children understand how important all of you are as veterans and how great this great country is, that their sacrifice is a small part of what others have given.

Now, it is time for me to move on to other things, to take some time for my family, my children and Danielle, with our soon to be grandchild. Her kids are very busy and for myself I will never forget the veterans, the VFW, and will continue to do what I can for veterans' causes. But I am going to also concentrate on my new liver, enjoying my beautiful bride, and I am going fishing.

Please allow me to introduce to you my family members who have been able to travel here today to share with me on this more auspicious occasion, my daughter, Danielle and her friend Damien, my son Sean. Many of you ran into Sean fooling around these conventions for years.

My sister, Sharon, who has both been a special sister and a dear friend through the years. My nephew, Buddy, a Sergeant in the National

Guard. The only thing I don't like about him he has more things on his uniform than I did. Buddy proudly served our nation both in Desert Storm and in Iraq.

My stepson, P. J., had to leave yesterday to attend a sales meeting in Florida, and it seems like every time he goes down there they have storms. I wouldn't invite him anymore His lovely wife, Jessica, is here.

Now, the apples of my eyes, Skyler and Jaycee. You know, it is great when you have built-in grandchildren. Let me just tell you something. As you are walking through Hallmark one day, look for Skyler's picture. She is on one of Hallmark's cards. She and I just did a shoot that we hope will wind up together on a Hallmark card.

A gentleman who has become a very valid friend, who will call, and Sean will come say, "Tony is on the phone." Please welcome Tony Orlando. He is a personal friend and loves the veterans, let me tell you. Then of course, my lovely wife, Madeline, joins he here at the podium. She has become my tower of strength and has submerged herself in the programs and goals of the VFW, especially the Unmet Needs Program of the foundation.

Thank you all for honoring me today. My wife is the English major, along with every other kind of major, and she is the one who reminded me of the words of a poet, Robert Frost.

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep."

Thank you. God bless America and all of you heroes. Thank you very much.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: There are many in the audience who are attending their first VFW National Convention. There are some things you remember and some things you forget. That was a very special moment. Let's have one more round of applause for retiring Adjutant General Senk from New Jersey. (Applause)

INTRODUCTION OF TONY ORLANDO

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I am going to say it one more time, one more very special award. Comrades, Tony Orlando is often remembered for recording "Tie A Yellow Ribbon," one of the most symbolic and inspirational songs of all time. Tony has a devout following, especially within the veterans community across the country and around the world, and for good reason.

For more than 30 years, Mr. Orlando has demonstrated his commitment to the American servicemen and women and to veterans by lending his talents to the betterment of their morale and their quality of life. Tony Orlando has a strong love for our country and for those who have and continue to serve in our military. All of us admire his dedication and his American spirit.

Please welcome Mr. Tony Orlando. (Applause)

REMARKS - MR. TONY ORLANDO

MR. ORLANDO: Thank you all. Thank you. First of all, let me just say thank you for last night's warm welcome. As usual, not only is your

convention an inspiring one, but I can't get over the warmth and the kindness, and the kind of welcoming that you have always given me. I hope you know that I really appreciate it and I appreciate all of you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you so very much for having me here last year and this year.

To Commander-in-Chief Furgess, thank you for allowing it to happen one more time and greeting me last night in your suite and making me feel like family. John Senk, for 27 years you served Veterans of Foreign Wars. Just to let you know, 27 years ago was when Jimmy Carter was President.

Madonna had not had a hit record yet. Tony Orlando had just gotten cancelled. That is a long time ago. I was 33 years old. I am 61 years old. I watched your family today have bittersweet tears. I say bittersweet because they knew. I know them personally and close.

They knew how important the VFW was to you. To watch you daughter Danielle, I realized that at 21 years old she has never known you to do anything else but work for the VFW. You are an inspiration to me as a friend and through the years in Branson, when I first started something called a Veterans Homecoming in 1993.

I opened my theater doors up for veterans to come in free as a way of me just saying thank you in a small way to the veterans for their families. Six hundred came in 1993. Last year, in my twelfth year, a gathering of 184,000 veterans came through Branson, Missouri. (Applause)

I have had the honor of having an amazing life with the U.S. military. Sometimes, John, we don't realize what God has planned for us. Sometimes we think we are doing the planning. But truly, it is the man upstairs that does the planning for us.

Sometimes we think we are coming up against something that is just terrible for us. Oh, my goodness, what now? We find out that the Lord had something very special for us. As an example, my grandfather served in World War I. His children served in World War II.

My Uncle Orlando was in the Navy. I grew up and had pictures of his open back, opened up by shrapnel received in his combat. I was named after him. I wanted to be like my Uncle Orlando. I wanted so much to live my life like the soldiers of my family.

Then comes the Vietnam War. The draft calls me in to take my test. I come in for my test and go to all my stations. And, you know the stations they are talking about where they look at every orifice in your body. As I came to the last one, to my amazement and shame, the director looked at me and said,

"You are 4-F."

I said, "4-F? What do you mean, 4-F?" He said, "Well, you are not going to be able to come into the service."

I said, "Why?" He said, "You have a narrow auditory canal." I said, "I am a singer." He said, "You will not be here. Go over to that station and go home." I went home in tears. I really did.

I was so embarrassed that I was the only member of my family that wasn't able to serve. Little did I know that God had in store for me a little song to record called "Tie A Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oak Tree." In 1973, I am invited by Bob Hope, as I told you yesterday, to come sing for our POWs who returned home from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

It changed my life.

I met Steven Long, who was held captive in the Hanoi Hilton for four years, and Buddy Day, who was one of the strongest most incredible men I have never met in my life, Jay Vargas, the recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor. And why did I meet these men? I met them because I recorded this little song called "Tie A Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oak Tree."

Since 1973, what a journey the Lord had in store for me. There I was with for the Iran hostage crisis. There I was at Dover Air Force Base during Desert Storm and there I was again during the Iraq War. Here I am, lo and behold, the guy who got turned away 4-F, never knowing what was in store for me.

The Lord had me wear the uniform and a medal that had the insignia Veterans of Foreign Wars. Let me tell you, John, what God has in store for you. You are about to do work, if you can believe this, because of your 27 years of experience as Adjutant General and Directors throughout your career at VFW.

Your dedication to veterans has a lasting power that goes long and beyond your lifetime. You touched me and you helped me in Branson to make that show grow into what it has become, the largest gathering of veterans in the United States of America. Thank you, John Senk.

Thank you, VFW, for making me feel somewhat in a small way like I have done my service to this country as you heroes have. God bless you and I think you all.

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: One more time for Tony Orlando, my comrades. (Applause) Comrades, let's welcome Past Commander-in-Chief from the great Department of North Carolina, Billy Ray Cameron. (Applause) All the way for Billy Ray, still serving veterans.

I am going to ask Tom Kissell to come forward and announce the beautiful, beautiful Buddy Poppy Award winners at this time.

WINNERS OF THE NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

COMRADE TOM KISSELL: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I would like to start out with announcing the Over One Million Club for 2005. The over one million Club was established several years ago to pay special recognition to the Departments whose poppy distribution equaled or exceeded one million.

For the past 18 consecutive years, the Department of California has exceeded total distribution of buddy poppies of over one million. This year the lone recipient is again the Department of California, who led the nation in total distribution, 1,050,500 buddy poppies.

I am going to ask the 2004-2005 Department Commander Everett R. Martin and Department President, his lovely wife, Stephanie Martin, of California to join Commander-in-Chief Furgess for the award presentation. (Applause) If I may, I will read the inscription on the One Million Club plaque for 2004-2005.

"Presented to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California, and its Ladies Auxiliary in special recognition and sincere

appreciation of the Department's support for the Buddy Poppy Program as evidenced by 18 consecutive years of over one million in total buddy poppy distribution."

It has been signed by Commander-in-Chief John Furgess and attested to by Adjutant General John J. Senk, Jr.

I can only add, Stephanie, the plaque for the Ladies Auxiliary came in damaged and we will replace it and have it sent to you for proper presentation. Thank you. (Applause) I want California to have an opportunity to say a word. That is a tremendous accomplishment. Everett.

COMRADE EVERETT MARTIN: Thank you, Chief and Tom. We accept this aware on behalf of the Department of California and we urge each and every Department to work for this award. This is a very important program and we do thank you.

MS. STEPHANIE MARTIN: On behalf of the Ladies Auxiliary to the veterans of the Department of California, we accept this so proudly and it will be in our Department office, and we, too, encourage everyone to participate and work this wonderful program. Thank you. (Applause)

COMRADE KISSELL: Now, it gives me great pleasure to announce the Buddy Poppy Display Contest Winners at the 106th National Convention, Salt Lake City, Utah, August 20-25, 2005.

CATEGORY 1 - PUBLIC PROMOTION OF POPPY CAMPAIGN

First Place - Howard M. Black Post No. 1508, Wildomer, California.

Second Place - Lt. Harold R. Cornwell Post and Auxiliary No. 1298, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Third Place - Chief Pontiac Post No. 1699, Cahokia, Illinois.

CATEGORY 2 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS

First Place - George A. Sutton Memorial Post No. 1831, De Soto, Missouri.

Second Place - Crawford County Post and Auxiliary No. 4549, Robinson, Illinois.

Third Place - Arthur W. Jones Post No. 7564, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Honorable Mention - W. E. Baggs, Sr., Post No. 9960, Swansboro, North Carolina.

Also in Category 2, I have the distinct pleasure of awarding the Director's Award Ribbon to the Mechanicsburg Memorial Post and Auxiliary No. 6704, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

CATEGORY 3 - ARTISTIC OR DECORATIVE USE OF POPPIES

First Place - Keith Holmes Post and Auxiliary No. 402, Coraopolis, Pennsylvania.

Second Place - Winner Post No. 4674, Winner, South Dakota.

The Third Place winner in Category No. 3 is the George A. Sutton Memorial Post No. 1831, De Soto, Missouri.

CATEGORY 4 - MEMORIAL OR INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS JUNIOR GIRLS UNITS/SONS OF THE VFW

First Place - Lewis E. Jackson Junior Girls Unit No. 4309, Brevard, North Carolina.

Second Place - Tioga Junior Girls Unit No. 2149, Wooddale, Illinois.

Third Place - Clarence Hoyt Junior Girls Unit No. 9217, Liberty, New York. (Applause)

This concludes the winners of the Buddy Poppy Display Contest for this 106th National Convention and the awards will be shipped\ to the attention of the Department Adjutant General for appropriate distribution and presentation. Thank you so much for all you do for that wonderful program.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Tom Kissell has worked very hard on Buddy Poppies. Let's greet him one more time for that good work. Thank you, Tom, and thank you, comrades. (Applause)

Before I call to the podium Past Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of our Finance an Internal Organization Committee, Jack Carney, I have got about two minutes before I do that. The convention planners say that we are at about 11:00 o'clock, and my watch says it is about 11:03.

But I appointed earlier this year a special Committee to do an update report on the VFW National Home for Children, not to investigate. That wasn't their purview, but to give us an update. They have accomplished that. The chairman of that Committee is here this morning and they have done a wonderful job on that report.

I want to call on our National Surgeon General Steve O'Connor, from Minnesota, to render that report or at least a thumbnail sketch of that report.

Steve.

REPORT ON THE VFW NATIONAL HOME FOR CHILDREN

SURGEON GENERAL O'CONNOR: Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief. Comrades, good morning. It is still morning, isn't it? Before I go into this report, I would like to recognize the other members of the Committee. We worked very diligently on this, and without their support and their help we would not have this product.

First of all, Adjutant General Quartermaster Bruce Edwards from the Department of North Carolina. Are you in here, Bruce? Past Department Commander Bruce Ely, Department of New Jersey. And District 5 National Councilman Roger Baker, Department of Indiana.

I will try and make this as brief as I can. It is a thumbnail sketch. We had over 18 recommendations in really two areas. The Chief asked us to answer a couple of questions. One of them was how can we as an organization regain the enthusiasm that we once had for the National Home? I can tell you or will tell you in a minute we have lost that enthusiasm, comrades.

The other one was to make a recommendation as to whether the VFW National organization should be actively involved in deter-

mining the future of the Home, whether that means changing programs or possibly even closing the home. But that was our task.

We looked briefly -- well, not briefly, but I will say briefly we looked also if we are going to do all this, is the National Home financially sound? We thought we ought to look at that before we could make any other decisions on those questions that the Commander-in-Chief asked us to reply on.

I will tell you, comrades, the National Home is in serious, and I want to underline serious, financial distress. For the three previous years, donations have been down significantly and, in fact, three have had to liquidate over $1 million a year for the last three years to meet the financial obligations of that program. That cannot continue.

We believe after looking at the financial records and all that, that the Home does have a potential to be financially sound in three to five years, but only if we, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Ladies Auxiliary, stand up to the plate. One of the things that has happened is those comrades who saved the free world as we know it today, who returned to build a nation, also built the National Home for Children. They supported it financially for 80 years.

But as we all know, those comrades are leaving us at the rate of over 1,000 a day. Comrades, I am here to tell you that we have not stepped up to the plate to take their place. I will go over briefly a few of the recommendations that we made. I won't go over so much the recommendations we made to the Home, because you know we can't do anything about that, but we can do something about some of the other problems.

First of all, we have to bring the National Home back to the forefront as one of our premier programs. We do a lot of things. We do a lot of things in the community. We do a lot of things in our state. That is the purpose of our organization is to take care of veterans, those serving us today and their families and children. That is one of our premier programs.

We have to advertise that again. We have to put that to the forefront, not that the other programs are not very good, because they are. But we have to remember our mission, and if we do not take care of the families and children of those that have sacrificed for us, we need to revisit our purpose.

I know it happens in my Post and District, and I will use them as an example. You are elected the Commander, you are making your appointments, you pick the cream of the crop to be your Membership Chairman. You have got to have a good Membership Chairman, your Operations Chairman. You go down the list.

You take the cream of the crop, and then you are starting to get to the end of those appointments and you say, you know, good old Joe or Jeannie really is good supporters and in their younger days they really did a lot for the VFW, and now they are getting a little older and slower and they have been good and I need to reward them.

We appoint them as the National Home Chairman. That happens through all levels of our organization. At the meeting, when it comes for their reward, they say the National Home is doing really good. We are really taking care of those kids.

The worst case scenario, and it happens far too often, is no

report, Commander. We need to appoint Chairmen of the National Home at all levels that are both interested and knowledgeable. We need to have programs that teach the Chairman about the National Home, and they need to get out to our membership and let them know what the Home needs.

On the other hand, the National Home needs to tell us how much money do they need to raise this year to run that home? Like the Jerry Lewis Telethon, they need to keep us informed. We need to gear our activities to meet those needs.

The other thing is we need to appoint a liaison for the National Organization to the National Home. We need to appoint somebody that is knowledgeable in both finances and marketing. Those areas are the ones that the Home needs help in. Those are the areas that most of the decisions are made on.

If we are going to be involved and determine the destiny of the Home, we have to report to the members. They need to be up to date, they need to know the issues and they need to take part in directing that Home, which means we have to have some continuity.

If the Commander-in-Chief, who has a tremendously busy year, is unable to devote that time, then he needs to appoint and, in fact, the National Home By-Laws allow for him to appoint somebody to stand in his step or her step. They need to do that so we can have some continuity on that Board.

The Trustees from the National Home Board need to get out in their Districts. I know, and I don't even know his name, and that is part of the problem, the Trustee that represents Minnesota and several other states, I don't remember ever seeing them at one of our state meetings. They need to get out there and they need to teach us and go forward.

Lastly, I would ask the incoming Commander-in-Chief if he could distribute this report to the Departments and every Council member. It will give you a good idea of what needs to be done. But one thing impressed me yesterday, you know we had the children from the National Home here. They got a rousing applause.

Who of you in this audience can walk up on this stage in front of them, look them in the eye and say, "Yes, we remember you in our prayers at every meeting and, yes, we may even mention you early in the meeting as we open the meeting, but, you know, we just really can't afford to take care of you and can't afford to take care of you at the level that we are now? We have scholarships in our community that we need to take care of and we need to take a Christmas basket to someone, so we just really love you and we are really praying for you, but we can't afford you." Who can do that?

Comrades, I want to thank you for this opportunity. Chief, thank you very much for it. I learned so much about the Home and I have such a commitment to the Home at this time. I hope you all will gain that commitment. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Steve. That is a good report and well said. Thanks to the Committee and the momentum is once again there, I believe, comrades, and to the future of this great VFW National Home for Children.

If Chairman Jack Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief, will

approach the podium, we are going to continue our business with the report of the Finance and Internal Organization Committee.

As Jack comes forward, there is a gentleman in the audience I believe that needs to be recognized. If he is not in the audience, I would like to recognize him anyway. Charlie Price of Delaware Post 3792, 87 years young, raised $13,000 in Buddy Poppy sales and has been Post Commander for three consecutive years. Thank you, Charlie, for all that hard work and dedication. He is 87 years young. (Applause)

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I would like to recognize the Vice-Chairman of our Committee, R. D. "Bulldog" Smith from Georgia.

Commander-in-Chief, our Committee met on Sunday as directed, and I want to commend the Committee for an excellent job, and certainly the many questions that were asked that made that Committee just a little bit better. So, I Convention Rules, I will read those approved, make a motion, and then I will go to those that were referred, and then the rejects. Those approved by the Committee are Resolutions 215, 216 and 218. Commander-in-Chief, I move that the Committee's action be approved.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF R. D. SMITH: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It has been moved and seconded that we approve those three resolutions. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, those in favor of the motion will vote "aye"; opposed. The "ayes" have it.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Commander-in-Chief, the Committee has recommended a referral to the National Council of Administration on Resolutions 201, 202, 203, 204, 205 and 213. Commander, I move that the Committee's action be approved.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF R. D. SMITH: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been properly made and seconded that the referral be made to the Council of Administration for Resolutions 201, 202, 203, 204, 205 and 213. The motion has been properly made and seconded. Is there any discussion?

I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dan Johnson, Adjutant/Quartermaster, Department of Idaho, a member of Post 63 and a delegate to this convention. I would like to set aside 201 through 205.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Give us the numbers again, Dan.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Nos. 201, 202, 203, 204 and 205.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Those will be set aside. We are voting on the remaining referral, Resolution 213. Those in favor of the referral of 213 will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

Now, we will go to those that have been set aside. I will refer back

to Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): I would like to make a motion we approve 201, 202, 203, 204 and 205.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We will do them one at a time, sir. The proper procedure is to refer to one at a time. I guess that is the issue now on the floor.

Microphone No. 2.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: A point of order. A motion was made for all of those. There is no provision to pull that out of the motion. The motion was for all of them. The motion was to refer all of them to the Council of Administration.

Our by-laws require we vote on that motion. You can't simply remove pieces from the motion and set them aside. These were not resolutions that were being recommended by the Committee. Those are the ones you can set aside. But if you have a motion on the floor to send the six of those resolutions, you need to vote on that motion. You cannot remove five of them from that motion legally.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I stand corrected. I don't mind at all to do it that way. The Council can study these items further.

Comrade Johnson, that seems to me like that ought to be amenable. The point of order is well taken that the package be referred to the Council of Administration for further discussion, which I think was your point the other day, if I am not mistaken.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, may I be allowed to speak on this motion now?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We need a second. You made the motion, if I am not mistaken. This is a point of order made by Past Commander-in-Chief Spera that it be referred to the Council of Administration for further study, which I think was your point the other day. We need a second to your motion.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I overheard Past Commander-in-Chief Carney. So we understand, there is a motion and a second, and so now we would like to be under discussion of that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): The reason I brought these five resolutions was after some discussion with a friend, who is a Past National American Legion Commander in Boise, and I said what do you as a Past National Commander receive travel-wise?

He said, "I get three trips a year. I get a trip to the National Convention. I get $110 per diem and I have to pay my hotel out of that, and I get two trips to Indianapolis for the Council Meeting. I get $85 a day and have to pay my own expenses, hotel out of that."

I wrote a letter, including those kinds of things to every member of the Council of Administration. The only Council member I heard anything from was my own, Dick Whipple. Then we had this decision made by the budget makers on the Council to eliminate the All-American Post and District Commanders except for the division winners.

I said I wondered if anybody looked at the very, very generous travel policy for the National Officers. I talked it over with many of my com-

rades in the Adjutant/Quartermaster business. We felt the only way we could be heard was to do these resolutions and to bring it up here at the National Convention.

We have seen quite often that politics get in the way of the National Council of Administration doing the good of the order. So I would like to turn this over to my friend, Benny Bachand.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I recognize Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Benny Bachand, Post 4287, Orlando, Florida. On Monday, as we all know, this body changed the convention rules to allow this particular discussion. I am pleased to announce, Commander-in-Chief, that none of the delegates here decided to spend $1 million, so I guess we are in good hands here.

Many years ago, the Council of Administration travel policies under Past Commander-in-Chief Jim Nier and Past Commander-in-Chief John Moon, they were much more restrictive than they are now. They have become more liberal. It seems we have got a lot of people going a lot of places doing a lot of things at great expense to the organization.

We hear, as members of our VFW, that we can't afford to do certain things. We can't afford to pay more money to National Committee members to come to our National Convention. We can't afford to take all Americans to our National Convention because the organization doesn't have the money.

We can't afford to spend more money for National Committee members for the Washington Legislative Community Service Conference because we don't have the money. There is a lot of thought going into this that we don't have the money. So, what this does, and hopefully will do to the Council of Administration, is to ask them to take a serious look at what the travel policies are of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and let's spend the money where we need to spend the money for the organization.

I am confident, Commander-in-Chief, that the new leadership we are going to have in Kansas City under the direction of the new Adjutant General and we have a new Quartermaster General, we have a new Commander-in-Chief, and I believe that these delegates are ready to give those people the authority to do what these resolutions are asking us to do.

With the assurances that I heard from the Quartermaster General that they will seriously look at these issues at the Council of Administration, I feel confident that I would vote against these resolutions now in favor of the National Council of Administration taking over this responsibility. Thank you very much.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Well, thank you. That seems to take some controversy away.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): As my preceding speaker mentioned, the issue on Monday was whether or not this delegation was going to be allowed to voice their opinions on these policies. The motion on the floor is to refer these to the National Council of Administration.

The issue of the policies themselves should not be addressed at

this time. We should address whether we are going to allow the Committee or support the Committee's recommendation to refer these to the National Council of Administration.

I say no. I wanted, by having Rule 7 changed, the opportunity to address each one of those resolutions individually on the floor. We should do that by defeating the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Dean.

Microphone No. 1 again. Let's give Microphone No. 3 a chance. I have not recognized them.

Microphone No. 3.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JAMES GOLDSMITH: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Jim Goldsmith, Past Commander-in-Chief, and a delegate from Post 4139, Michigan. I rise in opposition to the motion to refer this to the Council of Administration.

My comrades, if you pass these resolutions, what you are telling your National Council of Administration members that you have no faith and no trust in their ability to render decisions on the national level and represent you at the national level, your state on the national level.

I also read that resolution and I heard it say in there that indirectly the Past Commanders-in-Chief do not remember this is a volunteer organization. If I may take the time to go down a couple of Past Commanders-in-Chief, I am very well aware of what they do.

Art Fellwock, who is very involved in Evansville, Indiana; Norm Staab, who never misses a meeting in his home Post in Kansas, who, in fact, writes the newsletter. Wally Hogan, who two years ago was an All-American District Commander.

You go to Doc Wasylik, who is very involved in the Sandusky Post. You go to John Gwizdak, serving as the Quartermaster/Adjutant at the Post level and Safety Manager for 27 years. John Smart is involved in his Post. Tom Pouliot, who is involved in his Post, in fact, are building a new Post in Montana.

John Mahan is right along with him. You look at John Staum, who is another one that is involved in his Post. George Cramer, Ray Soden from Illinois, they are involved. We remember the Posts as volunteer Posts. You look at us and you recognize us up there this morning as Past Commanders-in-Chief and the things that we do for this organization, and now you want to restrict us.

John Gwizdak put it very well at the Budget and Finance Committee meeting last year. He said the Indians years ago and today in the Native American community always ask the past chiefs to sit in on their meeting and smoke from the pipe. Sometimes they probably put stuff in there we should not be smoking. But that is neither here nor there.

I am going to tell you what, you should have brought this up when I was Commander-in-Chief and I ran a deficit of $2.5 million. That is when it should have been brought up. I served and have been on the Long-Range Planning Committee for some seven or eight years.

Those are difficult, difficult, difficult meetings, but we try to do the best we can do. Larry Maher says that if the war had not happened we would have met the budget. If we had not had 9-11 during our years, Commander-in-Chief, Those things do happen.

The Past Commanders-in-Chief of this organization have put a tremendous, tremendous amount of time, money and effort. Some will say well, why did they run? That is because of the love for this organization. We still take time out, weekend after weekend, to represent this National Organization.

I will tell you this, as Chairman of the Budget Committee next year, I will do everything I can do to make sure that our Commander-in-Chief has the resources that he needs to spread the message of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I think it is very important that we remember that we are in a global world today, not only the Veterans of Foreign Wars but all society.

If you look around, you see the global terrorists, things are happening every day. I think it is vitally important that we sit there and refer these to the Council of Administration. Let them make the decision that you elected them to make. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Past Chief, for your comments to approve the motion to refer to the Council for their consideration.

Microphone 1 and then Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE PATRICK BOTBYL (Post 1593 - New Jersey): I also rise to support the referral to the National Council of Administration for two reasons. The first, comrades, is that we need to remember that the way that this information, the financial impact of this information, will be presented to the Council of Administration will be as the previous speaker said, through the Budget Committee, the National Budget Committee.

Now, that National Budget Committee, as we know, is a Committee that is appointed by the Chief, but also many representatives of the Council of Administration sit on that very important Committee. Every aspect of the finance that we have is reviewed in that Committee through the Adjutant Quartermaster's Office, and that is where the decisions need to be made and the recommendations made to the Council of Administration so that they can evaluate all of the impact of these decisions.

When we bring it on the floor here, we tend to express ourselves emotionally, and I don't think we really have a lot of the impact, the financial impact of looking at these and saying what the dollars and cents savings may be. I think we suspect there may be savings.

When we look at that bigger picture, the Budget and Finance Committee needs to take that information. They need to present that to the Council of Administration and then the decision made at that point. Comrades, I urge you to support the referral of this to the National Council of Administration.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone 2 and then Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE GEORGE MEADE (Post 3513 - Arizona): I am George Meade, Post 3513, Arizona. Commander-in-Chief, is it correct that the motion on the floor is to refer all five of these to the Council?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Yes. All six of them are being referred to the Council if the motion is approved.

COMRADE GEORGE MEADE (Post 3513 - Arizona): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I would like to move an amendment to the motion.

Is it in order?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Sure, it is. Make your amendment.

COMRADE GEORGE MEADE (Post 3513 - Arizona): I move that we take these individually instead of all six together.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: No, we can't do it that way.

COMRADE GEORGE MEADE (Post 3513 - Arizona): Well, we can try.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1, and then No. 3.

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Deke Johnson, a delegate from Post 63, Idaho. I would like to withdraw my motion and any objection to referring to the Council of Administration.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You need to withdraw the second. Who made the second needs to withdraw it.

COMRADE BENNY BACHAND (Post 4287 - Florida): I made the second. I will withdraw the second.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: So you are withdrawing the motion?

COMRADE DANIEL JOHNSON (Post 63 - Idaho): That is correct.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let me ask the Parliamentarian what the proper situation is. We are back to what the Committee recommended, which was the original Committee's recommendation to refer to the Council of Administration for further study on expenses.

Are you ready to vote? All those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. Thank you for that discussion. It will be referred to the Council of Administration.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I will read those rejected by the Council:

No. 206, National Headquarters By-Law Compliance.

No. 207, Establish Diabetes Awareness Program and Campaign in Each Department of the VFW.

Resolution No. 208, Propose Schedule for Life Membership Fees.

No. 209, Recognize the Committee on "Homeless Veterans" as a Full Standing Committee.

No. 210, Members at Large.

No. 211, Amend National By-Laws Congressional Charter Section 5 - Membership.

No. 212, Life Dues Raise.

No. 214, Directed Toward VFW State & National Conventions in 2005.

No. 217, To Permit Posts to Report the Market Value of Bonds and Investments in Their Quarterly Report of Audit Rather Than Cost Value.

No. 219, Members at Large.

No. 221, Amend National By-Laws, Congressional Charter, Section 5 - Membership.

No. 222, Oppose Life Member Fee Increase.

No. 223, Discontinue the MIP Program Immediately.

No. 224, Prohibit the Use of the VFW Seal or Emblem by the

VFW Political Action Committee's Endorsed Candidates.

Those are the ones recommended to be rejected.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: you have heard those that have been recommended for rejection by the Committee.

Microphone No. 1 and then Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE STEPHEN GIBBS (Post 1753 - Nevada): I make a motion to accept No. 209.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We need a second to that.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGRAVE (Post 2350 - Nevada): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there any discussion on that motion to adopt?

COMRADE STEPHEN GIBBS (Post 1753 - Nevada): Commander-in-Chief, the Veterans of Foreign Wars under the Veterans Service Resolution, they asked for Congress to fully fund the "homeless veterans". The Veterans of Foreign Wars also talked about the "homeless veterans", the combat veterans, and really we do not have really a standing Committee on it. I feel that after thinking about this for a couple of years, we are asking the National Organization to make this into a Committee with Committee members from each state to go to Washington, D.C., to be able to discuss the plight of our homeless veterans and combat veterans who are the majority of the homeless veterans.

To be able to do this, you can transfer some of the appointments for some of the non-essentials that go to Washington, D.C., as far as chairmanship.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: On the motion, Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB WALLACE: Commander-in-Chief, I am Bob Wallace, delegate from Post 1851, New Jersey.

The Washington office has looked at this issue very closely. We have looked at it from the aspect of the fact that the homelessness goal is to get people back into society and get them into jobs, good jobs.

So we have made a recommendation to the incoming Commander-in-Chief that we create an Employment Homeless Committee that looks at the issue totally instead of looking at it piecemeal. You can't have one without the other. The last three or four years, we have been meeting together with them because of the fact the issues have to follow together and they have to work together.

The homeless person is an issue that we want them to get back into society, on the economic rolls. If we don't work hand-in-hand with employment, you are not going to achieve that. Our recommendation is that the new Commander-in-Chief make the Employment Committee, the employment of homeless, so they can look at the total picture of the veterans and total family, and, if necessary, we bring the valued Veterans Service to do what they do. Thank you.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, the Committee's decision was based on Section 615 of the by-laws which grants the Commander-in-Chief the authority to establish and disband Committees as may be appropriate. That was the reason we took that action.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Okay. The motion has been

made and seconded that we have a new Standing Committee, and the arguments for and against. The argument against was that the Employment Committee would now lift up the issue of homelessness and rename it the Employment Homeless Committee.

COMRADE STEPHEN GIBBS (Post 1753 - Nevada): Once again, I do agree with Bob Wallace of the Washington office.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for that. Thanks for the comments. Do you want to withdraw your motion?

COMRADE STEPHEN GIBBS (Post 1753 - Nevada): Yes. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, at this time I would withdraw my motion.

COMRADE MIKE MUSGRAVE (Post 2350 - Nevada): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I withdraw the second.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Those have been rejected. Is there any further discussion?

Microphone No. 2, and then Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I move for adoption of No. 223.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: No. 223 is to Discontinue the MIP Program Immediately. Is there a second to that motion?

Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DICK KENNEDY (Post 9534 - Department of Europe): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: It is properly before us for discussion.

I recognize Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Post 4051 - Colorado): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am John Lewis, Post 4051, Colorado, and a delegate to this convention, and presently serving on the National Council of Administration from District No. 13. I rise in support of the MIP Program, and I would like to explain to you why I do this.

It seems to me like there is some sort of a jealousy or envy here with some of the people because somebody got a white hat because of their particular program. We are supposed to set aside our petty jealousies. I have been the National MIP Recruiter of the Year five times in a row.

I have gone out to Fort Carson to welcome the soldiers home. I have gone out there late at night, early in the morning, to bid them goodbye. I have signed up over 1,700 people into the MIP Program. I understand at the present time it is close to about a 20-percent retention.

At one time it was less than that. Twenty percent of 1,700, somewhere around 800 members have put on the rolls of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I have taken the VFW message out to these people. If we don't have this kind of a program, how are we going to get the message out to the people? What kind of a program are we going to have to replace it with?

I can't be responsible for what they do in other Departments. I have used this MIP Program to recognize people in the State of Colorado who have been long-time members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and they have no way of ever getting a white hat.

I put in enough MIP people into their Post in order for a couple of people who have over 50 years in the Veterans of Foreign Wars and never been recognized for anything, I put the members into their Posts so they

could get a white hat. Now, if that white hat is something that people are jealous of or envious of, I feel sorry for those kind of people.

I am also wearing a different hat this morning. On my hat it says "Recruiter, Veterans of Foreign Wars Recruiter Program, Century Program." On the upper corner of my hat there is a number 12. That means that I have put 100 members or more into the Veterans of Foreign Wars 12 years or more.

I am not just working the MIP Program, I am also working for new and reinstated. But please don't do away with the MIP Program. Let us that are dedicated do the work and do the work for veterans.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let me give the Chair a chance to explain the Committee's action. Chairman Carney.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: The reason for rejection, there is a Commander's-in-Chief program intended to bring VFW awareness to our young men and women in service. It has been successful since its inception in 1999-2000, bringing an average of approximately 25,000 new members into the VFW each year.

Our retention rate of the MIP members has been increasing over the last few years, and is now at approximately 15 to 20-percent retention rate, with the renewing members being placed at most Departments-at-large programs. The All-American contest rules have changed for 2005-2006, requiring Posts, Districts and Departments to achieve 100 percent in paid membership members being placed in their Department and, therefore, will qualify for All-American Division.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for that explanation, Mr. Chairman.

Microphone No. 2, and then Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): While the MIP Program may apply to some states or Departments, it does not apply to every Department. MIP is not the program for the Department of Europe. We do not have the luxury of canteens and Post homes to supplement our Department budget.

We arrive at our budget strictly by fund-raising and membership. This body knows that the Department of Europe is very successful with recruiting new members. We had eight straight years of All-American Commanders with less than 100 MIPs per year. We do not like the program. There are other Departments out there that we have spoken with that also do not like the program. It takes money away from their membership coffers. The National instituted this program without a vote and since National will not discontinue this program without a vote, we urge you to do away with the MIP Program. It is a cash cow.

It costs too much money to run the program for the value of the money that is coming back into the program. Your stated 15-percent retention rate is rather on the low side. There is not that much money coming in from the MIP Program to empower us to continue it at the cost that it takes to run the program, that we need to use.

This was a nice experiment. It did not work, it does not work and is not the program that we need in our Membership Program to successfully raise your membership goals of 100 percent.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for those comments.

Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE RICHARD GOEBEL (Post 9663 - Iowa): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Richard Goebel, Post 9663, Department of Iowa. I am in opposition to the MIP Program. It puts members into the member-at-large, which does not help any Department, and also if you don't have a military organization in your state, it doesn't do you any good. There are very few states where it helps.

This gentleman that had five years continuous MIPs, if they would all be put in the program to start with, I am sure it would have been a much higher retention than 15 percent. I rise in opposition to this MIP Program and it should be cancelled and the member-at-large program should be cancelled. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for the comments.

Microphone No. 3, and then Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JIM KOKUS (Post 888 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, my name is Jim Kokus. I am with Post 888, Department of California. I recruited over 800 MIPs this year. Let me tell you why I stand in favor of the MIPs.

First of all, it is all about them. It is all about them being a part of this great organization. We sometimes have to set aside some of our pettiness. So we say we don't have a military base in our state. But, by golly, they should be part of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. They have earned the right.

We want them to come aboard with us and we want them to be part of this great, great organization that you and I and the rest of the comrades are a part. We should bring them into our organization where I recruit our members. It is not recruiting, because these people come and pull on my leg and say I want to belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I believe in what you do.

It is not about the bars anymore, it is about what you do. I can't take money from them where they are, because I am inside a military installation. They are coming back from a hostile environment. By golly, think about it. They are going to be our replacements. We need to bring them in.

They say they want to pay their dues when they get back home. They will. We have to keep telling them come back in. Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief, and thank you very much, comrades, for what you do.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for those comments.

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE RICHARD KENNEDY (Post 9534 - Department of Europe): I stand up and speak out as Commander in '92-'93. I understand this MIP is not the goal. Fifteen percent is not a good figure. We have stood up here and talked about budget constraints, money, travel, so on and so forth.

The MIP Program is costing this organization money. The car doesn't move forward on no benzine. For you-all, that is gasoline at $3 a gallon. This organization is worth belonging to, $25 is the annual fee. A private, my grandson, makes $4,000 a month. He is a Lance Corporal in the United States Marine Corps. That is all I have to say.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you.

Microphone No. 1.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN SMART: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am John Smart, Past Commander-in-Chief, and a member of Post 489, New Hampshire. I rise in opposition to this motion

to disband the MIP Program. It was the Smart-Gwizdak-Goldsmith years that instituted the MIP Program.

In our course of programs, you asked us to reach out. How are we going to publicize our organization and make individuals aware of our organization? We said what better way to reach out to those young men and women who now are serving in harm's way than to offer them an opportunity to learn what our organization was all about.

It was about Operation Uplink, it was about our VFW magazine. It was about our communicators, so they would have the means and opportunity to read about our organization and know what we stand for. It was an opportunity to have one year's dues paid by this organization.

No way did we ever foresee that this was going to be a membership program. I stand in opposition of having anything to do with the MIP Program, making it part of our membership. It is publicity, it is publicity, it is publicity. What better way can we have in an organization?

They want to talk about 15-percent retention rate. What they are not telling you, we are going to have a database available to us in the very near future of young men, young women that we know to be eligible for this organization that we are going to reach out to.

Many individuals in this room, including myself, didn't join the Veterans of Foreign Wars when we came home from our service. Many stand as they do, they want to seek an education, they want to find a good job and they want to establish a family.

I can assure you with the MIP Program we are going to plant a seed in those comrades and sisters today who serve in the armed forces, that we are an organization that cares for them, that works for them. When the time is right, whether it is five years for John Smart or whether it be ten years for somebody else in the audience, decides they want to join a fraternal organization, the VFW will be their choice.

We can only accomplish that through the MIP Program if we don't make it part of the membership program. Thank you, Comrade Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for your comments.

Microphone No. 3, and then Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE DICK MORRISON (Post 8334 - Nebraska): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Dick Morrison, State Commander of the Department of Nebraska. I speak in favor of the MIP Program. It has certainly been a tool for us over the years. I grew up the son of a World War II veteran and a grandson of a World War I veteran.

So, I knew what the VFW was the whole time I grew up, and when I returned from my service in Vietnam I became a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. These young returning veterans have not had the luxury of knowing what the Veterans of Foreign Wars is all about.

When these young heroes come back from overseas, I welcome them back and I thank them for their service. As a token of our appreciation for their service over there, we would like to introduce them to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and we do so by giving them one year's free membership.

I realize the figure we have heard right now is 15-percent retention, but that figure has been going up every year. Once again, I think it is a way to bring young veterans into our organization, the type of mem-

bership we are looking for. I can certainly appreciate that the members will go up each year as the years go by. Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you for your comments.

Microphone No. 2, and then Microphone No. 1.

COMRADE BRUCE WITHERS (Post 10436 - Department of Europe): I rise in opposition to the MIP Program for a couple of reasons. Number one, I have been Recruiter of the Year twice for this organization. The way I did that, I keep hearing we need to tell our potential eligibles what the VFW is all about.

Well, that is what a good recruiter is supposed to do. I go out there and when I recruit, I say I don't want you to join this organization until I tell you why you should join. I take that five to ten minutes to talk to that potential eligible to tell him why he should join.

I will tell you that over 95 percent of the people that I talk to join. I paid to join this organization and I will point to most people in this audience, and they didn't get a free membership. I didn't get one, and the Commander-in-Chief, with due respect, you didn't get a free membership.

Most of the Commanders-in-Chief in this room never got a free membership. We paid the price. Now, we are doing the right thing. If you look at the priority goals for the VFW for 2005, under the active duty paragraph, it says to increase the level of active duty pay to equal the pay of our civilian counterparts.

That is a good choice, and that is what we should be doing. Let's get our soldiers more money so they will turn around and pay to join this organization, because it doesn't cost that much. It will benefit them for the rest of their lives. I say do away with the MIP and let's get on with the VFW the way we are supposed to be.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1, and then Microphone No. 3.

COMRADE GLEN GARDNER (Post 3359 - Texas): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Glen Gardner, a delegate from Post 3359, Garland, Texas. I am the author of this proposed resolution, but I stand in opposition to the passage of this resolution the way it has been written.

The purposes for drawing this resolution, our Vice Commander-in-Chief, in his visit to our State Convention, were to allow it to have a forum at the convention and hear what the delegates had to say. I, too, probably am one of the ones that created the monster that we have by going to those in the leadership and saying the only way we are going to get a lot of MIP members if we make it part of the membership program.

Nobody is going to sign them up until they are out there getting some reward for it. It has grown, however, to become a monster. I think if we give our new Adjutant General and those in leadership positions in this organization an opportunity to look at it and make the program what we expected it to be from the beginning, then it can be a good program.

I don't believe it needs to be a part of the membership program. We, in Texas, sent our chaplain to Fort Hood two days a week for about five years. The first two years he signed up primarily MIP members. Then I had a Commander that came in and said we don't want any more MIP members, we want paying members of this organization.

So, we told the chaplain you go back to Fort Hood, but you don't

sign up any more MIP members. I told the chaplain if you have one person who says I can't afford to belong to the VFW, you fill out an application and you send it to me, and I will see that it is taken care of.

In three years, I did not receive one application, and the number of members that he signed up did not decrease from the MIPs to the paying members. The program needs to be used properly. I can assure you that passing these MIP cards out to 400 or 500 members of the armed forces and say fill them out and turn them in so that somebody can get awarded their All-American cap is not the proper way for the program to be handled.

I can also assure you that we are not getting good addresses when it is being used this way. But if you will recruit them, if they don't have the money and you want to make them a MIP member, that is fine, but fill the application out properly.

Seventy to eighty percent of the ones we get in the Department of Texas have bad addresses because they weren't filled out properly to start with. I think the program, if used properly, used by our service officers in some area as John McNeill has talked to me about, can continue to be a part of this organization.

But we have got to get it away from the MIP Program and use it the way it was supposed to be used when first brought up by the National Organization. I would ask the delegates to vote against this resolution and give the leadership the opportunity to make those changes, and if they are not made we will come back to this floor next year and I can assure you I will stand up here and support doing away with the MIP Program. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for your comments.

COMRADE DANA HUSSEY (Post 1772 - New Hampshire): I am Dana Hussey, Post 1772, New Hampshire, and a delegate to this convention. I, too, am opposed to Resolution 223. I love the MIP Program. I think it is a great program. I am against it being used as part of the membership program, however, the same as Glen Gardner.

I think what it does, it gives members throughout the country that don't have a lot of military bases, it gives them direction. A lot of people are saying they don't know what to do, don't know where to look. We know there are millions of members out there that have not been asked.

They have another direction to look. All we have in our state is the National Guard Reserve Units, and now we have an arena to go out and talk to them. We have other information to give them and things to talk about. As far as the free membership, it is not about a free membership.

If you get a 15-percent retention rate, I think that is great. If you get five years, I think that is great. I think the MIP Program is the Commander-in-Chief's program, and the membership program is, and I think it is the Commander-in-Chief's prerogative.

I think the Commanders at all levels tailor their membership programs on how they need to get the job done. I think the National Organization is doing a great job on the membership program, and I think we should leave that part alone because that is your job and we should try to work within that MIP system.

I think that if we all try to work our system with your system, that is going to work. But the MIP Program itself is not about free stuff. It is

about getting out and talking to the active-duty military and getting the job done. The MIP Program itself should be away from the All-American program, away from the membership program, and a separate program by itself. Thank you, Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for those comments.

I am going to recognize the Adjutant General and give him permission to speak from this microphone instead of that mike.

Adjutant General Senk.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. I am John Senk, Adjutant General, and a delegate from Post 335 in Cranford, New Jersey. My comrades, I rise in opposition to the motion on the floor. I can recall vividly when Past Commanders-in-Chief Smart, Gwizdak and Goldsmith sat at the office and we talked about this.

I said, you know, when I got my first computer, I got a free one-year subscription to AOL. At the end of that year, I got a renewal. It never crossed my mind not to keep it. Comrades, that's the seed that the MIP Program plants. It lets them find out who we are, what we are, and what we are all about.

Now, we are doing great strides with the Foundation and the Unmet Needs Program. I think we are going to see the number of retention rise. We are doing a great job under MAP and, comrades, just to set the record straight, we signed up from MIP this year 33,000 members.

Now, I have heard them say 15-percent retention. I think the retention rate is just a little bit higher. I have heard people say from the floor that they may not have a military base, but every town and every borough across this great land of ours has a Reserve or National Guard Unit. When those people are deployed, they are eligible also.

It is only a one-year membership. Hopefully, it allows them to learn about our organization and the good things we do. Again, comrades, I rise in opposition to the motion on the floor.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you.

Microphone No. 2, Dean White. It is your second time.

COMRADE DEAN WHITE (Post 27 - Department of Europe): I challenge Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart's contention that it is a marketing program and not a membership program. Every speaker since Past Commander-in-Chief Smart has said that this should not be in the membership program.

If it is not in the membership program, why is there an honor division in the membership program for All-Americans, for those Commanders that use the MIP Program? This program is definitely in our membership program. It is not or no longer a marketing tool, if that is what its intent was. We need to do away with it because it is not doing the job it was intended to do.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Microphone No. 1 for the second time.

COMRADE JOHN SMART (Post 489 - New Hampshire): I have never stood before this microphone and supported it as a membership program. I said we established this program for a marketing program to get our message out. In no way, if anybody in this hall misunderstands me, this does not belong in membership. It should not be a part of our All-

American program or even our state program.

The intent of this program, when we established it, was to get our message out to show those young men and women in the military what we do for them, what we stand for, and to encourage them to some day when they choose to join the fraternal organization, the VFW will be their choice. Make sure that the point was I don't support it as a membership program.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you for that point of order. Comrades, we can spend as much time as you want to spend on this one resolution. The resolution was to do away with the MIP Program. We will spend as much time as you want. Time is quickly getting away from us. Do I hear a call for the question?

...Cries of "question."...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let me set the record straight. Resolution 223 was to do away with the MIP Program.

If you approve that, you are to vote "aye". If you feel otherwise, that it should be fine-tuned and referred, then you would oppose that. Keep it, revise it and fine-tune it.

Again, if you vote "yes", you vote to do away with the Military Initiative Program.

COMRADE DAN CAMPUS (Post 1548 - Montana): I have something to say. I am Dan Campus, Commander-in-Chief. I am a service officer living in Montana, Post 1548. I did not even know there was this kind of National program. Yet I got two National awards from your organization for Rough Riders without even knowing about this program.

I get in the streets and I talk to them. I ask them. To be able to have these other successful people go to military bases, that is great. We have one over 300 miles away from me. I get them off the street. We have 2,500 people in our hometown. That is all.

We have the American Legion and if we don't ask them they don't join. I feel to be able to get an award from this, no. It is our duty as members. I am against the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The question is to do away with the MIP Program. The Parliamentarian says we need to vote on a call for the question. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

Now on the motion, Resolution 223, which will do away with the MIP Program, if you are in favor of doing away with the MIP Program vote "aye". If you are opposed, vote "no".

The "nays" have it. It is rejected, No. 223.

Mr. Chairman.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF CARNEY: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief, for allowing us to serve you and the organization.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I do dismiss this Committee with the understanding that whatever the next Committee is they know it is hard work. They know there are no easy answers. That was a tough Committee. Let's give them a round of applause, comrades. (Applause)

We have moved to the point where the Adjutant General will now introduce a motion that the proceedings of this106th National Convention be referred to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington.

SUBMISSION OF PROCEEDINGS TO THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, with your permission, I have two motions. The first one, Commander-in-Chief and delegates to this great convention, I move that the proceedings of the Veterans of Foreign Wars 106th National Convention be submitted to the Speaker of the House for printing as a House document in accordance with Public Law 620, 90th Congress, approved October 2, 1968, entitled 44 United States Code, Section 1332.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SODEN: I second it.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made and seconded by Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Soden. Is there any discussion? Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL HOME TRUSTEES

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. It is time to read the nominees for National Home. The Ninth National Home District, representing Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota, Larry L. Scudder, VFW Post 1273, South Dakota.

The Twelfth National Home District, representing California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, Mattie Alexander, Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 661 in Oregon, and Verna Cawood, Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW Post 1555, California.

NOMINATION OF COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We do not need a motion for that. Thank you for that, Adjutant General.

Comrades, this is a very nostalgic moment where I preside over the call for nominations for new officers. It is an exciting time for those new officers, those that you will nominate today and elect tomorrow and install tomorrow. It will be an exciting time as this organization moves into its 107th year.

Thank you for all of your hard work this year and allow me one more time, please give each a rousing VFW round of applause. You richly deserve it. (Applause) Thank you very much.

Are there nominations for Commander-in-Chief?

The chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief James H. "Jim" Goldsmith.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GOLDSMITH: Thank you, Commander. Commander-in-Chief Furgess, delegates to the106th National Convention, let me say it is indeed my pleasure to be with you this afternoon to nominate an individual who is a true American and a true veteran advocate, plus a very close friend of mine.

He is an individual whose integrity, honesty and trust will never be questioned. He is an individual who has made some tough decisions for his year as Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Some of them were not popular, but decisions that he felt were necessary for this organization.

He is an individual who has traveled throughout this great land of ours, from the northern parts of Minnesota to the southern parts of Texas, from California to the East Coast. He has represented this organization very well during his term as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and soon to be Commander-in-Chief. He will be one that will make a great Commander-in-Chief.

Comrade Mueller 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 VFW 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, Comrade Mueller served as the National Convention Chairman when the Veterans of Foreign Wars observed their 100th Anniversary in Kansas City, Missouri.

Over the years, he has been active in his community and his church. In 2000, he was named O'Fallon's Volunteer of the Year. In 1994, Comrade Mueller was presented an award for his outstanding loyalty and support of the O'Fallon Fire Protection District.

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.

Comrade Mueller and his wife, Patricia, have been married for over 40 years and have two children. They reside in O'Fallon, Missouri.

Comrades, it gives me great pleasure to nominate for Commander-in-Chief for 2005-2006, Comrade James Mueller from the great State of Missouri. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A great nomination. Is there a second for Commander-in-Chief? I recognize Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Soden from Illinois.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SODEN (Department of Illinois): Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. Today it is a great honor for me and a pleasure to rise before you to second the nomination of an outstanding American and comrade, a man who served with distinction on every level and every office that he has held.

He is from the "Show Me" state and he has shown everybody every step of the way the right way. He stands very tall. He is a tall individual. I don't know if he can sing or not, but I will tell you what, when he finishes his term of office he will stand ten feet tall in our eyes.

So, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I second the nomination of James Mueller for Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for 2005-2006. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Are there any other nominations for Commander-in-Chief? I see none. I hoped there would be none, Jim. How about you? The nominations remain open until tomorrow morning.

NOMINATION OF SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

The chair recognizes Past Commander-in-Chief "Gunner" Kent.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ALLEN KENT: Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, Members, Comrades to the 106th National Convention:

I am "Gunner" Kent, Past Commander-in-Chief and a delegate from Post 9972, Sierra Vista, Arizona. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to put in nomination for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief a comrade that has proven his dedication, his knowledge and his leadership while serving this great organization as our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the past year. Gary served in Vietnam in 1968 to 1969 with the 541st Transportation Company.

Upon returning back from Vietnam, he joined Post 1539 in Babbitt, Minnesota, where he achieved Post Commander and All-American Commander. He then became District 8 Commander, again achieving All-American Commander.

It wasn't cold enough in Minnesota, so he moved to Alaska. When he went to Alaska, he became the State Service Officer, the State Adjutant and Assistant Quartermaster for over 17 years. He has also served on the Alaska Veterans Advisory Committee, as well as many National Committees in Washington and the National Convention.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to put in nomination a comrade of the highest integrity, dedication an knowledge of Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Gary Kurpius, from the great State of Alaska. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second to that nomination? I see Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk.

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK: Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Ray Sisk, a delegate from Post 9791, Frazier Park, California, and a Past Commander-in-Chief. To the comrades

that are left in this room, I just want to step right up to this microphone and let you know right now we are so very proud of our candidate for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Never have I ever seen a comrade in this organization that has been respected as this man is by his comrades in his home state and his Western Conference, and in the Departments that he has had an opportunity to visit as your Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

Here is a comrade that is a triple crown winner, All-American. He has been a Service Officer for the Department for many years, and when

you ask Comrade Gary Kurpius a question, you will normally get a very good answer and a very knowledgeable answer.

That is the kind of leadership that we need and that is the kind of leadership that we will propose to give you if you vote for him for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. At this time let me assure you it is a very prideful step for me to come to this microphone and ask for your support for our candidate from the Western Conference, Gary Kurpius for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you Chief, for that second. Are there other nominations at this time for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief? Seeing none, they will remain open until tomorrow morning.

Is there now a nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

Past Commander-in-Chief Robert Wallace.

NOMINATION OF JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF BOB WALLACE: Thank you, Commander-in-Chief. Comrade Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, National Officers, my colleagues and in the ranks of Past Commanders-in-Chief, fellow delegates to the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States:

I am most pleased and honored to stand before you today representing my beloved Garden State and the great Eastern State Conference, and our candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the year 2005-2006. 9-11 changed the world. There is no doubt about it.

If you come to Washington, D.C., and visit our office, the world has changed. We are engaged in a global war on terrorism, but we are against people who hate, hate us because of what we stand for, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the Bill of Rights and our Constitution.

But just as 9-11 changed the world, it also changed the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. We have many new challenges, but numerous opportunities, challenges as to how we operate as an organization, how we define our programs, our role in homeland security, how we support those serving in the military today and their families; how we bring those young new veterans into our ranks. Also how we ensure that this nation never forgets those who have worn the uniform of this great nation.

This is a different war with different deployments of individuals and units, especially members of the National Guard and Reserves. This war is creating a different veteran. With all these challenges, though, comes some great opportunities or the VFW.

The key to seizing the moment and turning these challenges into opportunities for a stronger more viable VFW is our national elected leadership. They are our face to the public, our military, our government leaders, our members of the world.

If they do not understand the issues we face and if they do not think different, we will fail as an organization. That is why we of the Eastern Conference are so proud of our candidate for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. He is not afraid of change. He is not afraid to make tough decisions.

He knows how to lead. He does so by example. He is not in it

for himself, but for the good of the VFW and all those who we serve. He joined the VFW in 1971 as a Life Member of the Star Landing VFW Post No. 2314 in Carteret, New Jersey. He served four terms as Post Commander. He is Past District Commander and All-State Commander.

He served many years as New Jersey's Membership Director, so he truly understands the issues that you face on the local level. He is a past member of the National Council of Administration. He also served on the National Security, Legislative, POW Committees, and he chaired all three.

He is married, and he and his wife, Gloria, have one son and daughter, a stepdaughter, and one granddaughter, and they reside in Carteret, New Jersey. He is a Vietnam veteran of the 4th Infantry Division. He is also recipient of the Bronze Star, Vietnam Service Ribbon, Campaign Medal, National Defense Ribbon and, yes, my comrades, the Good Conduct Medal.

He retired in 2003 after 33 years with the Union Carbide Corporation as Site Services Coordinator. He now works or the State of New Jersey as an investigator for the Weights and Measures Division. He also served as a Real Estate Commissioner for the State of New Jersey.

Our candidate understands the issues we face. He understands the local issues and he understands the Washington issues, and he is able to speak out firmly with knowledge. He is truly someone who we all will be very, very proud of. In challenging times like this, we need leaders like him.

I know he will seize the moment for change and work closely with Commander-in-Chief Mueller and his Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Kurpius, and all of us as we move our beloved VFW forward.

My fellow VFW delegates, family and friends, I am extremely proud and honored to place in nomination the name of George J. Lisicki, Life Member of Post 2314, Carteret, New Jersey, in nomination for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 2005-2006. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Chief, for that great nomination. Now, is there a second to the nomination?

I recognize William "Bill" Goode, VFW Post 809, New Jersey.

COMRADE BILL GOODE (Post 809 - New Jersey): Thank you very much, Comrade Commander. My name is Bill Goode, a delegate from VFW Post 809, Little Ferry, New Jersey, Past State Commander. This is a day I have been dreaming about for a long time.

Seven years ago, George and I started on a campaign for his nomination for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. We traveled the eastern states, north and south, east and west. We went to Europe. It has been an experience I will never forget. In fact, I plan to write a book on it, "Traveling With George."

Another thing that this experience has taught me, I formed a friendship I will never, never forget. He has been a good friend, a good associate and I wish him the best. So I am proud to second the nomination of my friend George Lisicki for the high office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for 2005-2006.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Bill. Are there other nominations for Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief?

The election will be Thursday morning.

Is there now a nomination for Quartermaster General?

I see Past Quartermaster General Joe Ridgley from Post 8220, Belton, Missouri.

NOMINATION OF QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

COMRADE JOE RIDGLEY (Post 8220 - Missouri): Good morning, comrades. My name is Joe Ridgley. Standing behind me to do a joint nomination are four distinguished Adjutant Quartermasters from all four conferences. As most of you know, I recently retired from the VFW National Headquarters after 29 years, the past ten as your Quartermaster General.

I hope I understand after that many years what is actually required for the position. The Quartermaster General is the chief financial officer of the great organization. He not only directs and manages six Departments and a staff of almost a hundred employees, but at the National Headquarters he is also responsible for managing the VFW's $200 million investment portfolio, including the Life Membership Fund, preparing and executing an annual budget of nearly $80 million.

He is in charge of assuring that all expenses are properly accounted for and that financial statements, tax returns and other reports are in order. He is responsible for overseeing the VFW Insurance Department, the Supply Department, and the real estate in both Kansas City and Washington, D.C.

He also serves as administrator of all the employee benefit plans, including the VFW Pension Plan. He oversees the purchase of millions of dollars of goods and services and handles dozens of other financial management duties over the year. In addition, the Quartermaster General serves on the Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer of the VFW Foundation and also serves on the Board of Directors of the VFW National Home for Children. The job requires understanding of business, administration, accounting, actuarial principles, banking and investment management, real estate, taxation, insurance, personnel management and employee benefits.

I am extremely proud to rise and place in nomination the name of an individual who has the education, the broad range of experience, and most importantly, in my mind anyway, the honesty and integrity to serve as the Quartermaster General of this great organization. This comrade is Larry Maher.

Almost 11 years ago, as I was considering whom to appoint as Assistant Quartermaster General, I wanted to choose someone who was qualified and capable of succeeding me, not necessarily now but immediately if that became necessary. I had a lot of talented individuals working for me at the time that I had chosen.

Instead, because of the issues that were happening and the issues that we had to address in the future as an organization, I went outside the National Organization and chose Larry, because I believed he had the qualities this organization needed.

I learned in those ten years that I was right. I knew that he was smart, he understood business, accounting and actuarial principles, and knew tax and employment law. I also knew that as our outside legal coun-

sel for the previous 15 years he was familiar with this organization and the structure and with many of the issues we worked with on a daily basis.

What I didn't know was that he was the hardest working individual I have ever met, that he cared deeply about this organization and its members, and that his personal honesty and integrity are above reproach. No one is more qualified than Larry Maher to be Quartermaster General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I ask you all to join with me, as I place in nomination the name of Larry M. Maher for Quartermaster General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Joe, for that nomination. Is there a second?

COMRADE DAVID HELFREY (Post 5864 - Alabama): Comrade Commander-in-Chief and comrades, it is with great pride that I stand before you this afternoon, along with the four conferences, to recommend an individual who we know has the abilities and will do an outstanding job. He has very big shoes to fill from before, but I am confident he has the ability to fill those shoes.

It is a great privilege to second the nomination of Larry Maher for Quartermaster General for the year 2005-2006. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Are there any other nominations for Quartermaster General? Seeing none, the election will be tomorrow morning, Thursday morning. Is there a nomination now for Judge Advocate General?

I recognize Past Commander-in-Chief Paul Spera from Massachusetts.

NOMINATION OF JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF PAUL SPERA: Thank you. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates for this Convention:

It is a privilege for me to rise on behalf of the delegates of the Eastern States Conference to present for your consideration and place into nomination the name of an individual who has earned his eligibility and his professional life and has brought himself to a point in time where he is fully qualified to be the Judge Advocate General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He joined the United States Army in 1962 and from 1962 to 1965 he served in the Army Security Agency. He earned his VFW eligibility in Vietnam with the First Calvary Division. He graduated from law school. He is able to practice law in Massachusetts and New Hampshire and also before the U.S. District Court in New Hampshire, the Supreme Court in New Hampshire, and also the United States Supreme Court.

He has been in private practice since 1972. He has been the Post Advocate of his Post 8214 in Manchester, New Hampshire. He has served the Department of New Hampshire as the Judge Advocate from 1996 to 2002, and again from 2003 to 2004. It is with pride that I place into nomination the name of Richard W. Therrien for Judge Advocate General for the year 2005-2006.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second now to that nomination?

I recognize Richard Young, Commander of the Department

of New Hampshire.

COMRADE RICHARD YOUNG (Department of New Hampshire): Good morning, comrades. When we started in this endeavor a while back, Dick and I had a long talk and we decided we needed a campaign manager, and only one guy we could settle on, and that was Past National Council member Paul Chevalier.

We started on this endeavor and Paul called me. He said, "Rich, we have a problem." He said, "How are we going to get him out of New Hampshire? We need to get him a passport." I got him a passport to drive to the Eastern State Conferences. We were successful in winning the endorsement.

Therefore, on behalf of all my comrades in the Eastern State Conference, those members of the great State of New Hampshire, it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination for Judge Advocate General Richard Therrien for the high office of National Judge Advocate General for the year 2005-2006.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you. Are there other nominations for Judge Advocate General? Seeing none the election will be tomorrow.

Is there a nomination now for Surgeon General?

I recognize Ray Sisk, Past Commander-in-Chief from California.

NOMINATION OF SURGEON GENERAL

PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF RAY SISK: Thank you very much, Commander-in-Chief. And again, my good comrades, I rise to ask for some consideration for the Surgeon General this year for our candidate from the Western Conference. We are pleased and happy we have a qualified candidate, and it was very little question about who we needed to run from our conference.

I would like to tell you a little bit about our comrade. She is an Air Force Flight Nurse, serving in Operation Desert Storm. She was awarded the Achievement Award, Kuwait Liberation Award, Southwest Asia Medal. This was in 1991.

She has helped me become an All-American Post Commander and an All-American District Commander in California, and she has been California State Surgeon from 1997 to 2003. She has been an All-State Quartermaster three times, National Aide-de-Camp, served on various other Committees.

Her work history, she was a nurse for America VA Medical Center in Tacoma, Washington, from 1978 through 1989, and I will guarantee you the compassion that she has for veterans you could never guess. She just certainly admires all of the heroes like you that are out there in this audience, and she has shown it in so many ways.

She has been the Director of Nurses at the Barstow Veterans Home in Barstow, California, from 1998 to 2000, and right now they think so much of her that she is the Health Facility Evaluator Nurse for the State of California. That is what she is doing now.

She does a tremendous job at all of the California conventions and mid-winters with her blood pressure testing and making sure that the

health of you comrades are looked after, and tries to give you some good advice. So, at this time it gives me a great deal of pleasure to present our candidate from the Western Conference in nomination, the name of Linda Fairbank for Surgeon General of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Linda Fairbank has been nominated for National Surgeon General. Is there a second to that nomination?

I recognize Microphone No. 2.

COMRADE JOE VELASQUEZ (Post 5059 - California): Good morning. Commander-in-Chief, National Officers, and Delegates to this Convention, I rise to second the nomination of Linda Fairbank. Due to the fact I am impaired and there not being a ramp to the dais, I request your permission to do it from down here, sir.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: You have it, Joe.

COMRADE JOE VELASQUEZ (Post 5059 - California): Thank you very much. I don't want to make a point that they are not in ADA compliance or anything.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Your point of order is well taken, sir.

COMRADE JOE VELASQUEZ (Post 5059 - California): Comrades at this convention, Linda Fairbank has proven herself to be an outstanding patient advocate. We all have been in the Veterans Hospitals and other hospitals, and you know a lot of times you are treated as a number and not as a person.

This wonderful comrade we have up here is indeed a patient's advocate. She is a true honor to us as one of our members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I am proud to second her nomination as Surgeon General.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Joe. Are there other nominations? The election will be tomorrow morning. Is there now a nomination for National Chaplain?

I recognize Chuck Huckaby, Past Commander of Oklahoma, Post 9904.

COMRADE CHUCK HUCKABEY (Post 9904 - Oklahoma): Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates to the 106th National Convention:

I come before you to place in nomination for our high office of National Chaplain a man who is well-qualified. His experience of 30 years as a pastor, from 1970 to 1976 he was a minister of the Bessie Baptist Church in Bessie, Oklahoma. In 1976 to the present, he is the minister of the First Baptist Church in Eufaula.

He has been employed by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission from 2004 to the present time. He has also been the Department Adjutant for the VAV of Oklahoma for 2003-2004. He was a member of the Southwest Oklahoma Development Authority from 1989 to 2003.

He was a Highway Safety Coordinator and Training Counselor. In 1985 to 1988, he was employed at the Clinton Regional Hospital at Clinton, Oklahoma, as a business office manager. He attended Southwestern State College in Oklahoma, and he also attended the Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary at Ft. Worth, Texas.

His military record, he served in the United States Army from 1966 to 1969, and he served two years in Vietnam. He is on the

Oklahoma War Veterans Commission. This is his third term. He is a Past National Chaplain of the VFW, 1997-'98, and at that time I had the privilege to cast the vote for this comrade.

He was a Past Department Commander of Oklahoma, 1996-'97. He is our State Chaplain for the Department of Oklahoma, 1998 to the present. I have had the honor to nominate him for all the terms, I think. He is a Southern Conference Chaplain from 1999 to the present time.

He has been our National Council member for District 10 in 2004. It gives me a great honor to put in nomination from the Southern Conference and the Department of Oklahoma the Reverend Dean Derieg, Chaplain for 2005-2006.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Dean Derieg has been nominated for National Chaplain. Are there any other nominations at this time? Seeing none, nominations will remain open until tomorrow morning. We will convene at 9:00 o'clock a.m. in the morning.

The Adjutant General has an announcement, and I would like to make two quick ones.

...Convention announcements. ...

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Sergeant-at-Arms, we will have the Closing Ceremonies.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Theodore Bowers gave the Closing Prayer at this time, followed by the Salute to the Colors.)

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Sergeant-at-Arms. We stand in recess until 9:00 a.m., Thursday morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly recessed at 1:00 p.m.)

THIRD BUSINESS SESSION
THURSDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 2005

(The Third Business Session of the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, was called to order in the Salt Palace Convention Center, Salt Lake City, Utah, at 9:00 a.m., with Commander-in-Chief John Furgess presiding.)

CALL TO ORDER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the room for the Salute to the Colors.

SALUTE TO COLORS AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

NATIONAL SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrades, all rise, please.

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

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Bowers gave the Opening Prayer.)

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, and be seated. Comrades, Ladies and families, I would like at this time to officially dismiss our Resolutions Committee. They have worked hard as all of our Committees at this convention, and I would like to call at this time for his final report of the Credentials Committee, Chairman Butters.

FINAL REPORT OF CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

COMRADE DAVID BUTTERS (Post 475 - Delaware): Commander-in-Chief, this is my Final Credentials Report for this 106th National Convention. As of the close of business yesterday, August 24th, the total delegates were 9,980. Added to that are the total Department Commanders of 51; the total Past Commanders-in-Chief, 27; total National Officers, 38. That is for a grand total of 10,096.

Assuming a 100-percent vote of all the delegates, a simple majority needed is 5,049. A two-thirds majority is 6,731. That is the report.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's greet the Credentials Committee. They have worked very hard all week and did an outstanding job. Thank you, David. (Applause)

I want to officially dismiss our Parliamentarian. Ed Burnham has performed those duties for many years. He is a jewel. At one time the other day, there were three guys whispering in two ears, but Ed Burnham is solid. He knows his by-laws frontwards and backwards.

Ed, would you, please, stand and be recognized. Let's recognize Ed Burnham, comrades. (Applause)

COMRADE ED BURNHAM: Thank you, Chief. It has been a privilege to serve you and our organization. Thank you.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Ed. I want to recognize a very special group this morning -- there is that word again --

the National Honor Guard. They are literally known worldwide, because they are so visible at Arlington National Cemetery Memorial Day activities, and so many other activities representing this great organization around the world.

At this time I would like for you comrades to give them a round of applause at this time. (Applause) Thank you, gentlemen, for your service. (Applause)

As these old Tough Riders of 2004-2005 fade into VFW history, please allow me a final moment of reflection as "Celebration of Service" yields to "Proud to Serve." As the hour comes that we must part, please recall these statements to your mind as you travel to your homes today and tomorrow and over the weekend.

To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan. To honor the dead by helping the living. To keep 'em smiling in beds of white. Duty, honor and country.

From Father Flanigan at Boys Town, "He is not my father, he is my brother." As the U.S. Ambassador said last December, "Welcome, VFW, to my area." As the Commanding General Operation Iraqi Freedom said 22 days ago, "Welcome, VFW, to Baghdad." Team VFW. From that Army Ritual 2005, let's continue the march.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We move now into the Election of Officers, to close out one year and to begin another great year. The nominations are now open for the office of Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday, the name of James Mueller 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 from Missouri, Jim Holmes.

COMRADE JIM HOLMES (Post 5717 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Holmes, Post 5717, Kearney, Missouri, and State Commander. I move the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Jim Mueller for the office of Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year.

COMRADE JESSE JONES (Post 2657 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jesse Jones, Post 2657, Department of Missouri. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made and seconded. Those in favor of the motion will vote "aye"; those opposed "no" . It is unanimous.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and comrades to this convention, it is my pleasure to cast one unanimous ballot for the Commander-in-Chief, and I cast this one ballot for James Mueller for Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Let's hear it for this outstanding family, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: My fellow comrades, I am just going to make a few brief remarks right now and my accep-

tance speech will come later. I stand before these delegates at the 106th National Convention with deep humility, and I am profoundly grateful for the trust and confidence that you have placed in me.

I assure you that I, along with the other National Officers that you have elected, stand ready and prepared to serve this great organization of ours. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honor that you have bestowed upon me. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The nominations are now open for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Yesterday the name of Gary Kurpius from Alaska was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes the Department of Alaska Commander, Calvin Pope.

COMRADE CALVIN POPE (Post 9635 - Alaska): Commander-in-Chief, I am Calvin Pope from the Department of Alaska, Post 9635. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Gary Kurpius for the office of Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made. Is there a second?

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Hearing a second, those in favor will say "aye"; all those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it. It is unanimous.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, it is an extreme pleasure for me to cast one ballot for the unanimous selection of Gary Kurpius from Alaska for Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT KURPIUS: Good morning, Comrades, Sisters and Guests:

First of all, I want to thank the very many individuals that got me to this position. There are so many to thank. First of all, I would like to start off with my home Post, 9635, Alaska, and the complete delegation from Alaska, the complete Department. You have done an outstanding job, and all of the rest of the good comrades from all the Departments, thank you so much for your support.

I also would like to recognize my fiancee, Nancy Ramsey. Thank you so very much for all your support and you know how important the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the work that I am involved in, and I thank you, Nancy, for your continuous support.

Nancy is my fiancee and we will be getting married on November 25th. You are all invited. We are going to Las Vegas. How is that? I will tell you what, comrades, this past year has been a tremendous experience. Sometimes I thought I was on a merry-go-round.

Other times I thought I was on a roller coaster because we certainly went around at times and we certainly had our ups and downs. I will tell you what, it was never boring. I think the national staff has learned something here that does the scheduling that they keep us out on the road and we will not be in Kansas City to bother them, probably.

That is not true. They do an outstanding job in Washington,

D.C., and Kansas City. I certainly appreciate all their support this past year. I know I will continue to get it in the future two years, and I know all you comrades can depend upon that also.

It is great to get out there in the field and meet all the dedicated men and women that are doing all the things that are so close to our heart, promoting the membership, doing our patriotic Voice of Democracy, our activities and community service, and see how energetic they are. You are great.

I want to thank you for all the courtesies that you have extended to me in my travels. We have had a little bit of changes that are happening in our organization. I promise to you, comrades, here at the start of my second year in the chairs, as your Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, in order to improve and strengthen this finest veterans service organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, we need to adapt to change.

We need to draw closer to our active duty members and our Guard and Reserve Units. We need to streamline, we need to change some of our programs. We need to take a look at what we do in community service. We need to work closely with Secretary Jim Nicholson and get them to prepare a budget that covers our health-care needs.

I promise you, comrades, that I will work very closely with Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, George Lisicki and each and every one so that we can accomplish these things. Once again, comrades, I want to thank you for electing me to this vitally-important position, and I would like to close by a statement that Harry Truman made about the greatest epitaph on a gravestone in the United States which is located in Tombstone, Arizona.

The epitaph says, "Here lies Jack Williams. He done his darnedest." Comrades, that is all I ask of you and as we walk together as a team, Jim, myself and George, and each and every one of you that we all do our darnedest this year for the veterans of this country. God bless you, God bless this great organization, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Gary. Comrades, allow me a moment of personal privilege, as I ask them to stand as a group, the great comrades from the Volunteer State of Tennessee. (Applause)

Yesterday, the name of George Lisicki was placed in nomination for the office of Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief for the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Is there any other nomination? Is there any other nomination? Is there any other nomination?

Hearing none, I recognize the Department Commander from New Jersey, William Grieman.

COMRADE WILLIAM GRIEMAN (Department of New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I move that nominations cease and the Adjutant General be instructed to cast one unanimous ballot for the next Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, George Lisicki.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second to that motion?

COMRADE BRUCE HEFLAND (Post 7677 - New Jersey): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, it gives me an honor and privilege to sec-

ond that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: A proper motion and second has been made. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". It is unanimously approved. George Lisicki from New Jersey has been elected.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and my Comrades: It is an extreme honor for me as the Adjutant General and one of my last official acts to cast one ballot for a gentleman I have watched come through the chairs in New Jersey. He is going to make an outstanding leader, George Lisicki. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Junior Vice Commander-Elect, I request the honor and privilege to escort you, your family and your friends around the convention hall, sir.

JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT LISICKI: Delegates to the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I stand before you this morning a very humble man to be elected to the high office of the greatest veterans organization in the world, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I would like to thank my Post, Post 2314, Carteret, New Jersey, District 8, New Jersey, to the Department of New Jersey, the Eastern States Conference for your endorsement, and many thanks to the Big Ten Conference, the Western Conference, the Southern Conference for your confirmation.

It is two very special people that I would like to thank here this morning, my two mentors. One is not with us here this morning, but I know he is here in spirit, and I speak of the late Howard E. Vander Clute, Past Commander-in-Chief. Howard, we made it. Howard's lovely wife, Susan, is here representing Howard. Susan, we are glad to have you here this morning.

The other is Past Commander-in-Chief Robert E. Wallace, the Executive Director of our Washington office. Bob, thank you so much for your guidance and support. The one person responsible for me being here this morning, I wouldn't be here without her support, my lovely wife, Gloria.

I want to thank my traveling companion, my campaign manager, probably the best friend a man could ask, All-American candidate Commander from the Department of New Jersey, Bill Goode. He has already asked me to appoint him as the national plumber. Bill, we are working on this, but we will have to bring that before the Budget Committee. (Laughter)

I would also like to thank the National Color Guard, 2005, from the Department of New Jersey. Thank you so very much. To the Commander-in-Chief, I would like to congratulate you and your staff and team for an outstanding job this year as our leader here of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

I would like to personally thank you for all the courtesies you have extended to me since my endorsement this past November by the Eastern States Conference, allowing me to be a part of this team and in the planning of the future of this organization.

To Commander-in-Chief-Elect Jim Mueller, Jim, thank you so much for making me a part of your team, a part of the planning, confidence you have placed in me, allowing me to be a part of what this orga-

nization's future will be and what we will have to do.

Along with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius, thank you for all your help and guidance. Like yesterday morning, at the All-American Club, the guy that was there to let me know at the last minute I was going to install him and he went through the same thing the year before, but Gary, thank you for your help on that.

Comrades, I look forward to working on the Mueller-Kurpius-Lisicki team, 2005-2006. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is an organization of the future. We are looking forward to great strides in this organization. As was mentioned earlier, change may be needed in this organization.

We are facing a new era in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Our Chief and his team almost put us over the top this year. He put that flag up there with his Tough Riders. The Mueller team will be able to grab that flag and put it over the top this year, and we will be a 100-percent national organization this year. We can guarantee you that, can't we, Commander-in-Chief?

In closing, thank you very much for the confidence you have placed in me. God speed to each and every one of you. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The nominations are open for Quartermaster General. Yesterday the name of Larry Maher was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes the Commander of Missouri, Jim Holmes.

COMRADE JIM HOLMES (Post 5727 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jim Holmes, Post 5727, Kearney, Missouri, State Commander of Missouri. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Larry Maher for the office of Quartermaster General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We have a motion. Is there a second?

COMRADE JESSE JONES (Post 2657 - Missouri): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Jesse Jones, Post 2657, Department of Missouri. I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, you have a motion and a second. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and Comrades, the Adjutant General casts one unanimous ballot for the election of Larry Maher as the Quartermaster General. Let me add, we are going to finally hear from the Navy.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade Quartermaster General-Elect, I request the honor and privilege to escort you, your family and friends around the convention hall.

QUARTERMASTER GENERAL-ELECT MAHER: Good morning, comrades. It has been a long week, and I don't intend to take time with long-winded remarks. We have already cussed and discussed quite a bit already this week anyhow. I want to thank you for the trust you have shown in electing me to this position, which I think is the ultimate position of trust in our organization. I promise you that I will never do any-

thing to violate that trust.

To outgoing Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, this past year wasn't always a bed or roses for either of us, but I will always appreciate what you have done for me. You won't regret that. More importantly, I appreciate the job that you have done for this great organization. You have always, always handled everything like the true gentleman that you are, a true gentleman to the core. (Applause)

To Jim Mueller, I look forward to working with you. Frankly, you are probably the most dedicated and conscientious person I know. Because of those two important attributes, I know you will do a great job. People that know you, know that what you say and what you do comes from the heart, and frankly there is no finer compliment I can pay to anybody.

I also look forward to working with Gary Kurpius, our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, and our Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki. They realize the things we do this year and over the next several years will be important to the future of our organization, and they stand ready to plan for that future, and that is very important.

Finally, I look forward to working with "Gunner" Kent and his staff, and all of the members of the Council of Administration and all of the Departments at the National Headquarters. As an organization, we have our work cut out for us, but I know as we work together we can solve problems rather than create them, and together we can move this great organization forward.

Everybody wants to make their thanks, and I have three that I want to make this morning. First, I want to thank Joe Ridgley for the opportunity he gave me to be a part of the National Headquarters in this great organization. Secondly, I want to thank my comrades in the Department of Missouri. They have stood by me through a lot of times over the last 11 years. They are truly good people. They really are.

Finally, I guess I better thank my wife, Judy, for a couple of things, among other things, a couple of things, listening to my occasional rants, and they are occasional and they are rants, and secondly, trying to keep things in perspectives. She does a great thing at both.

Again, thank you for your confidence you have placed in me and I will promise you I will do the best job I can for this organization. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, the nominations are now open for the office of Judge Advocate General. Yesterday, the name of Richard Therrien was placed in nomination. Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations? Are there any other nominations?

The chair recognizes the Commander from New Hampshire, Richard Young.

COMRADE RICHARD YOUNG (Post 1631 - New Hampshire): I move the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General case one unanimous ballot for Richard F. Therrien for the office of Judge Advocate General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We have a motion. Do we have a second?

COMRADE DAN HUSSEY (Post 1772 - New Hampshire): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I proudly second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been properly made and seconded. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed. The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and Comrades: The Adjutant General is pleased to cast one unanimous ballot for Richard Therrien from New Hampshire.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Judges don't get applause very often. Let's hear it for the Judge Advocate General. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Judge Advocate General-Elect, I request the honor and privilege to escort you, your family and friends around the delegation hall, sir. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, the nominations are now open for the office of Surgeon General. Yesterday the name of Linda Fairbank 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 from California, Shirley Shaw.

COMRADE SHIRLEY SHAW (Post 4647 - California): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Shirley Shaw, Post 4647, State Commander of the Department of California. I move that the nominations be closed and that the Adjutant General cast one unanimous ballot for Linda Fairbank for the office of Surgeon General for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made. Is there a second?

COMRADE JOHN LEWIS (Post 2111 - California): I second the nomination.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: On the motion and second, comrades, those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed "no". The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and Comrades: It gives me great pleasure to cast one unanimous ballot for Linda Fairbank for the high office of Surgeon General of this organization for the ensuing year.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Comrade National Surgeon-Elect, I request the honor and privilege to escort you, your family and friends around the convention hall.

SURGEON GENERAL-ELECT FAIRBANK: Commander-in-Chief Mueller, National Officers, Past Commanders-in-Chief, Distinguished Members and Guests, and Fellow Delegates:

First of all, I would like to thank all my friends and comrades in the great Department of California for all your support through these years. I would like to especially thank Past Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk and Past Supreme Commander Roland Joe Velasquez for your belief in me.

I would like to thank my husband, Ray Fairbank, for going on this journey that we have traveled. I would like to thank the Western Conference, and particularly the Departments of Arizona and the Pacific Areas for their early endorsement of my candidacy.

I would like to thank the Big Ten, the Southern Conference and the Eastern Conference for your endorsements. I am looking forward to working with you this year, and it will be an honor to serve the Veterans of Foreign Wars as your Surgeon General. Thank you, comrades.

COMRADE RAY FAIRBANK: I always had said the best man for the

job is my wife, Linda Fairbank.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, another moment of personal privilege as I recognize two very outstanding VFW workers in the greatest sense of the word, the outgoing National Chief of Staff from Tennessee, Ronnie Davis, and the outgoing Inspector General from South Carolina, Bill Jolin. (Applause)

The outgoing Surgeon General will be installed as a new Council of Administration member. I want to thank Steve O'Connor, the National Chaplain, Ted Bowers, and the Judge Advocate General Wayne Thompson. Thank you so very much. (Applause)

The nominations are now open for the office of National Chaplain. Yesterday the name of W. Dean Derieg 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 Oklahoma, Darrell McGee.

COMRADE DARRELL McGEE (Post 5263 - Oklahoma): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am Darrell McGee, Post 5263, Commander of the State of Oklahoma. I move that the nominations be closed and the Adjutant General cast one unanimous vote for Dean Derieg for the office of National Chaplain for the ensuing year.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Is there a second?

COMRADE RICHARD ELAMORE (Post 9265 - Oklahoma): I second the motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The motion has been made and seconded. Those in favor will vote "aye"; those opposed " n o " . The "ayes" have it.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief and my Comrades: It gives me extreme pleasure to cast one unanimous ballot for the election of Dean Derieg as National Chaplain for the ensuing year. (Applause)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: National Chaplain-Elect, I request your pleasure to escort you, your family and friends around the convention hall.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN-ELECT DERIEG: This looks like a congregation in my Baptist church on Sunday morning. I want to thank you, the members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States of America, the Southern Conference, and my home state of Oklahoma.

I want to thank you for the honor that you have bestowed upon me today. Tradition tells me that when I stood before the ordination board, they placed their hand upon my shoulder and one deacon, 97 years old, whispered in my ear and said very simply: "Remember, son, there is no such thing as a bad short sermon." (Laughter)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Chaplain. Adjutant General Senk.

PLACEMENT OF CAPS AND PINS ON ELECTED OFFICERS

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Commander-in-Chief, at this time we will go into the placement of caps, pins and badges by wives or signif-

icant others. At this time, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to bring to this podium a lady whom I have grown to really love, I cherish her friendship, and I speak of none other than our Commander-in-Chief's lovely wife, Alma.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, as Alma comes forward for a very special presentation, we overlooked something, and I want to apologize. The Judge Advocate General duly elected, a great parade, and we didn't let him speak. Let's let the Judge say hello.

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL-ELECT THERRIEN: In the manner of a few words, not having spoken at all, is something that I think should not happen. Be that as it may, I just wanted to say thank you to all of those that helped me get to this position. I thank you for your confidence and trust. I thank the Eastern States Conference, the Department of New Hampshire, and especially friends that have helped me along the way, Paul Chevalier, Past National Council member, Rick Young, Department Commander of New Hampshire, and on the Ladies side, Elizabeth Castracan. Thank you all so very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Thank you, Judge. We do apologize for the oversight. I am going to remove this pin that says "Commander-in-Chief."

(Whereupon, Mrs. Furgess presented the cap and pin to Immediate Past Commander-in-Chief Furgess.)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Oh, a Gold Life Member card. Thank you, comrades. This is very, very special. Thank you so much. Thank you, Alma.

I am going to call up now the Commander-in-Chief-Elect for a very special presentation. I know you are going to wear this with pride from the bottom of the hill to the top of the hill. Let's greet the Commander-in-Chief-Elect Jim Mueller from Missouri. (Applause)

Pat at this time has a very special other p presentation as she presents the cap, the Veterans of Foreign Wars official cap, that says "Commander-in-Chief '05-06." (Applause) a

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: I will be honored to make this presentation to Gary. This is the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief's pin. I just want to say to Gary, I thank you for all the support you have given me this last year, your friendship, and sometimes you don't know what Gary is going to come up with. Gary, thank you. (Applause)

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT KURPIUS: George, it is a great honor to welcome you to the team as Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief. George was officially elected today, but he was working as a team all year. He has done an outstanding job and we are looking for great things from George. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: We overlooked the placement of the cap on the new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief. Nancy, come forward for a very special cap placement.

SENIOR VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF KURPIUS: I didn't want to wear two hats, comrades. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The cap for the new Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief is by Ms. Gloria Lisicki.

Judy, will you come forward, Judy Maher, for a very special cap placement on the Quartermaster General, Larry Maher. (Applause)

Judge Advocate General, for his cap placement at this time. (Applause)

The Surgeon General, Linda, for her cap placement. (Applause)

The National Chaplain for his cap placement.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: The Chaplain has asked that I place his cap on his head. It is a great pleasure for me to do that. Having served with Dean, I know he will do us a fine job. By doing this, I want to make sure I am in his prayers. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: The cap placement for the incoming Adjutant General will be placed by Commander-in-Chief Jim Mueller, "Gunner" Kent.

ADJUTANT GENERAL-ELECT KENT: I have a wife, but she is being installed as the Patriotic Instructor for the Ladies Auxiliary. She can't be in two places at once. Thank you. (Applause)

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: "Gunner", we understand that. Thank you so very much.

The Adjutant General will now read the names of the Council Members-Elect for the ensuing year.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS-ELECT

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Council members, as I read your name, please rise and take three steps forward, and do an about face.

District No. 1	-	Billy J. Floyd
District No. 3	-	Ronald Dickens
District No. 5	-	Paul Jones
District No. 7	-	Michael Penney
District No. 9	-	Arthur Shull
District No. 11	-	William Desplanque
District No. 13	-	Steve Phelps
District No. 15	-	Jesus Gonzalez
District No. 17	-	Dennis Guthrie
District No. 19	-	Charles Wiggins
District No. 21	-	Stephen O'Connor
District No. 23	-	Jack Pickard
District A	-	Frank Lopes
District B	-	Charles Brimm
District C	-	Jim Longendyke
District G	-	John Fitzke
District J	-	Eugene LeShore

Will the rest of the Council members please join the group standing. Take a step forward and do an about face.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTMENTS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ELECT

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I will now call on the Commander-in-Chief-Elect for his announcement of appointments for Adjutant General, National Chief of Staff, Inspector General and National Sergeant-at-Arms.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: My fellow comrades and guests, I have asked Allen "Gunner" Kent to serve as my Adjutant General.

As National Chief of Staff, John I. Dahman.

For Inspector General, Dan Petersen, and for National Sergeant-at-Arms, Barry Hoffman.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: Comrades, at this point it is a great honor to announce that we will now proceed with the Installation of Officers for the ensuing year, 2005-2006.

National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will escort the Installing Officer to a position on my right.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: Yes, sir, Commander-in-Chief. Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I have the great honor and pleasure to escort to your right Past Commander-in-Chief George Cramer, who has been officially appointed to install the officers for today's convention.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Thank you. Good morning. 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 FURGESS: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Have the books of the Adjutant General and Quartermaster General been examined and approved by the National Council of Administration?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: They have.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Does the Adjutant General have on file proof of eligibility of all officers to be installed during this installation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: He does.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: I would like to remind any officer not having proof of eligibility on file and not being installed at this time, that the by-laws prescribe you must within 60 days of election or appointment submit to the Adjutant General for his file a copy of your proof of eligibility.

Are the funds in the hands of the Quartermaster General ready to be turned over to his successor when duly installed?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: They are.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Do you have the charter in your possession?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF FURGESS: I do.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: You will now surrender the gavel to me.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Past Commander-in-Chief John Furgess, you have now been relieved of your duties as Commander-in-Chief of this organization. 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 that you have gained

during your term of office. You will now station yourself to my right.

Before I continue, Past Commander-in-Chief Furgess, you kind of coined a phrase at this convention, and I would just like one more time to use your phrase by saying I think you did a heck of a job for this organization last year, and we owe you a debt of gratitude. One more time.

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

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.

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

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: With the swearing in of my successor, as provided for in the National By-Laws, I will vacate my chair and my successor will take over.

Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Gary Kurpius.

Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, George Lisicki.

Adjutant General, "Gunner" Kent.

Quartermaster General, Larry Maher.

Judge Advocate General, Richard Therrien.

Surgeon General, Linda Fairbank.

National Chaplain, Dean Derieg.

Comrades, last but certainly not least, our Commander-in-Chief for the ensuing year, James R. Mueller.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS HOFFMAN: I have all the officers for the installation ceremony.

ADJUTANT GENERAL SENK: Comrade Installing Officer, at this time the officers-elect are in place and awaiting their installation. I will relinquish this back to you, George. I again say I will be leaving the table and down here to watch the ceremonies. Thank you all and God bless you. (Applause)

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Thank you, John. 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 or the shoulder of a comrade in front of you, 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, if so ordered by proper authority, that 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.")

National Chaplain.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN BOWERS: 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 amongst us. Grant the wisdom unto them so that during their deliberations they continue to favor Thee, our glorious country and to better our 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 CRAMER: National Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now escort the officers to their respective stations. Comrades and Sisters in the room, you may be seated. I would suggest that the National Officers remain standing.

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. Learn well responsibilities entrusted so that you may intelligently discharge the duties you are to undertake.

The Constitution, Ritual and the By-Laws of our organization prescribe in detail the duties of your respective offices. By virtue of the confidence placed in you through your election or through your appointment, we assume that you will acquaint yourselves thoroughly with your duties. You may now be seated.

Comrade Commander-in-Chief-Elect James Mueller, before administering to you your Obligation, it is proper for me to remind you of certain duties. You will be held personally responsible for the Charter of this organization and at the end of your term of office, you will deliver it to the officer appointed to install your successor.

It is your duty to see that all National Officers perform their duties to the best of their ability and you shall keep yourself informed on all proposed legislation which may affect the welfare of potential and actual comrades of this organization, and you will strive for adoption of only those measures which will be beneficial to all.

You will be required to devote all of your time to the many duties of your office, and 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 that may be referred to you.

As Commander-in-Chief, you will be regarded by your comrades and 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 James Mueller, are you willing and ready to assume your solemn Obligation?

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF-ELECT MUELLER: I am.

INSTALLING OFFICER CRAMER: Comrade Commander-in-Chief to be James Mueller, you will raise your right hand, touch the flag of our country with your left hand, give your name and repeat after me.

(Whereupon, Commander-in-Chief-Elect Mueller received the following Obligation: "In the presence of Almighty God and the Officers and Delegates of this Order here assembled, I, James Mueller, 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 Constitution, Ritual and By-Laws 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.")

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, I ask you to now rise, face our Commander-in-Chief, stretch forth your right hand and repeat after me: "Comrade Commander-in-Chief James Mueller, to you I pledge my sincere allegiance."

Comrade Commander-in-Chief, National Officers and Delegates to the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, I now proclaim the National Officers installed and this organization in working order for the ensuing year. (Applause)

You may be seated. Jim, I just want to say it has really been an honor and privilege to have this opportunity to install you. I got to know you as you worked your way up through your Department, through the District and as a National Director, Vice-Chairman and whatever.

You are a great leader of this organization. You are a very sincere person. To you and to Pat and the rest of your family, I wish you God's speed. Have a great year.

ACCEPTANCE ADDRESS BY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, my fellow comrades. I am profoundly grateful to the delegates of the 106th National Convention for electing me as Commander-in-Chief to the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. You honor me with your trust and confidence, and I stand ready to serve you.

The John Furgess, Ed Banas, Past Chiefs that are here today, thank you for your leadership, for your guidance and your mentorship. I want to thank George Cramer for installing me. I want to thank Adjutant General John Senk for his years of faithful and dedicated service, and welcome Past Chief "Gunner" Kent back on the team as the new Adjutant General.

To my Post and its Ladies Auxiliary, I would ask you to stand and be recognized. (Applause) The 9th District and the great Department of Missouri, please stand. (Applause) I thank you for your support, friendship, and most of all, for your love.

To the new National President, Sandy Germany and all the ladies of the Ladies Auxiliary, thank you for what you do daily for the VFW organization. I look forward to working with all of you.

At this time I would like to recognize my mother, Sally Mueller. She is a member of the Ladies Auxiliary. Mom, thank you for being here. (Applause) To my sister, Bonnie, I ask them to please stand when I call their name. My brothers, Ken, Bryan, John and Bob, and their families that are with us today, thank you for being such a great family.

To my lovely wife, Pat, I want to publicly thank you, Pat, for your continued understanding, sacrifice, patience, and most of all, for your love. Without your untiring support, I would not be here today.

To our two children, Christy and Jason, who could not be here today, I want to extend my thanks to them for their love and for keeping me attuned to the new generation. Sometimes I don't think I will ever understand the new generation.

Now, 88 people have served before me as Commanders-in-Chief of this great organization. The foundation that you, the membership, helped them lay is strong, it cares and it is making a difference every day in the lives of millions of other Americans. I pledge to you that trust, along with Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius and Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki.

We will do whatever it takes to keep the VFW strong, to keep the VFW focused on its mission to help guide the VFW into the future, but the three of us cannot do it alone. Just as our nation has continued to evolve after 229 years of liberty, we, too, must evolve to overcome the challenges and meet the new opportunities at the Post, District, Department and National Headquarters level.

There will be some changes this year. I ask you to support them. I know that change is difficult, and none of us like it. But it is absolutely necessary to the survival and growth of our great organization. We must first rededicate ourselves to honoring the dead by helping the living, and refocus our intentions on those efforts and services and programs that we do better than anyone else.

Only then will the future become something that can be embraced and not feared. Our forefathers cared enough for others that they dared to right the wrong of their generation and to change the internal structure of the VFW to match a changing world.

We, the 106th Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, must have that same zeal to take that spirit back to our Departments, to our Districts and to our Posts. Because if we don't care about our veterans, no one else will, and all veterans will suffer.

I have often been asked how I first got involved in the VFW, and that answer is simple. I was asked to join by someone who knew I had just returned from Vietnam, and that brings me to the first of two challenges that I am issuing to you.

I ask everyone here to recruit three new members this year, just three. But if you do more, that is great. But the challenge is to recruit three new members, and more details on this and the new National Program will be forthcoming.

Just as our forefathers passed the leadership to the next generation, my generation will soon be looking for new leadership to guide this great organization into the future. One million of them are already eligible for VFW membership by virtue of their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. But we will not get them to join if we don't recognize and adapt to the changing world around us.

Sixty percent of them are married. Most of their spouses work. That means their time is very precious. If they do get involved in the VFW, they will want to participate in the programs that involve the entire family. They are more health-conscious than most of us ever were, so they are not going to find anything appealing about a VFW Post that allows smoking or begins selling alcohol the first thing in the morning.

I can hear the grumbling now from some of the diehards. If we don't accept that the world is changing, this generation will pass us by. It is something that I will not allow to happen on my watch. (Applause)

My challenge to recruit three new members is realistic. It is doable and it is absolutely necessary for the future of the VFW. Membership allows us to accomplish our mission on the home front, but we must never forget those that have gone before us.

That brings me to my second challenge. I want everyone to dedicate this year to someone who is no longer with us. It can be a relative who was a veteran, someone you once served with or someone from your hometown who continues to be listed as one of America's 88,000 MIAs.

I am dedicating my year to Allen Grueber, someone whom I served with in Vietnam, someone who died before his time and someone I think about almost every day. Had he survived the war, I have no doubt that Allen would be a leader in this organization.

But in a sense, I guess he is because his memory helps guide me to remain focused on the future without forgetting the past. If you can't think of someone to dedicate this year to, feel free to use him, or you can dedicate it to the memory of Bill Ruth, Commander of Post 10076, in Mount Airy, or Jim Allen, who was the newest fatalities of Post 1503 in Dale City, Virginia.

Both Bill and Dan were tragically killed in the Pentagon. 284 people died when American Airlines Flight 76 crashed into it on September 11, 2001. Our nation has been at war for almost four years now. We and our families have gone through this before.

We have walked in their shoes, and we have looked through their eyes. That is why it is so important for us to be there for this new, yes, generation of military men and women. We have to be there for the Allens and the Bills and the James.

We have to be there for the families. We have to be there for James Shaw, the 82nd Airborne and his family. James is a son of California Department Commander Shirley Shaw. He returned from Iraq on Easter Sunday, but he will be heading back in December with his unit.

We have to be there for the Past Commander of Rhode Island, Scott Gould and his family. Scott's National Guard Unit was called up last year. He has been in Iraq since last November and isn't expected back for another three months. We have to be there for those other countless others, their families, who are standing strong for America at home and abroad, because we, above all others, are the Veterans of Foreign Wars and we are proud to serve America's veterans. (Applause)

This is my theme for the year, "Proud to Serve America's Veterans." But it comes with a responsibility of telling America a story about who we are, what we do and who we serve. I think we do a great job of patting ourselves on the back, but we need to tell more stories like VFW Post 1108 in Wayne County, Indiana, who donated more than $37,000 to a local sheriff's office to ensure they were properly equipped.

This Post heard of a need that directly impacted an entire county of 70,000 people. They answered that call. We need to tell America about the VFW Service Officers who have helped veterans recover more than $1 billion last year in VA compensation and pension claims, and how

we awarded more than $2.6 million in college scholarship funds to America's youth.

We need to talk about and give thanks to large corporations and small businesses that are making up the pay difference when their Guard or Reserve employees are called up. We need to tell America about Terri Coleman of the Ladies Auxiliary, President of the VFW Post 5922 in Springdale, Arkansas.

Her son's staff returned home from Iraq, and she is now leading the effort to adopt a second local Guard Unit that has just been activated. From her two units adoption request, the VFW has adopted the Military Assistance Program. We need to sell America on the highly-trained servicemen and women who will be looking for jobs once the war ends and they leave active service.

These new veterans truly understand the words now and responsibility and what that means. They have a place in our society, equal to or ahead of those who chose not to serve. We need to use our individual and collective influence to ensure that America hires veterans first.

Stories similar to these are happening every day across our great country. They are powerful stories, and the people they impact will never forget the day when someone from the VFW cared enough to make a difference in the life of another.

Morale is everything in the field, but we all know that good morale starts at home. We must reach out to them before they destroy, while they are deployed and when they return. Through our unit adoptions and our smart programs, we must take care of your families during your absence.

If we become part of this new morale, this new generation will join. They will join us, because of our need to belong to something that is larger than ourselves. This is an organization that makes a difference every day in the lives of millions of people across this big country, an organization that puts service of others first, and an organization that is the largest organization of combat veterans in the United States. (Applause)

Comrades, our forefathers returned from the Spanish-American War and the Philippine insurrection to a country whose government bore no responsibility to care for the minds or bodies that were broken, or to care for their families should they die.

Our forefathers banded together to care enough, to care enough to march on to Washington to ensure that the future of the generations of American soldiers who never have to beg for recognition and benefits from our government. That was a long time ago.

Although a lot of progress has been made, the battle still continues. Thanks to our Washington office, the Action Corps and those of you who have marched on Capitol Hill in March, we have spearheaded a new program that for the first time has created a dramatic program that complements the military group life insurance.

We led to increase the death gratuity to $100,000, raised military insurance to $400,000, and for the third consecutive year we have led throughout the user fee and co-payment increase for Category 7 and 8 veterans. (Applause) We are far from done.

After the VA admitted their 2005 budget was short, we fought and

got a one and a half billion dollars in emergency funding added to this year's budget. We are currently fighting that next year for timely and quality health care for all deserving veterans. (Applause)

It was our strong advocation of veterans on Capitol Hill that created the VA 75 years ago this year, and it will be our efforts that will keep the company focused on veterans in the past, in the future, in the next 75 years.

Comrades, a strong membership gives us a greater voice in the halls of Congress where we have many friends, Congressmen and Senators, who support veterans' issues because they want to. When President Reagan signed the Bill in 1980 that elevated it to a national position, he said, "America's debts to those who fight for defense does not end the day the uniform comes off."

Our friends in Congress know that we, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, continue to serve America through our military unit sponsorship programs, through our outreach programs to families who wait faithfully for their loved ones to return.

To our care package to the deployed personnel and visits to wounded troops recuperating in Bethesda and elsewhere, and your support of America's youth and our faith in everything that is good about this great country. Comrades, as I have said before, our forefathers cared enough for others that he dared to right the wrongs of their generation and to change the structure of the VFW to match this changing world.

Let the memory of their struggles and their accomplishments be our guide to make things happen, make things better, and make things better for all veterans. (Applause)

I have issued the first challenge because the survival of our great organization requires it. I have issued the second challenge, because we must never forget that we are an organization that honors the dead by helping the living. Keep telling America that the VFW is one team with one mission, and that mission is to ensure that our nation keeps its promises to its veterans, its service members and their families.

Keep telling America that our children and their children understand the sacrifice that is called for in America. Keep telling America without the military servicemen and women there would not be the United States of America. Thank you once again for the honor you have bestowed upon me.

Before I close, I would be remiss, and I would ask John Furgess to join me here for a minute. John, I want to take this opportunity to personally thank you for the great leadership you have given this organization last year through your "Celebration of Service."

John has done this organization proud. He has traveled this great country from one end to the other. His leadership and ability has been great. He has traveled to Russia, Beijing, Korea, been in the White House. John, I admire you and on behalf of Pat and I, I want to thank you and Alma for the many courtesies that you have extended to us, and more than anything I thank you for your great friendship. (Applause)

I truly look forward to serving with our Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Gary Kurpius, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki, and all the other National Officers that have supported me this past year.

At this time I would like to recognize Microphone No. 1.

CLOSING CEREMONIES

COMRADE LARRY LeFEBVRE (Post 552 - Michigan): Comrade Commander-in-Chief, Larry LeFebvre, a delegate from Post 552, Lincoln Park, Michigan. There being no further business to come before this convention and the officers having been properly installed, I move that at this time the 106th National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States be closed sine die.

COMRADE ROGER MAYS (Post 2051 - Michigan): I second that motion.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: You have heard the motion? Is there any discussion? All those in favor will signify by saying "aye"; all opposed will say "no". The "ayes" have it. It is so ordered.

I will call upon the National Sergeant-at-Arms for the Closing Ceremonies.

(Whereupon, National Chaplain Derieg gave the Closing Prayer from the Ritual.)

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

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF MUELLER: Thank you, National Sergeant-at-Arms. Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and sisters, let's give the National Honor Guard and the Sergeants-at-Arms another round of applause for the great job they do. (Applause)

Now, there being no further business, I want to officially close the 106th National Convention sine die.

(Whereupon, the meeting was duly adjourned at11:15 a.m.)

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

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 111 - LIFE MEMBERS.

Life Members: Any person who is a member in good standing of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member by payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster. A member in good standing as a Member-at-Large may become a life member by submitting the applicable fee to the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant in the case of Department Members-at-Large. Any person otherwise eligible for membership, but not previously a member, may become a life member upon election to membership in accordance with Section 103, payment of any admission fee in accordance with Section 104 and submission of a life membership application and payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster or, in the case of prospective Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant, respectively. A former member otherwise eligible for reinstatement to membership may become a life member upon reinstatement to membership in accordance with Section 106, payment of such reinstating fee as may be assessed by the Post and submission of a life membership application and the payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster or, in the case of Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant, respectively.

Life Membership Fees:

(1.) Plan E Life Membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the following Plan E fee schedule effective January 1, 2006, as that schedule may, from time to time, be changed in accordance with paragraph (b)(2) below.

Attained Age	
Through 30	$425
31-40	410
41-50	375
51-60	335
61-70	290
71-80	225
81 & over	170

The applicable fee from the effective life membership fee schedule will be determined using the applicant's attained age as of December 31st of the current calendar year in which the application is submitted regardless of actual date of birth.

Upon receipt of the applicable fee, the Post Quartermaster shall immediately forward payment together with the life membership application of the individual to the Quartermaster General (or, if required by the Department, through the Department Quartermaster to the Quartermaster General). In the case of Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant, respectively, shall forward payment along with the life membership application to the Quartermaster General. The life membership shall become effective immediately upon the receipt of the full fee by the Quartermaster General. The Quartermaster General shall deposit all sums received for life membership in a special fund called the Life Membership Fund, and shall issue a suitable life membership card.

A life member shall not be subject to further membership dues, levies or life membership fees of any kind and shall have all the benefits and privileges of Post, Department and National membership as long as the member shall live; provided, however, a life member who shall subsequently be found ineligible for membership shall forfeit such life membership, in which case such life member shall be entitled to a proportionate refund of life membership fees paid. A life member who shall be discharged from the organization by reason of disciplinary action shall forfeit such life membership. In such event, no refund of fees paid will be made.

(2.) Cost of Living Adjustment to Fees and Annual Payments: The fee schedule shall be amended every three years. The amended fee schedule, effective on January 1, shall be calculated as follows:

The fee for each attained age shall be increased (or decreased) by the percentage of the accumulated Cost of Living Adjustment ("COLA") changes for the previous three-year period, rounded to the nearest whole dollar. For purposes of determining the Cost of Living Adjustment, the percentage increase (or decrease) used by the Social Security Administration to determine changes in Social Security benefits under the Social Security Act, as amended by PL 92-336, shall be used. The fee schedule in these By-Laws shall be restated to include the amended fee schedule.

The annual payment with respect to each life member paying the increased fee shall likewise be increased (or decreased) by the accumulated percentage of the Cost of Living Adjustment ("COLA") increases (or decreases) for the previous three year period and any other three year periods after January 1, 2006. The Quartermaster General shall calculate the annual payment amount in accordance with this By Law and shall publish the amount of the annual payment that will be paid with respect to any life member paying the life member fee during any three-

year period.

(c) Life Membership Committee: The Life Membership Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. Such committee shall also be known as the Board of Trustees of the Life Membership Fund. The Quartermaster General shall be treasurer of the Life Membership Committee and shall have custody of the Life Membership Fund. The Life Membership Committee shall administer the Life Membership Fund, investing and reinvesting funds, to the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(d) Per Capita Tax:

(1.) Plan E: An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year and, in addition, the same amount shall be paid in January of the following year for persons who have become life members during the period September 1 to December 31, provided, however, that to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payments to the National Headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Department Headquarters and the Post to which the life member belongs shall never total less than $27.00 and any Cost of Living Adjustments increasing or decreasing the annual payments with respect to any such life member as provided in paragraph (b)(2) above.

(2.) Prior Plans:

(i) Plan D: An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year provided, however, that to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payments to the Post to which the member belongs, Department and National Headquarters shall never total less than $16.50.

(ii) Other Prior Plans (A, B and C): An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee, after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year, provided, however to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payment to the Post to which the member belongs, the Department and National Headquarters shall never total less than $10.50.

(3.) The amounts payable under paragraphs (2)(i) and (2)(ii) above shall, with respect to a member of a Post, be divided equally

between the Post, Department and National Headquarters; with respect to a Department Member at Large, be divided equally between the Department and National Headquarters; and, with respect to a Member at Large, be payable to National Headquarters.

(4.) Death of a life member following issuance of the checks paying the member's per capita tax for the next calendar year to National Headquarters, Department and Post, shall not be a cause for a refund of such per capita tax for that calendar year.

(DISAPPROVED)

B-2

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 211 - SUSPENSION AND REVOCATION OF CHARTER.

Amend Section 211, (a), second paragraph, National By-Laws, by deleting the words "August 1st" and replace in lieu thereof the following: "June 1st."

(APPROVED)

B-3

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 213 – ARREARAGES.

Amend Section 213, National By-Laws, by adding the words "for the ensuing year" after "Post Election Report."

(APPROVED)

B-4

Proposed by Department of Europe

SECTION 101 – ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 101-Eligibility: Change the first paragraph by deleting the "(1)" on the third line, after the word, "membership"; replacing the "semi-colon" after the words "Congressional Charter" on the seventh line, with a "comma"; and deleting the words, "and (2) who is a citizen of the

United States,", in its entirety.

(DISAPPROVED)

B-5

Proposed by Department of Maryland

SECTION 111 – LIFE MEMBERS.

Amend Section 111 – Life Members by deleting in its entirety and insert the following:

Section 111 – Life Members.

(a) Life Members: Any person who is a member in good standing of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States may become a life member by payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster. A member in good standing as a Member-at-Large may become a life member by submitting the applicable fee to the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant in the case of Department Members-at-Large. Any person otherwise eligible for membership, but not previously a member, may become a life member upon election to membership in accordance with Section 103, payment of any admission fee in accordance with Section 104 and submission of a life membership application and payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster or in the case of prospective Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant respectively. A former member otherwise eligible for reinstatement to membership may become a life member upon reinstatement to membership in accordance with Section 106, payment of such reinstating fee as may be assessed by the Post and submission of a life membership application and the payment of the applicable life membership fee to the Post Quartermaster or, in the case of Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant, respectively.

(b) Life Membership Fees:

(i) Plan E Life Membership fees shall be charged in accordance with the following Plan E fee schedule effective January 1, 2006, as that schedule may, from time to time be changed in accordance with paragraph (b) (2) below:

Attained Age	
Through 30	$375
31-40	355
41-50	330
51-60	295
61-70	250
71-80	200
81 & over	150

The applicable fee from the life membership fee schedule will be determined using the applicant's attained age as of December 31st of the current calendar year in which the application is submitted regardless of actual date of birth.

Upon receipt of the applicable fee, the Post Quartermaster shall immediately forward payment together with the life membership application of the individual to the Quartermaster General (or, if required by the Department, through the Department Quartermaster to the Quartermaster General). In the case of Members-at-Large, the Adjutant General or Department Adjutant respectively, shall forward payment along with the life membership application to the Quartermaster General. The life membership shall become effective immediately upon the receipt of the full fee by the Quartermaster General. The Quartermaster General shall deposit all sums received for life membership in a special fund called the Life Membership Fund, and shall issue a suitable life membership card.

A life member shall not be subject to further membership dues, levies or life membership fees of any kind and shall have all the benefits and privileges of Post, Department and National membership as long as the member shall live; provided, however a life member who shall subsequently be found ineligible for membership shall forfeit such life membership, in which case such life member shall be entitled to a proportionate refund of life membership fees paid. A life member who shall be discharged from the organization by reason of disciplinary action shall forfeit such life membership. In such event, no refund of fees paid will be made.

(2) Cost of Living Adjustment to Fees and Annual Payments. The fee schedule shall be amended every three years. The amended fee schedule effective on January 1, shall be calculated as follows:

The fee for each attained age shall be increased, (or decreased) by the percentage of the accumulated Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) changes for the previous three-year period. For purposes of determining the Cost of Living Adjustment, the percentage increase (or decrease) used by the Social Security Administration to determine changes in Social Security benefits under the Social Security Act as amended by PL 920336 shall be used. The

fee schedule in these By-Laws shall be restated to include the amended fee schedule.

The annual payment with respect to each life member paying the increased fee shall likewise be increased (or decreased) by the accumulated percentage of the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increases (or decreases) for the previous three-year period and any other three-year periods after January 1, 2006. The Quartermaster General shall calculate the annual payment amount in accordance with this By-Law and shall publish the amount of the annual payment that will be paid with respect to any life member paying the life member fee during any three-year period.

(c) Life Membership Committee:

The Life Membership Committee shall consist of the Commander-in-Chief, the Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant General and the Quartermaster General. Such committee shall also be known as the Board of Trustees of the Life Membership Fund. The Quartermaster General shall be treasurer of the Life Membership Committee and shall have custody of the Life Membership Fund. The Life Membership Committee shall administer the Life Membership Fund, investing and reinvesting funds, to the best interest of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

(d) Per Capita Tax:

(1.) Plan E. An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year and, in addition, the same amount shall be paid in January of the following year for persons who have become life members during the period September 1 to December 31, provided, however, that to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payments to the National Headquarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Department Headquarters and the Post to which the life member belongs, shall never total less than $24.00 and any Cost of Living Adjustments increasing or decreasing the annual payments with respect to any such life members as pro-

vided in paragraph (b)(2) above.

(2) Prior Plans:

(i) Plan D: An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following calendar year to Posts, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year, provided, however, that to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payments to the Post to which the member belongs, the Department and National Headquarters, shall never total less than $16.50.

(ii) Other Prior Plans (A, B and C)
An amount, as determined by the Life Membership Committee, after consultation with professionals licensed in actuarial science, shall be paid in September of the current year for the following year to Post, Departments and National Headquarters on all life members recorded as of August 31 of the then current calendar year, provided, however, to the extent funds are available in the Life Membership Fund, payment to the Post to which the member belongs, the Department and National Headquarters, shall never total less than $10.50.

(3) The amounts payable under paragraphs (2)(i) and (2)(ii) above, shall with respect to a member of a Post be divided equally between the Post, Department and National Headquarters, with respect to a Department Member-at-Large, be divided equally between the Department and National Headquarters, and, with respect to a Member-at-Large, be payable to National Headquarters.

(4) Death of a life member following issuance of the checks paying the

member's per capita tax for the next calendar year to National Headquarters, Department and Post, shall not be a cause for a refund of such per capita tax for that calendar year.

(DISAPPROVED)

B-6

Proposed by Department of Virginia

ARTICLE XIII – MENS AUXILIARY

SECTION 1302 – ELIGIBILITY.

Amend Section 1302 National By-Laws by deleting it in its entirety and replacing in lieu thereof the following:

Membership in the Mens Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars shall be limited to husbands, widowers, fathers, foster and stepfathers (who have performed the duties of parent), grandfathers, sons, grandsons, foster and stepsons (who attained that status prior to age sixteen and who the duties of parent were performed), brothers, half brothers, foster and step-brothers (who attained that status prior to age sixteen) of persons who were or are eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Members must not be less than sixteen (16) years old.

Persons eligible for membership in the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States shall not be eligible for membership in the Mens Auxiliary.

(DISAPPROVED)

B-7

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 617 – REGIONAL NATIONAL COUNCIL OF ADMINISTRATION MEMBERS – HOW ELECTED.

Amend Section 617, National By-Laws, by deleting the following in its entirety:

"12. South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming."

"F. Michigan."

and replacing in lieu thereof the following:

12. North Dakota, Wyoming.

23. Michigan, South Dakota.

(APPROVED)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL OF PROCEDURE

The following amendments, published in accordance with Article XIV of the By-Laws, are proposed for consideration at the 106th National Convention in accordance with Article XIV, Section 1401 of the Manual of Procedure.

M-1

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

SECTION 609—NOMINATION, ELECTION, INSTALLATION AND TERM OF OFFICE.

Amend Section 609, Manual of Procedure, second paragraph, second sentence, deleting the words "first two votes" and insert in lieu thereof the following: "first vote."

(APPROVED)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RITUAL

R-1

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

Amend the Ritual, Order of Business, Item 16, Chaplain, by deleting in the first sentence the words "widows and children" and replace in lieu thereof the following: "children and families."

(APPROVED)

R-2

Recommended by National By-Laws Review Committee

Proposed by Commander-in-Chief

Amend the Ritual, Member's Obligation, by deleting the fifth paragraph in its entirety.

(DISAPPROVED)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

No. 201 (Several Departments) — Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Paid Spouse Travel

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: Paid travel for spouses/guests be limited to the Commander-in-Chief's Award Trip and to the National Convention for the Commander-in-Chief and Senior and Junior Vice Commanders-in-Chief. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 202 (Several Departments) — Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Per Diem

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: VFW per diem rate be set at the same amount for all employees as well as all National Officers. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 203 (Several Departments) — Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Past Commanders-In-Chief Paid Travel

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: Past Commanders-in-Chief paid travel be limited to the Conference Meeting of the conference that his Department is a member, Washington Legislative Conference, VFW National Convention and the Commander-in-Chief's Homecoming if he is one of the two immediate Past Commanders-in-Chief from the Commander-in-Chief's Conference. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 204 (Several Departments) — Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Commander-In-Chief's Award Trip

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: The Commander-in-Chief's Award Trip be limited to 60 couples including the 54 Department Commanders. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 205 (Several Departments) — Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Commander-In-Chief's Homecoming

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: Paid travel to the Commander-in-Chief's

Homecoming be limited to the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Chief of Staff, Judge Advocate General, Inspector General, National Chaplain, Surgeon General, National Council Members from the Commander-in-Chief's Conference and the two immediate Past Commanders-in-Chief from the Commander-in-Chief's Conference plus the VFW Ladies Auxiliary National President, Senior Vice and Junior Vice Presidents. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 206(Several Departments)—National Headquarters By-Law Compliance
Rejected

No. 207(Department of Pennsylvania)—Establish Diabetes Awareness Program and Campaign in Each Department of the VFW
Rejected

No. 208(Department of Washington)—Propose Schedule for Life Membership Fees
Rejected

No. 209(Departments of Nevada & Washington)—Recognize the Committee on "Homeless Veterans" as a Full Standing Committee
Rejected

No. 210(Department of Alabama)—Members at Large
Rejected

No 211 (Department of Nebraska)—Amend National By-Laws Congressional Charter Section 5-Membership
Rejected

No. 212(Department of Nebraska)—Life Dues Raise
Rejected

No. 213(Department of Nebraska)—Revised VFW Officer Travel Policy – Commander-In-Chief's Homecoming

Resolved, that the VFW General Travel Policy Guidelines be revised to include the following: Paid travel to the Commander-in-Chief's Homecoming be limited to the Commander-in-Chief, Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General, Chief of Staff, Judge Advocate General, Inspector General, National Chaplain, Surgeon General, National Council Members from the Commander-in-Chief's Conference and the two immediate Past Commanders-in-Chief from the Commander-in-Chief's Conference. Referred to the Council of Administration. (Approved as Amended)

No. 214(Department of Connecticut)—Directed Toward VFW State & National Conventions in 2005

Rejected

No. 215(Department of Virginia)—Professional 911 Public Safety Operators and Dispatchers

Resolved, that we recognize Professional 911 Operators and Dispatchers as highly skilled, highly motivated, sincerely dedicated, and professionally competent community service personnel and should be so recognized at all levels of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. (Approved)

No. 216(Department of Virginia)—Make Available the National Membership at Large Mailing Lists to the Appropriate Departments

Resolved, that the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Headquarters shall provide a mailing list of National Members at Large (Life and Annual) to the Departments in which they reside in order to solicit their interest and willingness to transfer their membership to, and thereby assist, Posts within their community. (Approved)

No. 217(Department of Virginia)—To Permit Posts to Report the Market Value of Bonds and Investments in their Quarterly Report of Audit Rather than Cost Value

Rejected

No. 218(Department of Virginia)—Shorten the Obligation Required of all Persons Joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Resolved, that the VFW's Commander-in-Chief be requested herewith to appoint a committee of patriotic individuals thoroughly knowledgeable in Constitutional law and in the long and distinguished history of the VFW, to draft a new Obligation for inclusion in the Ritual; that this committee consist of at least three and not more than five persons, and that the proposed Obligation be no longer than 50 words, preferably shorter; and

Further resolved, that the Committee be instructed to conclude its work by January 1, 2006, so that the proposed new Obligation can be given full consideration by the VFW's leadership in time for it to be presented for adoption at the National Convention in August 2006. (Approved)

No. 219(Several Departments)—Members at Large

Rejected

No. 220(Department of California)—Transfer the Process of Developing and Sending Dues Notices to the Dues Processing Department Under the Quartermaster General

Rejected

No. 221(Department of Iowa) —Amend National By-Laws, Congressional Charter Section 5 – Membership

Rejected

No. 222(Department of Minnesota)—Oppose Life Member Fee Increase

Rejected

No. 223(Department of Texas)—Discontinue the MIP Program Immediately
Rejected

No. 224(Department of Wisconsin)—Prohibit Use of the VFW Seal or Emblem by the VFW Political Action Committee's Endorsed Candidates
Rejected

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON GENERAL RESOLUTIONS

No. 301(Department of Washington)—Inscribe "So Help Us God" at the End of the Speech on the National World War II Monument
Rejected .

No. 302(Department of Pennsylvania)—Re-Examine the ACLU
Rejected

No. 303(Department of Illinois & Virginia)—National Museum of the United States Army

Resolved, that we endorse the building of the National Museum of the United States Army. That a museum honoring members of the United States Army who have, do, or will serve in defense of this great nation is long overdue; and

Further resolved, that any request for solicitations be submitted in writing to the National Council of Administration and conform to standard VFW procedures; and

Further resolved, that we commend the United States Army and the Army Historical Foundation for their diligent effort to accomplish this tribute. (Approved as Amended)

No. 304(Department of Virginia)—To Request all VFW Posts to Include a Prayer for Permanent Peace in their Annual Memorial Day Ceremonies
Rejected

No. 305(Department of Illinois)—Support Creation of Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial

Resolved, that we fully support and endorse the creation of the Iraq & Afghanistan War Memorial; and

Further resolved, that any request for solicitations be submitted in writing to the National Council of Administration and conform to standard VFW procedures. (Approved as Amended)

No. 306(Department of Illinois)—Stop the United Nations Firearm Ban
Rejected

No. 307(Department of Idaho)—Desecration of the U.S. Flag

Resolved, an appeal may be taken directly to the Supreme Court

of the United States from any interlocutory or final judgment, decree, or order issued by the United States district court ruling upon the constitutionality of subsection; and

Further resolved, the Supreme Court shall, if it has not previously ruled on the question, accept jurisdiction over the appeal and advance on the docket and expedite to the greatest extent possible; and

Further resolved, the individuals that desecrate the flag are to be punished according to the code, therefore, we would like to see this code made into a law and enforced to the full extent. (Approved)

No. 308(Department of California)—Correct Omission on World War II Memorial
Rejected

No. 309(Department of California)—Amend 42 U.S.C. Section 1988
Rejected

No. 310(Department of Minnesota)—Request for Increased Awareness of the Federal Flag Code

Resolved, that we take a strong leadership role in helping all levels of the organization including Posts and Auxiliaries in educating everyone about the proper care and display of the flag of the United States of America, as expressed in the Federal Flag Code. (Approved)

No. 311(Department of North Carolina)—Nuclear Ballistic Missile Submarines Patrol Award
Rejected

No. 312(Department of Texas)—VFW Establish a Special Ceremony for the Handling and Disposition of the American Flag
Rejected

No. 313(Department of Louisiana)—Energy Crisis Must be Addressed
Rejected

No. 314(Department of Louisiana)—Religious Freedom is Our Heritage
Rejected

No. 315(Department of Louisiana)—Positive Changes to Our Burial Flag

Resolved, that we suggest that a standard size flag of 5′x9 ?′ be approved and manufactured or altered to remove the metal grommets and reduce the thickness and size of the bunting. (Approved as Amended)

No. 316(Department of Louisiana)—Oppose Law of the Sea Treaty to the United Nations
Rejected

No. 317(Commander-in-Chief)—Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center

Resolved, that we call upon our membership and the general public to support the construction of the underground Vietnam Veterans

Memorial Center on the land area between Henry Bacon Drive, 23rd Street, Constitution Avenue and the Lincoln Memorial; and

Further resolved, that any request for solicitations be submitted in writing to the National Council of Administration and conform to standard VFW procedures. (Approved as Amended)

No. 318 (Commander-in-Chief)—Assist Returning OEF/OIF Veterans Secure Employment

Resolved, that we urge the VFW membership to act upon this resolution by using their individual and collective influence to ensure that America hires veterans first. (Approved)

No. 319 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support Air Force Memorial

Resolved, that we endorse the establishment of a memorial dedicated to the United States Air Force; and

Further resolved, that any request for solicitations be submitted in writing to the National Council of Administration and conform to standard VFW procedures. (Approved as Amended)

No. 320 (Commander-in-Chief)—Pearl Harbor Memorial and Museum

Resolved, that we support the construction of a new Pearl Harbor Memorial Museum and Visitor Center in Hawaii; and

Further resolved, that any request for solicitations be submitted in writing to the National Council of Administration and conform to standard VFW procedures. (Approved as Amended)

RESOLUTIONS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

No. 401 (Commander-in-Chief)—Support Public Awareness Projects

Resolved, that we will 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; and

Further resolved, that each Department exercise maximum initiative to maintain the vitality and thrust of the POW/MIA program at Department, District and Post levels by encouraging such actions as display of the POW/MIA flag and appoint an interested member at Department, District and Post level to act as the POW/MIA project officer; and

Further resolved, that we support the annual National POW/MIA Recognition Day. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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 who were forced to work as slave laborers 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 slave labor claims of these former POWs in an expeditious manner. (Approved as Amended)

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 Captain Speicher's fate until a full accounting can be determined. (Approved as Amended)

No. 405 (Commander-in-Chief)—Drape the Caskets of Fallen American Warriors with the Flag of the United States

Resolved, that we are firm in our support for legislation establishing the right of every fallen member of the armed forces of the United States to have his/her casket immediately draped with the flag of the United States upon departure from any foreign country. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved)

No. 407 (Commander-in-Chief)—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. (Approved)

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 in 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 strong national defense and in combination with our allies and friends remain capable of defeating present and future threats. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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 to take offensive action against terrorist groups and 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. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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 to enable the Coast Guard to carry out its many Department of Homeland Security missions and maintain military readiness. (Approved as Amended)

No. 415(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 pro-

viding modern state of the art weapons and technology to safeguard its freedom, and promote security in the Asia/Pacific region. (Approved as Amended)

No. 416(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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 417(Commander-in-Chief)—Retain the Selective Service

Resolved, that we wholeheartedly support the Selective Service System and its continued funding as a matter of national security. (Approved as Amended)

No. 418(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 continuously 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. (Approved)

No. 419(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 strategic interests in that region. (Approved as Amended)

No. 420(Commander-in-Chief)—Retain 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. (Approved)

No. 421(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. (Approved)

No. 422(Commander-in-Chief)—Protecting Americans from Ballistic Missile Attack

Rejected

No. 423(Commander-in-Chief)—Increase the Defense Budget

Resolved, that we strongly urge the Congress to quickly approve, as a minimum, the President's budget request. (Approved as Amended)

No. 424(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 2006 to ensure the U.S. Navy is capable of matching any known worldwide naval military threat; to include new operational concepts to meet potential threats. (Approved as Amended)

No. 425(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, improve Naval readiness and continue to up-grade the equipment of the Reserve and National Guard components. (Approved as Amended)

No. 426(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. (Approved)

No. 427(Commander-in-Chief)—Increase Military Base Pay

Resolved, that we appreciate and have supported past Congressional efforts with the goal to restore military base pay to full comparability with the private sector by 2007. (Approved as Amended)

No. 428(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. (Approved)

No. 429(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. (Approved)

No. 430(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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 431(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. (Approved)

No. 432(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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 433(Commander-in-Chief)—Support Equity for Reserve and Guard Members

Resolved, that we in coordination with the Reserve and National Guard components, 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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 434(Commander-in-Chief)—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. (Approved)

No. 435(Commander-in-Chief)—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. (Approved)

No. 436(Department of Connecticut)—To Require Pre- and Post-Deployment Mental Health Screenings for Members of the Armed Forces

Resolved, that we support legislation that the Secretary of Defense shall prescribe in regulations a requirement that the members of the armed forces deployed to a combat theater received a mental health evaluation conducted in person by a qualified mental health professional

before their deployment and when returning from service in a combat theater receive a mental health evaluation by a qualified mental health professional, within a reasonable time after return, in order to evaluate a combat stress condition that could be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder; and

Further resolved, that a reasonable seamless remedial program be established to address the problem within the active military service and when returned to a National Guard or Reserve status; and

Further resolved, that if a veteran or military retiree status be established and care continued in a medical facility that the seamless transfer of the medical information established by the legislation be forthcoming. (Approved)

No. 437(Department of Connecticut)—Military Vaccine and Antibiotic Availability for Homeland Security

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to formulate and enact a policy related to homeland security, whereby the U.S. government would create procedures to research, develop, manufacture and distribute vital vaccines and antibiotics for civilian and military use in the immediate time frame, rather than relying solely on the commercial marketplace. (Approved)

No. 438(Department of Connecticut)—Reconstitution of Reserve Component Units Returning from Deployments

Resolved, that we urge Congress to authorize and appropriate adequate funding for the reconstitution of Reserve Component units returning from combat area deployments, for repair, replacement or procurement of mission essential equipment, for restructuring of Reserve Component units into high demand units, and for individual and unit training as needed. (Approved)

No. 439(Department of Florida)—Air Force Ground Combat Recognition Badge

Resolved, that we petition the Congress to direct the Secretary of the Air Force to establish a suitable combat recognition badge for personnel who are engaged in direct combat while serving as a Air Combat Controller or serving in army units engaged in ground combat or in direct support of army units engaged in ground combat operations. (Approved)

No. 440(Department of Iowa) —Code Talkers Congressional Gold Medal of Honor Medal
Rejected

No. 441(Department of Louisiana)—Tighter Border and Immigration Controls Needed
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. (Approved)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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 sys-

tem be held accountable and that veterans receive priority of service in all federally funded job-training programs. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 609 (Commander-in-Chief)—Repeal of VA Home Loan Funding Fees

Resolved, that we urge Congress to repeal all VA Home Loan funding fees. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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 reinstated while the War on Terrorism is

actively engaged. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 615(Commander-in-Chief)—Employment 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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 617(Commander-in-Chief)—Presumptive Service Connection for Tinnitus and Hearing Loss

Resolved, 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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 619(Commander-in-Chief)—Adequate Funding for State Veterans Homes Programs

Resolved, 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 program. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 621(Commander-in-Chief)—Veterans Preference

Resolved, that we oppose all attempts to reduce or circumvent veterans preference. (Approved)

No. 622(Commander-in-Chief)—Workforce Investment Act

Rejected

No. 623(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. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 627(Commander-in-Chief)—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 notwithstanding the fact that the graves are already marked with a private marker and the veteran died prior to December 27, 2001. (Approved)

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 Representative (LVER) be staffed by qualified veterans; and

Further resolved, that DVOPS and LVER positions be full-time and dedicated solely to serving veterans. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved as Amended)

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, Combat Action Badge or the Combat Action Ribbon for operations not falling within an officially designated period of war. (Approved as Amended)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 635(Commander-in-Chief)—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. (Approved)

No. 636(Commander-in-Chief)—Government Headstones

Resolved, that we petition Congress to amend Public Law 107-103 to allow the voluntarily 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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 638(Commander-in-Chief)—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. (Approved)

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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 640(Commander-in-Chief)—Reaffirm Support for the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) for all Separating and Retiring Military

Personnel

Resolved, that 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. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

No. 642 (Commander-in-Chief)—Increase Servicemembers Death Benefits

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; and

Further resolved, that we urge Congress to enact legislation that will increase the death gratuity to $100,000. (Approved)

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. (Approved)

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). (Approved)

No. 645 (Commander-in-Chief)—Women Veterans Health Care

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 historically they have been less aware of their eligibility to VA programs. (Approved as Amended)

No. 646 (Commander-in-Chief)—Burial Plot Allowance

Resolved, that Congress pass legislation increasing the burial plot allowance to $1,000. (Approved as Amended)

No. 647 (Commander-in-Chief)—Minimum Compensation for Hearing

Loss

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 compensable evaluation for any hearing loss for which a hearing aid is medically indicated. (Approved as Amended)

No. 648 (Commander-in-Chief)—Definition of 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. (Approved)

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 to extend the benefits established under Title 38 United States Code § 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. (Approved as Amended)

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 Unites 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. (Approved)

No. 651 (Commander-in-Chief)—Petition the Department of Veterans Affairs 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. (Approved as Amended)

No. 652 (Commander-in-Chief)—Exempt Catastrophically Disabled Veterans from Paying VA Co-Payments

Resolved, that we urge Congress to add Catastrophically Disabled veterans to the list of veterans that VA is mandated to provide health care to in 38 USC § 1710(a)(2) which would require the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to exclude catastrophically disabled (priority group 4) veterans from paying both VA health care and medication co-payments by adding them to the lists of veterans exempt from paying co-payments in 38 CFR 17.108(d) and 17.110(c). (Approved)

No. 653 (Commander-in-Chief)—Combat Related Special Compensation

Resolved, that we urge Congress to expand combat-related spe-

cial compensation to disabled retirees who were not allowed to serve 20 years solely because of combat-related disabilities. (Approved)

No. 654(Commander-in-Chief)—National Guard and Reserve Benefits

Resolved, that we urge Congress to take necessary actions to upgrade Guard and Reserve benefit and support programs to a comparable level as their active duty counterparts, as a means to help ease the tremendous operational stresses imposed on Guard and Reserve members and their families. (Approved)

No. 655(Commander-in-Chief)—VA Claims Backlog

Resolved, we urge Congress to allocate the necessary resources for the Veterans Benefits Administration to hire sufficient employees to implement the necessary training that will allow VBA to begin to overcome the claims backlog and to enable an effective transition plan for the ongoing senior workforce retirements. (Approved)

No. 656(Department of Europe)—Timely Survivors' Benefit Program Entitlement Payment to Survivors

Resolved, that we petition Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of Defense to ensure that each branch of the armed forces' servicing finance center releases the initial survivor's entitlement check immediately upon receipt of the SBP claim. (Approved)

No. 657(Department of Europe)—Post Exchange and Commissary Privileges for U.S. Military Retirees Residing or Traveling Overseas

Resolved, that we petition Congress to enact legislation requiring the Department of State and the Department of Defense to ensure the protection of exchange and commissary benefits for retirees of the U.S. armed forces in all future treaty negotiations, renegotiations, amendments, or adjustments in any nature. (Approved as Amended)

No. 658(Department of Europe)—Space Available for Family Members of Retired Members of the Armed Forces

Resolved, that we urge the Congress to amend Title 10 U.S. Code § 1060 to allow the travel of unaccompanied family member(s) on a space available basis for the purpose of visiting an incapacitated retired member of the armed forces institutionalized by competent medical authority in a medical facility distant from the normal place of residence of the retired member. (Approved as Amended)

No. 659(Department of Nebraska)—VA Co-Pay Increase

Resolved, that we oppose increases in the VA pharmaceutical co-payment. (Approved as Amended)

No. 660(Department of Florida)—Permanency of VA Nursing Home and Non-Institutional Extended Care Services Under Public Law 106-117 and the Use of Funding Without Fiscal Year Limitations

Rejected

No. 661(Department of Connecticut)—Entitlement to Nursing Home Care
Rejected

No. 662(Department of Connecticut)—Mandatory Funding for Veterans Health Care
Rejected

No. 663(Department of Connecticut)—Veterans Preference
Resolved, that we encourage state and municipal governments to continue to strengthen veteran's preference laws as an appropriate measure of honor for those who served in the armed forces. (Approved as Amended)

No. 664(Department of Connecticut)—Prescription Drug Benefit to all Eligible Veterans
Rejected

No. 665(Department of Connecticut)—Routine Vaccinations to all Eligible Veterans
Resolved, that we endorse to the Department of Veterans Affairs that all veterans who do not have health insurance or who do not have vaccination coverage in their health insurance be provided, at their request, free of charge, routine vaccinations such as flu, tetanus, hepatitis, pneumonia, or other vaccinations as recommended in the routine adult immunization schedule of the CDC. (Approved)

No. 666(Department of Virginia)—Plus-Up Veterans Health Care as an Inescapable Cost of Going to War
Rejected

No. 667(Department of Virginia)—Establish a Separate Budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs
Rejected

No. 668(Department of Virginia)—Property Tax Relief for 100% Disabled Recipients of Veterans Pension
Rejected

No. 669(Department of Mississippi)—To Have Veterans that are Court Appointed "Guardians" and have Those Children in their Custody be Recognized by the Department of Veteran Affairs as a Dependent
Rejected

No. 670(Department of California)—Support House Bill H.R. 831 to Increase the Allowance for Burial Expenses
Rejected

No. 671(Department of California)—State Veterans Home Loan Program
Rejected

No. 672(Department of California)—Support for VA Paying Full Cost of Care for Qualifying Veterans Residing in State Veterans Homes
Rejected

No. 673(Department of California)—Establish Legislation for Plot Interment Allowance for Family Members
Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend Title 38 United States Code, to authorize a Plot Allowance for burial expenses of veterans' eligible family members. (Approved as Amended)

No. 674(Department of California) —Support for the Continuation of the Veterans Upward Bound Program
Resolved, that we hereby request the United States Congress to preserve and bolster the Upward Bound program. (Approved)

No. 675(Department of California)—Extended Home Loan Program to Grenada, Panama, Persian Gulf, Bosnia, and other Post 1977 Veterans and Opposing Provisions of the "Tax Simplification" Plan that Would Eliminate Veterans Housing Benefits
Rejected

No. 676(Department of California)—California Veterans Board Federal Budget Proposals to Reduce Federal Aid for State Veterans' Homes and for Daily Care of Veterans in State Homes
Rejected

No. 677(Department of Kentucky) —VA Care for Reservists and National Guard
Rejected

No. 678(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. (Approved)

No. 679(Department of Michigan)—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. (Approved)

No. 680(Department of Michigan)—Compensable Evaluation for Service-Connected Hearing Loss Requiring the Use of Hearing Aids
Rejected

No. 681(Department of Montana) —Tricare Prime
Rejected

No. 682(Department of Ohio)—Veterans Preference for Assistant Secretary (ASVET), Regional Administrators (RAVET), Director (DVET), and Other Vets Staff

Resolved, that we urge Congress to amend Title 38 United States Code to reinstate the veterans preference hiring requirement for all positions within the DOL. (Approved as Amended)

No. 683(Department of Ohio)—Revert Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Grants to Staff Based Grant
Rejected

No. 684(Department of Ohio)—Department of Veterans Affairs Employment

Resolved, that we urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to give all qualified honorably discharged veterans first priority in job vacancies within the department. (Approved as Amended)

No. 685(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 veterans of the U.S. military who were discharged under honorable conditions. (Approved as Amended)

No. 686(Department of Ohio)—Homeland Security
Rejected

No. 687(Department of Ohio)—Concurrent Receipt of Military Longevity Retirement Pay and Department of Veterans Affairs Disability Compensation
Rejected

No. 688(Department of Ohio)—Employee Protection in Employment for Treatment at VA Facilities
Rejected

No. 689(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

Resolved, that we support veterans priority of service be expanded to include any agency or organization, state or federal, that receives federal funding for employment and training, i.e. directly or through federal grants through the states (including the Workforce Investment Act (WIA); and

Further resolved, that the Secretary of Labor shall establish and implement a department wide policy on veterans priority of service in Employment and Training Programs; and

Further resolved, that the Secretary of Labor meet with other secretaries of the Cabinet to review and establish veterans preference and priority of service in their programs, such as HUD for housing and homeless veterans and their families, etc. to help eliminate physical, personal, and societal barriers related to employment and training to enable veterans to become productive citizens in their communities; and

Further resolved, that we encourage Congress to mandate a member of a veterans service organization to be appointed to the Governor's and Local Workforce Policy Board as authorized by the Workforce Investment Act; and

Further resolved, we request all "one-stop" centers created by the Workforce Investment Act provide priority of service to veterans. (Approved as Amended)

No. 690(Department of Ohio)—Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Eligibility
Rejected

No. 691(Department of Ohio)—Support Job Protection for Service Connected Disabled Veterans Requiring Visits at VA Facilities
Rejected

No. 692(Department of Ohio)—Reaffirm Support for the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) for all Separating and Retiring Military Personnel

Resolved, that we reaffirm strong support of the Transition Assistance Program. (Approved as Amended)

No. 693(Department of Ohio)—Support Reassessment on how LVER(s) are Assigned to Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) Sites to Assist all Separating and Retiring Military Personnel

Resolved, that we request that legislation be implemented making TAP site a mandatory site for State Workforce Investment Act participating and that at a minimum one LVER be stationed at the site full-time if warranted. (Approved)

No. 694(Department of Ohio)—Support Improvements of Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) Performance Standards
Rejected

No. 695(Department of Ohio)—Apportionment of Disability Compensation in State Divorce Courts
Rejected

No. 696(Department of Texas)—Reaffirm Support for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)

Resolved, that we support legislation to reauthorize the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act program; and

Further resolved, that we seek adequate funding for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act. (Approved)

No. 697(Department of Texas)—Eliminate Regional offices of the Veterans Employment and Training Service

Resolved, that we seek and support legislation that will eliminate the regional offices of the Veterans Employment and Training Service and return the organization to its original purpose of advocating and providing direct oversight services to veterans programs. (Approved as Amended)

No. 698(Department of Texas)—Oppose the Transfer of Veterans' Employment and Training Service to the Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolved, that we oppose all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer Veterans' Employment and Training Service from Department of Labor to Department of Veterans Affairs. (Approved)

No. 699(Department of Texas)—Oppose any Weakening of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program and Local Veterans Employment Representative Program

Rejected

No. 700(Department of Texas)—Requiring the Veterans' Employment and Training Service to Hire Veterans

Rejected

No. 701(Department of Texas)—Support President's National Hire Veterans Committee

Resolved, that we express our support for continuation/extension of the President's National Hire Veterans Committee. (Approved as Amended)

No. 702(Department of Texas)—Restore Oversight of Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) Programs

Rejected

No. 703(Commander-in-Chief)—Additional Benefits and Services to Veterans Children with Spina Bifida

Resolved, 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. (Approved)

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Committee on Convention Rules

Chairman:

Clifford G. Olson, Jr.,

Past Commander-in-Chief, Massachusetts 8699

Vice Chairman:
John S. Staum, Past Commander-in-Chief, Minnesota 9625

Committee on Credentials

Chairman: David F. Butters, Delaware 475

Committee on Finance and Internal Organization

Chairman: John M. Carney, Past Commander-in-Chief, Florida 4643
Vice Chairman: R. D. Smith, Jr., Past Commander-in-Chief, Georgia 4346

Department	Name	Post No.
Alabama	Tom Ferguson	6020
Alabama	George H. Jones	6073
Alabama	Charles R. Stephens	3128
Alaska	John W. Minnick	9365
Arizona	James G. Ellars	10008
Arkansas	Carlton L. Byrd	8245
Arkansas	Michael P. Fairhead	3031
Arkansas	James F. Gilbert	4548
California	William H. Carvalho	344
California	Richard Fenn	7243
California	John L. Fitzke	4647
California	James A. Green	10166
California	Doug L. Rockwell	2323
California	James R. Rowoldt	10040
California	Gerald L. Stewart, Sr	4647
Colorado	John R. Lewis	4051
Colorado	James L. Mitchell	8121
Colorado	Warren E. Wellensiek	4171
Connecticut	William A. Hornok	1673
Delaware	Alan W. Lynch	2863
Dist of Col.	Lester W. Hansen	2979
Europe	Todd H. Ota	3885
Florida	John J. Clark, III	5968
Florida	Harvey F. Eckhoff	7674
Florida	Richard Fitzgerald	7721

Florida	Stephen F. Schlueter	10141
Georgia	David G. Pipes	8385
Hawaii	Roland P. Ahuna	10154
Idaho	Douglas A. Olsen	10043
Illinois	Thomas D. Bailey	886
Illinois	Charles R. Brimm	6368
Illinois	Robert W. Migalich	4763
Illinois	John P. Russo	10302
Indiana	David G. Havely	5864
Indiana	David Lantz	1130
Indiana	Arnold L. Marion	6606
Iowa	James R. Cox	7641
Iowa	Donald L. Gilbert	733
Kansas	Ronald G. Browning	10552
Kansas	Robert B. Greene, Jr	7397
Kansas	Tom G. Sanko	1714
Kansas	Richard N. Weston	2981
Kentucky	Alexander J. Feher	5171
Kentucky	Malcolm L. Gass	10281
Latin Amer/Carib	Ruth D. Thomas	3835
Louisiana	Willie J. Boudreaux, III	7755
Louisiana	Charles E. Wiggins	3665
Maine	William B. Bradbury	1603
Maine	Raymond R. Lupo	1761
Maine	Arthur J. Roy	1603
Maryland	Jack P. Lewis	194
Maryland	Harvey A. Stephens	2632
Massachusetts	John J. Burnett	697
Massachusetts	Walter Gansenberg	834
Massachusetts	Thomas O. Paul	801
Michigan	Neil A. Fulton	701
Michigan	Gary L. Paulin	565
Michigan	Jackie L. Pickard	2780
Minnesota	Robert E. Hansen	295
Minnesota	Albert W. Mitchell	5725
Minnesota	Louie R. Mrozek	6316
Minnesota	Stephen J. O`Connor	4114
Minnesota	Steven P. Van Bergen	6587
Mississippi	John O. Matthews	10567

Missouri	Royce R. Kelb	5925
Missouri	Dean R. Yarolimek	5517
Montana	Charles R. Miller	689
Nebraska	Leonard Gauchat, Jr	8221
Nebraska	Vern E. Hoffart	131
Nebraska	Gary C. Steckelberg	7419
Nevada	Stanley F. Destwolinski	8660
New Hampshire	James A. Clemons	8401
New Hampshire	John M. Lilly	1698
New Jersey	Patrick J. Botbyl	1593
New Mexico	Manuel G. Evaro	4384
New York	Harold M. Leavor	9487
North Carolina	Michael B. Edwards	9488
North Carolina	Preston F. Garris	2615
Ohio	Wayne M. Crane	3360
Ohio	Danny R. Crow	2529
Ohio	Robert W. Crow	4027
Ohio	Craig D. Swartz	2947
Oklahoma	William C. Bender	4446
Oregon	Gary D. Pitman	10637
Pacific Areas	Laurence L. Lyons	11016
Pennsylvania	William C. Allen	7213
Pennsylvania	John A. Biedrzycki	418
Pennsylvania	Allen Q. Jones	21
Rhode Island	Roger J. Lavoie	5392
South Carolina	Frank M. Fogner	10804
South Carolina	Louis A. Thornton	4262
South Dakota	William R. Barlow	3442
South Dakota	Harold O. Weber	1273
Tennessee	Millard C. Damron, Jr	4641
Tennessee	Robert M. Dickens	9754
Tennessee	Alfred O. Janson	5266
Tennessee	David J. Lopez	4895
Texas	Cary N. Brawner	12024
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Texas	Buddi C. Harlan	4010
Texas	John F. Mc Kinney	1475
Vermont	Rene E. Rocheleau	778
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Virginia	Joseph O. Longstreet	3219
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Washington	Charles E. Vitiritti, Jr	9430
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Colorado	Warren R. Tellgren	9644
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Connecticut	Robert J. Froelick	8075
Connecticut	Stuart C. Headford	9460
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Delaware	Robert D. Wilkinson	2863
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Georgia	Henry D. Epps	5897
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Idaho	Donald S. Holloway	3646
Idaho	Dale W. Smith	3646
Illinois	John H. Buettner	1699
Illinois	Matthew M. Mihelcic	7980
Illinois	William H. Regan	2287
Illinois	Dale D. Roach	8350
Indiana	Robert C. Chesko	1130
Indiana	Brady Huggins	261
Indiana	Deon D. Miller	5365
Indiana	Lawrence G. Northcutt	7119
Iowa	Donald E. Fisher	6172
Kansas	Richard G. Clutts	7271
Kansas	Larie O. Davis	6654
Kansas	Stephen L. Van Buskirk	7397
Kentucky	Carlos Pugh	4075
Latin Amer/Carib	Arthur J. Littesy	3835
Maine	Zane A. Grant	2599
Maine	Charles Warden	11553
Maryland	Tomas F. Bunting	2562
Maryland	John M. Reiman	6694
Massachusetts	Lyndon R. Burrows	2331
Massachusetts	Michael J. Gormalley	2016
Massachusetts	Donald R. Lafond	7239
Massachusetts	William J. Shea	3236
Michigan	Larry A. Coleman	1888
Michigan	John Gubin	9021
Michigan	John J. Harrow, Jr	3724
Michigan	David S. Miller	3925
Minnesota	Daniel Bartholomew	230

Minnesota	Timothy J. Eggersdorfer	950
Mississippi	Johnny J. Raney	10567
Missouri	Vernalee R. Bartholome	5606
Missouri	David Cartner	3174
Missouri	Kevin C. Jones	4050
Missouri	T. J. Lundy	473
Missouri	Donald J. Newman, Jr	2866
Montana	Joe R. Fletcher	1087
Montana	John W. Mahan	1116
Montana	Maurice J. Mills	2986
Nebraska	Gerald L. Ludwig	7998
Nebraska	Ken J. Peitzmeier	1644
Nebraska	George E. Rathmann	1644
Nevada	Walter J. Dybeck, Jr	3848
Nevada	James H. Ludlow	3547
New Hampshire	Paul J. Chevalier	168
New Hampshire	Gregory P. Lynch	1088
New Hampshire	Robert W. Madigan	483
New Hampshire	Eugene A. Pawlik, Sr	1617
New Jersey	Henry J. Adams, Jr	3525
New Jersey	Fred G. Betteridge	1963
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New Jersey	George E. Goodrich	2314
New Mexico	Eugene L. Chambers	1477
New Mexico	Felix J. Coca	2951
New Mexico	Jesus R. Gonzalez	4384
New York	Allan E. Davenport	1019
New York	Nicholas D. Frederes	53
New York	Jack L. Haight, Jr	6778
New York	James M. Longendyke	1386
North Carolina	Ted H. Briggs	9010
North Carolina	Ronald E. Lief	7288
North Dakota	Scott L. Ross	1874
North Dakota	Steven A. Volk	1868
Ohio	Harry Crabtree	8402
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Ohio	John Wasylik	2529

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Oklahoma	Charles A. Huckaby	5994
Oregon	Norman M. Henshen	7384
Oregon	Edward L. Williams	4060
Pacific Areas	John H. Davis, Jr	3457
Pennsylvania	Dwight R. Fuhrman	8896
Pennsylvania	Norman F. Rettig, Jr	249
Rhode Island	John J. Barone	8955
Rhode Island	Leo R. Swider	2929
South Carolina	George M. Pullie	6091
South Carolina	George E. Watts	5208
South Dakota	Dick L. Pickering	4726
South Dakota	Larry L. Scudder	1273
Tennessee	Charles J. Carter, Jr	9686
Tennessee	Billie S. Cassidy	4973
Tennessee	Charles P. Cassidy	4973
Tennessee	Carl T. Jackson	684
Tennessee	Mark A. Patterson	4730
Tennessee	Harlan D. Rector	4933
Texas	Ronald C. Hornsby	10428
Texas	Manfred J. Knapp	2544
Texas	Richard C. Prewett	8932
Texas	Daniel L. West	3413
Utah	Johnnie B. Janes	9803
Vermont	Bradley F. Reynolds	798
Virginia	James K. Martin	1503
Virginia	Harold J. Roesch, II	3219
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Wisconsin	Richard K. Morey	1037
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Florida	William R. Kirsop	8083
Florida	Thomas L. Kissell	7909
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Georgia	Ray E. Brooks	2785
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Idaho	Wayne H. Syth	9831
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Illinois	Rick Frank	1461

Illinois	Terry W. Vance	9789
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Indiana	Omar F. Kendall	673
Indiana	Eugene H. Kijanowski	717
Indiana	Jack Mason, Sr	1157
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Iowa	Robert C. Peters	5981
Iowa	Phillip D. Walsh	6172
Kansas	Vernon W. Russell	852
Kansas	Roger H. Sellers	6654
Kentucky	Thomas R. Aull	696
Kentucky	Jesse R. Green	1191
Louisiana	Federico M. Arends, III	5951
Maine	Peter F. Miesburger	9389
Maine	Thomas G. Trottier	1603
Maryland	Victor W. Fuentealba	9083
Massachusetts	Wilfred J. Arsenault	2346
Massachusetts	Walter J. Brown	2394
Massachusetts	Richard L. De Noyer	1012
Massachusetts	Joseph P. Mc Kean	2394
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Michigan	Lawrence Le Febvre	552
Michigan	Lloyd F. Putman, II	6579
Michigan	Barry F. Walter	4005
Minnesota	Patrick T. Bohmer	246
Minnesota	Donald E. Heuer	9433
Mississippi	Charles E. Fiske	4272
Mississippi	Johnnie L. Richard	2539
Mississippi	Fred W. Scarborough, Jr	5931
Missouri	Lawrence M. Maher	7356
Missouri	Frank J. Rick	6603
Missouri	Kim W. Wischmeyer	3987
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Montana	Eugene J. Mc Donald	1634
Montana	Thomas A. Pouliot	1116
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Nebraska	Billy C. Smith	7028
Nevada	John T. Edwards	3819
Nevada	Robert J. Garlow	36

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New Jersey	G. B. Eveland	7677
New Jersey	Warren C. George	6590
New Jersey	John J. Senk, Jr	335
New Mexico	James H. Ferguson	7686
New Mexico	Raul V. Sanchez	6917
New York	Elton C. Klein	478
New York	Robert C. Stinger, Jr	6530
North Carolina	Jack W. Kerns	9488
North Carolina	Elree T. Smith	10999
North Carolina	Colon J. Warren	9103
North Dakota	Thomas G. Bernotas	4324
North Dakota	Ted A. Krogen	2328
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Ohio	Joseph M. Colarusso	8040
Ohio	Richard R. Uzl, Jr	7727
Ohio	Gerald J. Ward	5713
Oklahoma	James A. Aldridge	4446
Oklahoma	Donald R. Fenter	5263
Oregon	Joe W. Collins	1383
Pacific Areas	Richard A. Keeley	9612
Pennsylvania	Edward A. Deissroth	6704
Pennsylvania	Franklin E. Lopes	92
Rhode Island	John Sivo	2396
South Carolina	Henry T. Bozard	2779
South Carolina	William J. Jolin	6087
South Carolina	James M. Mc Clendon	3433
South Carolina	Gerald T. Pothier	10256
South Dakota	Arnold J. Heggestad	4674
South Dakota	Richard R. Schwanke, Jr	628
South Dakota	Tom Sherman	3342
Tennessee	Ronnie L. Davis	1618
Tennessee	David Everett	4349
Tennessee	Charles K. Miller	5156
Tennessee	Edward F. Southern	4862
Texas	Jimmie D. Cantrell	9168
Texas	Joe N. Daniel	3278
Texas	Glen M. Gardner, Jr	3359

Texas	Danny R. Henry	4372
Texas	Jerry D. Murphree	3359
Utah	Charles A. Gray	4519
Vermont	Arthur R. Bowman	771
Virginia	Curtis Bartmess, Jr	10574
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Washington	Edwin F. Rasmussen	9430
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Idaho	Robert B. Finney	63
Illinois	Fred J. Albers	5790
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Kansas	Orlin L. Wagner	112
Kentucky	Donald G. Dixon	680
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Massachusetts	Louis C. Stifano	1012
Michigan	David L. Hutson	8846
Minnesota	Alcuin G. Loehr	4847
Mississippi	Donald L. Verucchi	9573
Montana	Daniel P. Antonietti	1448
Nebraska	John R. Liebsack	2503
Nevada	Daryl L. Mobley	3630
New Hampshire	Paul J. Chevalier	168
New Jersey	Michael H. Wysong	9503
New Mexico	Roland La France, Sr	6917
New York	Karl R. Rohde	1374
North Carolina	Arthur A. Shull	2843
North Dakota	John L. Jacobsen	1326
Ohio	Larry D. Moore	3494
Oregon	H. M. Jackson	4108
Pennsylvania	Thomas J. Dougherty	3474
Rhode Island	John J. Barone	8955
South Carolina	Al Spencer	10813
South Dakota	William F. Cerny, Jr	9950
Tennessee	Cooper T. Holt	1289
Texas	Kenneth R. Burton, Jr	9182
Utah	Norman I. Nelson	1695
Vermont	Edward H. Laviletta	792
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West Virginia	Ralph Stump	2716
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272
Wyoming	Robert L. Craft, Jr	11453

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Connecticut	Dale St Louis	574
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Florida	Charles W. Householder	5690
Florida	Ernest R. Sandman	2500
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Idaho	Kenneth E. Pitcher	10043
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Illinois	Kenneth D. Seay	9759
Indiana	Roger E. Baker	6841
Indiana	Charles A. Bass	7119
Indiana	Richard M. Faulk	2839

Indiana	William A. Thien	3281
Iowa	Edward B. Ball	775
Iowa	Robert S. Randall	839
Iowa	Gary L. Thomas	5603
Kansas	Harold E. Garrett	112
Kansas	Buddy J. Haney	56
Kansas	Clyde H. Hatcher	1254
Kentucky	Michael R. Allen	10281
Kentucky	Robert E. Colasanti	10281
Kentucky	Park A. Yeager	11139
Latin Amer/Carib	Dannie Cooper	3822
Latin Amer/Carib	Darryl S. Dalley	3822
Louisiana	Ivy J. Dupre	7755
Maine	Richard R. Commeau	3381
Maine	Richard B. Filliettaz	6977
Maryland	William L. Self	10076
Maryland	Raymond M. Shipley	5370
Massachusetts	John A. Martin	5737
Massachusetts	Ronald A. Patalano	529
Michigan	Ronald L. Amend	7486
Michigan	Garry J. Goff	2406
Michigan	Billy G. Stancroff	7729
Michigan	James A. Van Hauter	4553
Minnesota	James A. Connolly	6690
Minnesota	Alcuin G. Loehr	4847
Minnesota	John L. Shalloe	8510
Mississippi	Louis M. Tanksley	9122
Missouri	Glenn E. Davis	4294
Missouri	Eugene L. Hoeltge	5077
Missouri	Dewey M. Riehn	280
Montana	Randall A. King	1579
Nebraska	Roger L. Lang	926
Nebraska	Wilbert H. Wagner	6219
Nevada	Herman C. Hagen, Jr	3848
Nevada	Walter Lewis	1002
New Hampshire	Richard F. Therrien	1631
New Jersey	Ernest R. Cuff	1795
New Jersey	Andrew Henkel, Jr	2290
New Jersey	Donald E. Marshall, Jr	9503

New Jersey	Michael H. Wysong	9503
New Mexico	Tyrone M. Benson	7686
New York	Ellis E. Bex	9596
North Carolina	Michael T. Burris	2615
North Carolina	William C. Cox	7383
North Carolina	Douglas L. Seay	4309
North Dakota	Loren M. Headrick	753
Ohio	Gary B. Bentfeld	2799
Ohio	Merton S. Compton	7424
Ohio	Leon Johnson	6772
Ohio	John E. Moon	2873
Ohio	Terry A. Roan	3124
Oklahoma	Glenn O. Hughes	382
Oklahoma	Kenneth C. Pike	4876
Oklahoma	Henry L. Privette	8798
Oregon	Manuel J. Huerta	4248
Pacific Areas	Clifton W. Wilsey	2485
Pennsylvania	Theodore E. Bowers	8896
Pennsylvania	Roland J. Gallagher	6704
Pennsylvania	Charles H. Prince	8826
Rhode Island	Ernest R. Frappier	6342
Rhode Island	Frank E. Lightowler	6342
Rhode Island	William J. O`Donnell	2396
South Carolina	Richard N. Bell	4262
South Carolina	M. H. Gunter, Jr	8738
South Dakota	Linda M. Nelson	791
South Dakota	Cheryl M. Stahlecker	791
Tennessee	Henry P. Applegate	9851
Tennessee	Shelby G. Berryhill	684
Tennessee	Robert D. Gray	6494
Texas	Russell E. Behrndt	8787
Texas	Alexander Vernon	9191
Texas	Ferrell E. Warden	8552
Utah	George W. Hall	9413
Vermont	Kevin T. Maloney	6689
Vermont	Lynn P. Shepard	6689
Virginia	William B. Bovee	10546
Virginia	G. R. Faris	8467
Washington	Donald E. Bracken	2289

Washington	Alger E. Bragg	224
West Virginia	James R. Talerico	573
Wisconsin	Walter G. Hogan	6498
Wisconsin	Steven D. Lawrence	10272
Wisconsin	John A. Miller	9537
Wyoming	Robert J. De Bernardo	9439

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Arizona	Billie E. Stuart	549
Arkansas	A. M. Armstrong	2283
Arkansas	William W. Beams, Sr	2278
Arkansas	Carthel B. Parrott	3543
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California	Albert J. Butler	1512
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Colorado	Franz J. Wedemann	5061
Connecticut	Cornelio R. Hong	594
Connecticut	Albert Montambault	7330

Connecticut	Mike L. Montecalvo	6933
Connecticut	Joseph H. Perry	10004
Delaware	Michael K. Farley	5892
Delaware	Charles E. Price	3792
Dist of Col.	William L. Bradshaw	284
Dist of Col.	John P. Breen	2979
Europe	Dale R. Nagan	10708
Florida	Eugene Le Shore	10174
Florida	Eugene R. Manfrey	6827
Florida	Kenneth A. Thie	9272
Georgia	Wayne A. Hagan	6605
Georgia	Edmondson J. Irby, Jr	4830
Georgia	Harry C. Lambert	6686
Georgia	Joe T. Wood	8452
Hawaii	Nicholas S T. Young	1540
Idaho	Thomas E. Monson	63
Illinois	Victor H. Cibelli	235
Illinois	Donald R. Cox	2649
Illinois	John A. Metzger	2671
Indiana	Paul D. Curtice	1257
Indiana	Jerell O. Herston	6978
Iowa	William Desplanque	1655
Iowa	Howard W. Ransford	775
Kansas	Jefferson D. Lawson	1650
Kansas	Steven L. Phelps	7972
Kansas	Charles L. Shoemaker, Sr	12003
Kentucky	Eddie R. Huddleston	1178
Kentucky	Gerald L. Kayrouz	1170
Kentucky	James H. Presson	5409
Latin Amer/Carib	Michael E. Robinson	3835
Louisiana	Carroll J. Knott	5153
Louisiana	Larry W. Rivers	1736
Maine	Roland Choate	887
Maryland	Ronald E. Kitchen	434
Massachusetts	John F. Leonard	639
Massachusetts	George D. Murray	1018
Michigan	Edmund R. Gucwa	6896
Michigan	Eric L. Halvorsen	5065
Michigan	Lemuel J. Hunt	2406

Minnesota	Thomas L. Hanson	1639
Minnesota	Rolland D. Porter	1223
Minnesota	James D. Vetter	1223
Mississippi	Samuel C. Ladner	4808
Missouri	Thomas J. Hartman	35
Missouri	Lyle J. Seelinger	3118
Montana	James C. Aho	2252
Montana	Daniel P. Antonietti	1448
Nebraska	Robert D. Fenton	2503
Nebraska	John R. Liebsack	2503
Nevada	Jerome M. Adams	1753
New Hampshire	Billy J. Floyd	1631
New Jersey	Manuel Almeida	2226
New Jersey	William A. Goode	809
New Jersey	George T. Van Allen	7504
New Jersey	Donna L. Wertz	6590
New Mexico	Joe D. Salas	401
New York	Anthony M. Ferrarese	16
New York	William E. Mc Garr	6196
New York	James H. Vinsonhaler	7127
North Carolina	Arthur A. Shull	2843
North Carolina	Raymond J. Yamrus	7318
North Dakota	John D. Hanson	1874
North Dakota	Allen C. Rusch	762
Ohio	Francis L. Clendenen	9473
Ohio	James B. Lantz, Jr	2901
Ohio	Larry D. Moore	3494
Oklahoma	Herman O. Allmendinger	1843
Oklahoma	J. Richard Elsheimer	9265
Oregon	Glenn D. German	2302
Oregon	Dennis G. Guthrie	4108
Oregon	Hubert A. Marsh	1383
Pacific Areas	William J. Riopel	9951
Pennsylvania	Ruth A. Fairchild	315
Pennsylvania	Ronald G. Herman	8951
Pennsylvania	Paul J. Kopp	8896
Pennsylvania	Ronald G. Tyler, Sr	1462
Rhode Island	Armondo C. Azzinaro	8955
Rhode Island	Carmino M. Calvitto	45

Rhode Island	Salvatore J. Capirchio	2396
Rhode Island	William P. Donnelly	1271
South Carolina	Lyn D. Dimery	10420
South Carolina	James V. Mott	7735
South Dakota	Delane E. Fickbohm	6149
South Dakota	Fay J. Hendricks	6149
South Dakota	Lorne F. Ruzicka	3312
Tennessee	Robert L. Blair	4848
Tennessee	James E. O`Neill	4641
Tennessee	Raymond J. Rich	4641
Texas	Dennis M. Barber	3892
Texas	Wayne A. Depute	6378
Texas	John T. Spahr	8587
Texas	George B. Sparkman	9181
Utah	Roy G. Kunzi	3586
Utah	Michael A. Parks	9413
Vermont	Thomas H. Meehan	1332
Virginia	Dennis M. Cullinan	7916
Virginia	Conrad J. Yetter	993
Washington	Charles E. Mason	4278
West Virginia	Randall L. Bare	6669
West Virginia	Willis R. Friley	6450
Wisconsin	Arlene G. Banks	9403
Wisconsin	Charlene K. Cobb	10173
Wisconsin	De Witt H. Woodworth	1530
Wyoming	Robert L. Craft, Jr	11453