109th Congress, 1st Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 109–8

PROCEEDINGS OF 86*th* NATIONAL CONVENTION *of the*

AMERICAN LEGION

Nashville, Tennessee

August 31–September 2, 2004

2004 : 85th NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION : 2004

109th Congress, 1st Session – – – – – – – – – – – – – – House Document 109–8

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 86TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

COMMUNICATION

FROM

THE AMERICAN LEGION

TRANSMITTING

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF THE AMERICAN LEGION PROCEEDINGS OF THE 86TH ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION, HELD IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE FROM AUGUST 31, SEPTEMBER 1, AND 2, 2004 AND A REPORT ON THE ORGANIZATION'S ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR PRECEDING THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO 36 U.S.C. 49

FEBRUARY 17, 2005.—Referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and ordered to be printed

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, February 17, 2005.

Hon. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: In compliance with current public law we herewith transmit for printing as a House document a financial statement and independent audit of The American Legion, proceedings of our 86th annual National Convention held in Nashville, Tennessee from August 31, September 1, and 2, 2004 and a report on our organization's activities for the year proceeding the convention.

Sincerely,

STEVE A. ROBERTSON,
Director, National Legislative Commission.

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FOREWORD

This booklet has been prepared for the information of members of The American Legion. It has come to be known as the Summary of Proceedings of the National Convention for the current year. It is a comprehensive resumé, in as small space as possible, of what took place at the Eighty-sixth Annual National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004.

The final report of the National Organization, for the period ending December 31, 2003, and Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2003 and Surplus Analysis, January 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 are included in the Summary.

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

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

Robert W. Spanogle
National Adjutamt

Note: At various times, the National Vice Commanders, as follows, presided over the Convention sessions, when called upon by presiding officer, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure as shown in the verbatim proceedings: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Kansas; Fang A. Wong, New Jersey; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina; Todd E. White, Wyoming.

NATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND NATIONAL OFFICERS
THE AMERICAN LEGION, 1919 to Date

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

* indicates deceased

HONORARY COMMANDERS

General John J. Pershing*
Marshall Ferdinand Foch*

PARIS CAUCUS

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

ST. LOUIS CAUCUS

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

1st NATIONAL CONVENTION

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

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

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

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

5th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, California, October 15 to 19, 1923
Commander: Alvin M. Owsley*, Texas
Vice Commanders: Edward J. Barrett*, Wisconsin; Watson B. Miller*, District of Columbia; E. Erle Cocke, Sr.*, Georgia; Robert O. Blood*, New Hampshire; Chiles P. Plummer*, Wyoming
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. William P. O'Connor*, Ohio
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

6th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Paul, Minnesota, September 15 to 19, 1924
Commander: John R. Quinn*, California
Vice Commanders: Lester F. Albert*, Idaho; Celora M. Stoddard*, Arizona; William B. Healey*, Pennsylvania; F. Ryan Duffy*, Wisconsin;
Dr. I. Thurman Mann*, North Carolina
Adjutant: Lemuel Bolles*, Washington Resigned 2-1-24; Succeeded by Russell G. Creviston*, Indiana
Treasurer: Robert H. Tyndall*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Ezra Clemens*, Minnesota
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

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

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

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

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

11th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Louisville, Kentucky, September 30 to October 3, 1929
Commander: Paul V. McNutt*, Indiana
Vice Commanders: Lawrence E. McGann, Jr. *, Illinois; George W. Malone*, Nevada; Edward L. White*, Connecticut; Miller C. Foster*, South Carolina; Walton D. Hood*, Texas
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rabbi Lee J. Levinger*, Delaware
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois

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

13th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Detroit, Michigan, September 21 to 24, 1931
Commander: Ralph T. O'Neil*, Kansas
Vice Commanders: Bert S. Hyland*, Vermont; Roland B. Howell*, Louisiana; Harry B. Henderson, Jr. *, Wyoming; Dr. James A. Duff*, West Virginia; Dr. Neal D. Williams*, Missouri
Adjutant: James F. Barton*, Iowa
Chaplain: Rev. Joseph N. Barnett*, Wisconsin
Treasurer: Bowman Elder*, Indiana
Historian: Eben Putnam*, Massachusetts
Judge Advocate: Scott W. Lucas*, Illinois to 6-24-31 Succeeded by Acting Judge Advocate: Robert A. Adams*, Indiana

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

28th NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Francisco, California, September 30 to October 4, 1946
Commander: John Stelle *, Illinois
Vice Commanders: R. Graham Huntington*, New Jersey; Fred LaBoon*, Oklahoma; Sam L. Latimer, Jr.*, South Carolina; H. Dudley Swim*, Idaho; Jeremiah Twomey*, Massachusetts
Adjutant: Donald G. Glascoff*, Michigan
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Smith*, Iowa.
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr.*, Alabama
Treasurer: John R. Ruddick*, Indiana, (died 7-13-45) Succeeded by Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

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

30th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami, Florida, October 18 to 21, 1948
Commander: James F. O'Neil*, New Hampshire
Vice Commanders: LeRoy William Barns*, South Dakota; Albert A. Cree*, Vermont;
Richard B. Ott*, Washington; Myron R. Renick*, West Virginia;
Joe W. White*, Georgia
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Frank L. Harrington*, Montana
Historian: Thomas M. Owen, Jr. *, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

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

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

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

34th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New York, New York, August 25 to 28, 1952
Commander: Donald R. Wilson*, West Virginia
Vice Commanders: Adolph F. Bremer*, Minnesota; Frank R. Kelley*, Massachusetts;
Thomas E. Paradine*, New York; Oscar B. Rohiff*, Wyoming;
Audley H. Ward*, South Carolina
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Olaf G. Birkeland*, Wisconsin
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

35th NATIONAL CONVENTION
St. Louis, Missouri, August 31 to September 3, 1953
Commander: Lewis K. Gough*, California
Vice Commanders: William R. Bourdon*, Arizona; Lyon W. Brandon*, Mississippi;
Wilbur C. Daniel*, Virginia; Harry V. Groome*, New Jersey;
J. Addington Wagner*, Michigan
Adjutant: Henry H. Dudley*, Nebraska
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. John E. Duffy*, Ohio
Historian: Monte C. Sandlin*, Alabama
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

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

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

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

39th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 16 to 19, 1957
Commander: W.C. 'Dan' Daniel*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Gaylor M. Brown*, Iowa; George T. Lewis*, Jr., Tennessee; Carl R. Moser*, Oregon; John E. Stay, Pennsylvania; J. Edward Walter*, Maryland
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Bernard W. Gerdon, Indiana
Historian: Robert T. Fairey*, South Carolina
Treasurer: Neal Grider*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

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

41st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 25 to 27, 1959
Commander: Preston J. Moore*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: C. D. DeLoach, District of Columbia; John W. Collins*, Pennsylvania; James B. Kerrigan*, Missouri; Robert Charles Smith*, Louisiana; James C. Bangs*, Idaho
Adjutant: E.A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Twiss*, Massachusetts
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Ralph B. Gregg*, Indiana

42nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, October 18 to 20, 1960
Commander: Martin B. McKneally*, New York
Vice Commanders: William A. Brennan, Jr., Indiana; A. Layman Harman*, South Carolina; Nate V. Keller*, Minnesota; Irven Frank Gianotti*, Minnesota (appointed September 14, 1960, to fill vacancy created July 25 by the death of Nate V. Keller); Willard W. Brandt, North Dakota; Charles McGonegal*, California; Corydon T. Hill*, California (appointed May 4, 1960, to fill vacancy created January 27 by the death of Charles McGonegal)
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Robert I. Kahn, D.H.L., Texas
Historian: Mrs. Charles A. (Emily) Herbert*, New Jersey
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

43rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Denver, Colorado, September 12 to 14, 1961
Commander: William R. Burke*, California
Vice Commanders: George K. Walker, Massachusetts; James M. Wagonseller, Ohio; Vincent J. Maxheim*, Iowa; Dr. Harry H. Kretzler*, Washington; R. C. Godwin*, North Carolina
Adjutant: E .A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. William H. Moss*, Tennessee
Historian: Glenn B. Hoover*, Iowa
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

44th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Las Vegas, Nevada, October 9 to 11, 1962
Commander: Charles L. Bacon*, Missouri
Vice Commanders: Walter W. Barnard*, Montana; Edward T. Hoak*, Pennsylvania; Wilson H. Morrison*, Michigan; J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma; Edward Wysocki*, New Jersey
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Robert G. Keating*, Connecticut
Historian: Earl David Young*, Colorado
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

45th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Miami Beach, Florida, September 10 to 12, 1963
Commander: James E. Powers*, Georgia
Vice Commanders: Harold D. Beaton*, District of Columbia; James W. Doon*, New Hampshire; Claude A. Hamilton*, South Dakota; Paschal C. Reese*, Florida; Victor F. Whittlesea*, Nevada
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming
Chaplain: Rabbi Albert M. Shulman*, Indiana
Historian: H. Armand de Masi*, Italy
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

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

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

48th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Washington, D.C., August 30 to September 1, 1966
Commander: L. Eldon James*, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Dr. A.R. Choppin*, Louisiana; William E. Galbraith, Nebraska; Robert O. Phillips*, Philippines; William J. Rogers, Maine; Soleng Tom,* Arizona
Adjutant: E. A. Blackmore*, Wyoming (died 4-21-67) Succeeded by Ernest N. Schmid 5-4-67 to 8-31-67
Chaplain: Rev. Alfred C. Thompson, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

49th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Boston, Massachusetts, August 29 to 31, 1967
Commander: John E. Davis*, North Dakota
Vice Commanders: Robert M. Fritz*, Indiana; Lewis W. Emerich, Texas;
Harry V. Klein*, Pennsylvania; Frank L. Orfanello*, Massachusetts;
James A. Tadlock*, New Mexico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Anthony J. O'Driscoll*, New York
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

50th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, September 10 to 12, 1968
Commander: William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
Vice Commanders: Coleman Nolen*, Oklahoma; Louis R. J. Malo*, Rhode Island;
Roscoe D. Curtiss*, Tennessee; Dr. Edwin L. Peterson, Utah;
Marvin W. Roth*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. Edward P. Nolan*, Pennsylvania
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

51st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Atlanta, Georgia, August 26 to 28, 1969
Commander: William C. Doyle*, New Jersey
Vice Commanders: C. Russell Huber*, Alaska; John A. Jones*, West Virginia;
Howard E. Lohman*, Minnesota; Lewis E. McCray*, Alabama;
Maurice Parisien*, Maine
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. C.J. Olander*, Mississippi
Historian: Harold A. Shindler*, Indiana
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

52nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Portland, Oregon, September 1 to 3, 1970
Commander: J. Milton Patrick*, Oklahoma
Vice Commanders: Kent. T. Lundgren*, Michigan; Roland D. Marble, Mississippi;
Raymond F. Mudge*, New Hampshire; Earl R. Norgard*, Oregon;
Gilberto M. Font*, Puerto Rico
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Fr. William D. Curtis*, Minnesota
Historian: John A. May*, South Carolina
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

53rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Houston, Texas, August 31 to September 2, 1971
Commander: Alfred P. Chamie*, California
Vice Commanders: Claude Carpenter, Arkansas; Max Hanson*, Idaho;
Robert E L. Eaton*; Maryland; Gabriel T. Olga*, Massachusetts;
John E. Gilbert, Pennsylvania
Adjutant: William F. Hauck*, Indiana
Chaplain: Rev. Milton B. Faust*, North Carolina
Historian: Howard M. Swinney*, Kentucky
Treasurer: William Francis Polen*, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Bertram G. Davis*, New York

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

77th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Indianapolis, Indiana, September 4 to 6, 1995
Commander : William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Vice Commanders: Joseph T. Craig, Alaska; Silas M. Noel, Kentucky; Calvin E. Patton, Maryland; H. Gordon Burleigh*, New York; Vernon K. Grosenick*, Wisconsin
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Roy L. Pryor*, South Carolina
Historian: M. LaReine Maxey*, Nevada, (died 10-7-94) Appointed at 1994 Fall Meetings, Carl S. Wipperman, Washington
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

78th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Salt Lake City, Utah, September 3 to 5, 1996
Commander: Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Vice Commanders: Keith Baker, Iowa; William L. Ciciotte, Maine; Robert D. Scott, Oregon; C. Darrel Haskell, South Dakota; Ralph J. Reel, Tennessee
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Joseph E. Reynolds, Texas
Historian: R. Paul Tenney, Vermont
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

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

80th NATIONAL CONVENTION
New Orleans, Louisiana, September 8 to 10, 1998
Commander: Anthony Jordan, Maine
Vice Commanders: Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut; Conrad A. Chisholm, Idaho; Norris W. Preston, Missouri; Gerald L. Moore*, Ohio; Robert E. Vass, West Virginia
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Henry E. Eisenhart, Pennsylvania
Historian: Tommy Mills, Mississippi
Treasurer: Webber LaGrange, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

81st NATIONAL CONVENTION
Anaheim, California, September 7 to 9, 1999
Commander: Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Vice Commanders: Leo P. Burke, California; Roger L. Tingler, Georgia; James W. Gravenstein, Kansas; Fernando M. Goulart, Rhode Island; John D. Morris, Texas
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Robert J. Sweeney
Historian: Robert L. Klipstine*
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr.
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

82nd NATIONAL CONVENTION
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 5 to 7, 2000
Commander: Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Vice Commanders: James F. Fraughnaugh, Alabama; Milton W. Lobstein, Michigan; Robert Skallerud, Minnesota; Robert F. Neville, New York; L. Harry Easley, Washington
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: David R. Brown, Louisiana
Historian: Robert Mead, Nebraska
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

83rd NATIONAL CONVENTION
San Antonio, Texas, August 28 to 30, 2001
Commander: Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Vice Commanders: Charles C. Ragsdell, Arkansas; James E. Koutz, Indiana; Henry P. Bradley, Massachusetts; John C. Pellegrini, Montana; William A. Weatherly, South Carolina
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Calvin C. Turpin, California
Historian: James Buterbaugh, Kansas
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

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

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

86th NATIONAL CONVENTION
Nashville, Tennessee, August 31 to September 2, 2004
Commander: John A. Brieden, III, Texas
Vice Commanders: Richard G. Denbow, Iowa; Michael Dennis Helm, Kansas;
Fang A. Wong, New Jersey; Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina;
Todd E. White, Wyoming
Adjutant: Robert W. Spanogle, Michigan
Chaplain: Rev. Dr. William J. P. Doubek, III, Missouri
Historian: Fae Casper, Georgia
Treasurer: George A. Buskirk, Indiana
Judge Advocate: Philip B. Onderdonk, Maryland

PROCEEDINGS

of the

86TH Annual Convention

of

The American Legion

Tuesday, August 31, 2004

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

...At 8:15 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the 86th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were conducted.

Call to Order
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The 86th National Convention of The American Legion will come to order. Ladies and gentlemen, please rise. The National Champion Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, Maryland presents the Colors, and then please remain standing through the rest of the opening ceremonies.

...Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, Rockville, Maryland presented the Colors, followed by the National Anthem, sung by Katie Park of Chattanooga, Tennessee.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Color Guard, you may retire.

Next we'll have the Invocation by our National Chaplain, the Rev. Bill Doubek, Post 163, Neosho, Missouri. Please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. William J.P. Doubek, Missouri, National Chaplain

Eternal God, at the beginning of this Convention we come to You for help and light. Grant that we may hallow these days to Your service and find in You peace, wisdom and strength. Grant that we may serve You in spirit and in truth, and build our work on the good foundation of justice and charity.

Be with us in all our sessions. Be at our side. Give us the grace to think what is right and be our guide and counselor as we work for the good of our comrades everywhere; for our communities; for our individual states and our beloved nation.

This we ask in Your name. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

If you will join me for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony
Dave Rehbein, Iowa, Chairman Foreign Relations Commission
Warren G. King, Sr., Tennessee, Former POW

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: At this time we pause to remember those who are listed as prisoners of war or missing in action from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and the Cold War.

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

We now call on Dave Rehbein of Iowa, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission, and Legionnaire Warren King, Sr., of Post 82 in Nashville, a former POW himself, to place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair.

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

Preamble To The American Legion Constitution
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

And now we will join together in re-affirming our commitment to the principles and ideals on which our great American Legion was founded by reciting, in unison, the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion.

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

You may be seated.

If you've heard me speak in this last few years, you undoubtedly have heard me talk about why I do what I do for The American Legion. For those few who have not heard me, let me tell you.

I do it because I really believe I can make a difference. I believe that we all working together collectively can make a big difference for America. And nobody can dispute that since our founding, The American Legion has made a difference.

But we have far to go, and we have much to do. And throughout the generations of comrades before us, and those who will come after us, a common beacon guides us.

...At this time—Choir—"There She Stands," with video.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen the Tift County High School Choir from Tifton, Georgia, under the direction of Mr. Randy Barber. (Applause.)

At our very first Convention in 1919, we established our commitment to the children of America. Our leadership and guidance has made a difference for generations of citizens through our youth programs. Today, we present to you the best of today's generation of American Legion Youth Champions.

Our first Youth Champion will be a senior at T.L. Hanna High School in Belton, South Carolina. He is active in his JROTC Unit and participates in Speech and Debate. Please welcome the 2004 Boys Nation President, Stephen Riley Harvell.

The American Legion Youth Champions
2004 Boys Nation President
Stephen Riley Harvell, Belton, South Carolina

Boys State and Boys Nation did a lot for me. It taught me respect for the government and respect for the democratic processes of the nation. But, what it's taught me more along my way—it and the program itself—but it's the ladies and gentlemen of The American Legion that I've met along the way. You've been someone for me to look up to. I found a mentor in each and every single person who I've encountered here.

And as I look upon my fellow counterparts throughout the nation, something that America needs; America's youth need someone strong and vibrant to look up to; someone who serves their country and who understands the sacrifice that it takes to provide democracy.

So today, I'm here to answer three questions for you. I hope to reassure you as to the competency of this generation. First. I want to tell you what you can know. You can know that America's youth today are ready and willing to take America into the future. We as a youth, as the people who I've met along the way, the 28,000 Boys Staters, and the 96 delegates to Boys Nation with me, are ready and willing to take America into the future.

Second of all, what can you do? What you're doing is wonderful. You're believing in America's youth when a lot of people choose not to. A lot of people have given up hope. And for that I must commend you. Your youth programs are astounding and wonderful.

And finally, what can you hope for? You can hope for a better tomorrow, because America's youth are ready to make tomorrow better for us.

Before I close today I'd like to thank, first of all, my parents and my friends. I'd like to thank my youth minister, Dale Tadlock. And I'd like to thank Post 14 in Anderson, South Carolina for sponsoring me to Boys State, and the Department of South Carolina for taking me to Boys Nation. So if you're ever in South Carolina the great and wonderful, beautiful State of South Carolina with smiling faces and beautiful places, I hope that you'll look us up and maybe enjoy our hospitality. So thank you, and God bless America.

ANNOUNCER: The 2003 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year has a long list of community volunteer activities to his credit. Representing Post 19 in Logan, West Virginia, the 2003 Legion Player of the Year is Jared James Willis.

2003 Baseball Player of the Year
Jared James Willis, Logan, West Virginia

It is an honor to be here today to speak to such a prestigious and distinguished organization. Thank you for selecting me as one of your Youth Champions. You see, American Legion Baseball has taught me more than just about the game of baseball. It's taught me to hold a great respect for my flag and my country. It reminds me of how thankful I am to have the freedom to play the game of baseball. I'm only here today because of the many Americans who made an everlasting commitment to their country.

I'd like to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to be here in Nashville and participate in the great activities of your National Convention. The words 'thank you' do not begin to express my appreciation. But I would like to say thanks to Logan County, American Legion Post 19, and my coach, Kevin Gurtz for nominating me. Thanks to the West Virginia American Legion and all those over the years that have supported me during my baseball endeavors.

Thanks to the National American Legion organization and all the officials that made my trip to Cooperstown, New York a trip of a lifetime and to those who have made this trip a terrific finale to my career with The American Legion Baseball Organization. A very special thanks to the selection committee that felt I was deserving enough of this great honor. I am honored to be one of your Youth Champions.

ANNOUNCER: The Junior Shooting Champion for 2004 is a member of the Lake Houston 4-H Outdoor Explorers sponsored by the Ernest Shock Post 132, in Humble, Texas. Please welcome Wesley Hess.

2004 Junior Shooting Sports Champion
Wesley Hess, Humble, Texas

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program extends far beyond the few thousand competitors who enter the National Championships every year. It reaches out to every young person across America. For instance, The American Legion, with other organizations such as 4-H, gives to the young citizens access to courses like firearms safety and provide opportunities for competition. Through The American Legion, our nation's youth are becoming more aware and safety conscious while participating in the events that shooting sports has to offer. Children are taking this knowledge of firearms safety home with them and this shows through the reduction in the number of gun related accidents among the kids in the United States.

The American Legion does make a difference in each and every community across America, and you can see this in the many young Americans that we represent.

ANNOUNCER: The 2004 National Oratorical Contest Champion is from Albany, Georgia. His speech on the U.S. Constitution reminded us how important it is for each of us to exercise our right to vote, because each vote makes a difference. Please welcome Philip Bishop.

2004 Winner National Oratorical Contest
Philip Bishop, Albany, Georgia

In the paraphrased words of the late Congresswoman from Texas, Barbara Jordan, "My faith in America is whole. It is complete. It is total. And I am not going to stand here and be an idle spectator." These words exemplify the spirit of The American Legion, and the effort it has always made to instill a sense of pride, patriotism and responsibility in the young people of America.

The Oratorical Contest provides high school students with the opportunity to understand the rights and responsibilities that come with being an American. While learning about history, government and the Constitution, we also learn a lot about ourselves. Thank you Walter H. Burke Post 30, the District of Georgia, and thank you to my family. Your support has been tremendous.

I commend The American Legion for their dedication and commitment to this nation. I have participated in many oratorical contests and this is the premiere program in the nation. The Legion family helps maintain the American dream, where young people can exercise their personal freedom to build, to grow and to prosper.

ANNOUNCER: Our next youth champion touched the hearts of veterans in his

community by organizing a Patriot Day Flag Retirement Ceremony. He makes a positive impact on many lives through his active involvement in his community. Please welcome the 2004 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year from McMinnville, Tennessee, Garrett F. Martin.

2004 Eagle Scout of the Year
Garrett Martin, McMinnville, Tennessee

My scouting career began 13 years ago, and not being interested in sports like most boys my age, I found my niche in Boy Scouts and in music. I would like to take this time to thank The American Legion for sponsoring Boy Scout troops across the nation. I'm glad to see you cover the physical aspects of youth with the shooting sports and with the baseball, but also the morals, the spirituality and character that is taught through scouting.

The years of scouting flew by, and it was time to plan my Eagle project; several ideas were tested and under careful consideration, I chose to lead my troop in a flag retirement ceremony. The event was planned to commemorate Patriot Day, just one year from the 9/11 attacks. The dignified ceremony was quite a success with over 150 flags donated for retirement. Those flags were then replaced with new ones to those who donated.

Veterans who served our country were given a special place of honor. Their patriotism was just as much alive that day as it was when they were in battle. They had memories in their eyes of war stories that were never spoken. Many veterans said that they had never experienced a flag retirement before, but they had no idea what impact the ceremony would have on them but ultimately, on us.

My commitment to America's future began the day I was born. I wanted to be a creator of freedom, not just a consumer of it. George Bush reminds us that America's purpose always stands before us. Our generation must show courage in a time of blessing as our nation has always shown in a time of crisis. And our courage issue by issue, can gather to greatness, as we serve our country. Each one of you here is a hero in my eyes. You are truly the greatest generation that unquestionably served our country.

You know, I've always been given the advice to surround myself with good people. Over the last few months, I have found that The American Legion are those good people. You are kind, compassionate and giving. Believers in patriotism, in God and in our country. You are the foundation and heart of America.

I thank each of you for believing in me and my future. Thank you for your kindness and your hospitality. Welcome to my home state of Tennessee, and I hope you all enjoy the sites and the sounds of Nashville.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We also have with us this morning the President of Girls Nation, Kate Gillman of Plandome on Long Island, New York.

At Manhasset High School, she plays lacrosse and soccer, but she said her Girls Nation experience moved her. In fact, she's now considering political science as a major in college because she says, "I really think I can make a difference."

2004 Girls Nation President
Kate Gillman
Plandome, Long Island, New York

I would just like to say a quick thank you to the men of The American Legion and the women of the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of The American Legion and

everyone here. You have given me such an opportunity, as well as my friends back here and we cannot say enough what this experience has done for us.

It has given me a lasting sense of pride in our nation that I know will never be extinguished. I now have a deep appreciation for our flag and for everything that democracy stands for. I hope that I can make you proud as your Girls Nation President, and continue the great tradition that you all have started here. Thank you so much for what you are doing for our country and please keep up the good work.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: There are those who question the younger generation but I tell you what, when you work with the best kids, you see that we have outstanding young people who will lead the nation in the future. As I look over my shoulder, Garret has every single merit badge that the Boy Scouts offers.

And Philip's oration that won the championship was so good if you look at the most recent *Dispatch*, I've quoted him. And I may use you again. (Laughter.)

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 2004 American Legion Youth Champions.

Presentation of the Spirit of Service Awards

ANNOUNCER: There is a special group of individuals in the armed forces today who redefine the term "service". As they serve their country, they also make time to serve their communities, their neighbors and comrades. Each year, The American Legion honors a person from each branch of the military with the Spirit of Service Award.

Assisting National Commander Brieden in presenting this year's awards is The Honorable R. L. Brownlee, Acting Secretary of the Army.

Representing the United States Army is a soldier committed to supporting the Scouting program in his spare time through his leadership and example. Specialist Russell A. Burnham, United States Army.

SPEC. BURNHAM: Thank you for this wonderful award. It not only honors me but more importantly, it honors my family Elizabeth, Emily and Tyler; my community, the Boy Scouts of America and the United States Army.

Also, thank you for honoring my fellow brothers and sisters in arms in their outstanding service and commitment to a better world. I love being a soldier, I love volunteering my time to the Boy Scouts. I loved being an Eagle Scout and I love being an American.

After 24 years of life I still have a lot to learn, but I have learned that when great organizations such as The American Legion want to honor you with an award for doing the things you love, you must be on the right track. I will continue to serve my community and this nation to the best of my abilities. I would like to leave you with a quote from a book called *Burnham: King of Scouts*. "As far as we can look back into history, the downfall of any nation can be traced to the moment that nation became timid about spending its best blood."

ANNOUNCER: Information Systems Technician Second Class Luciana A. Rodrigues has been selected to represent the Department of Navy for her selfless volunteerism and commitment to her comrades and community. Our next Spirit of Service Award goes to Petty Officer Luciana Rodrigues.

PETTY OFFICER RODRIGUES: It is an absolute honor and privilege to be

representing the world's greatest Navy today. Thank you to The American Legion for this incredible honor. It is especially meaningful to be recognized by The American Legion, a group of amazing individuals, a community of veterans who have served this country so dutifully, so proudly and so honorably. I've had a fantastic experience meeting some of you and sharing your experiences in the service. You've truly made me feel welcome.

I joined the Navy to serve my country and through service to country, I have truly learned the value of service to community. With the example and support of my shipmates and the greatest Chiefs of the Navy, I've been able and encouraged to make the most of my Naval career. Most importantly, I cannot accept this award without thanking my loving family who have been there for me since the day I enlisted, and especially my sister. You've been my inspiration my whole life.

ANNOUNCER: Corporal Clinton F. Firstbrook truly embodies the Marine Corps' core values of honor, courage and commitment. He has amassed hundreds of hours of community service to benefit his fellow Marines, their families, and his community. The 2004 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Marine Corps goes to Corporal Clinton F. Firstbrook. Accepting the award for Corporal Firstbrook is Major Stephen A. Cox.

MAJ. COX: I'm Major Steve Cox. I'm the Commanding Officer for Corporal Clinton Firstbrook at the Pentagon, and it's certainly an honor and a pleasure this morning to receive this award on his behalf. Corporal Firstbrook couldn't be here this morning because he has volunteered for another assignment. He is doing exactly what you would expect of your United States Marines, he's forward deployed, he's currently serving in the Green Zone in Baghdad and part of Combined Joint Task Force 7. (Applause.)

I can tell you that Corporal Firstbrook is a tremendous Marine and he is doing a super job for our country. You could not have picked a finer representative from the United States Marine Corps to receive this Spirit of Service Award than Corporal Firstbrook.

Now due to the miracle of modern technology, Corporal Firstbrook was able to send a video message this morning. I'd like to go ahead and play that video at this time.

(Video Acceptance Speech.)

CPL FIRSTBROOK: I'm sorry I can't be there with you tonight, but by the time you view this I'll be a few thousand miles away over in Iraq. In fact, I wish I was more presentable, but I've been running around all day as you can see. So, I'm a little sweaty trying to get my last gear checks accomplished.

But on to the matter at hand. Hopefully, Major Cox isn't building me up too much. I'm not even really sure what he's going to say. All that's important is that I'm 21 and I'm single. So if any of you nice ladies out there want to shoot me an e-mail, I'm sure he'll give you my address.

But in all seriousness, thank you very much for honoring me as one of the recipients of this award. It is a tremendous honor as I said, but one that I cannot share alone. Without the support of my command and the Personal Services Office at Henderson Hall, it would have been much harder for me to accomplish what I did.

Something that you might find interesting is that I never really volunteered before I joined the Marine Corps. But after I saw what my efforts did, I tried to do as much as possible. As the other recipients will agree, the feeling you get when volunteering is very hard to explain and unlike any other. The best thing I can do to describe it is talk to you about the faces I've seen of those I've helped. You see in the eyes how appreciative and

thankful they are for what you've done. That's really the reason why I do what I do. But seeing as my flight leaves in a few hours and I still have quite an amount to do, I'm going to cut this short and let you all get back to the festivities. So hopefully, you all enjoy everything and I'll see you in about six months.

ANNOUNCER: Storekeeper Second Class Patricia Johnson helps to provide children with disabilities the opportunity to experience the emotional development and fun of playing baseball. She also volunteers for Toys For Tots, the Partnership in Education Program and other causes. Please welcome Petty Officer Second Class Patricia Johnson, United States Coast Guard..

PETTY OFFICER JOHNSON: I would like to express my gratitude to my fellow veterans for their service and continued support of this great nation, and to The American Legion. I would like to thank the Marine Safety Office in Charleston, South Carolina, and my family, retired 1st Sgt. William Johnson and our daughters Melissa and Ashton, and our son Justin and my mother for supporting me.

I am honored to be chosen as one of the 2004 Service Award recipients. During the past four years I have been working with a group of amazing individuals. This group has taught me the meaning of never giving up, of cheering for the other person and most of all for enjoying life to its fullest.

I see my work with the disabled youth of Charleston's community as being my greatest joy, my greatest gift and my greatest accomplishment. They are the angels among us and my special angel is my daughter Melissa who is a member of the Challenger Team.

ANNOUNCER: The 2004 Spirit of Service Award for the United States Air Force goes to a woman who has selflessly volunteered hundreds of hours in support of various charities and causes. She embodies the spirit and commitment of making a difference in the lives of her fellow citizens. Please welcome Staff Sergeant Catherin C. Lammon, United States Air Force.

STAFF SGT. LAMMON: It's an honor for me to be here today. I am proud to serve God, the Air Force and my country. Our nation remains strong because of the brave men and women who have answered the call to serve in past, present and future. The American Legion represents and supports those who have pledged their lives to secure the blessings of liberty and the freedom we have in our nation.

I express my gratitude today. My father was a Korean veteran who served 20 years in the Army. In 1971, I was in the backseat of a Ford LTD and we were living in Wisconsin. A Vietnam veteran was walking home carrying his life in his duffel bag. My dad picked up that Vietnam veteran and took him home and gave him some money, and kept in touch with him. And that's where I picked up my volunteer work. He was always doing volunteer work and I uphold this family tradition of doing volunteer work from taking care of babies for deployed airmen, or sending them a package, or just doing local things in my community with an autistic 11 year old girl.

Today, I say thank you to Shriver Air Force Base, the 50th Space Wing, Col. Votrinoe, the 50th Operations Group, my husband and the Colorado Springs community, and The American Legion for allowing me to volunteer with various organizations. I am proud to receive The American Legion Spirit of Service Award.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen the 2004 American Legion Spirit of Service

Award Winners. (Applause.)

National Commander's Remarks

During the next few days of this Convention and throughout the coming year, I challenge you all to renew your commitment to the wonderful youth of our country represented by our youth champions. We must not fail the magnificent men and women of our armed forces represented by our Spirit of Service Award winners. It is one of the most important jobs that we have to support the troops. They are the newest generation of veterans and they must be cared for. And you all must continue to make a difference in our fight to protect Old Glory and the values of America. You must never forget why we dedicate ourselves to these causes. I think that is best exemplified in the first four words of our Preamble that we recited together "For God and country."

I also want to give a special thanks to our Tift County High School Choir. They were here for our religious services on Sunday. They were back again today. What most people do not realize is you don't just walk out and perform. It takes hours and hours of practice, and they spent a good deal of their summer practicing for this trip just to make sure that they would do you proud, and I think that they have. Their trip to our American Legion Convention has been made possible by the National Anthem Project. I would hope that you've been by the exhibit hall and visited their booth. If not, you need to do so because that project can really make a difference in America's future.

Greetings: Katherine Morris, Texas, National President American Legion Auxiliary

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Our next guest was elected to lead the nation's largest patriotic women's organization. When first elected, she received a rousing send-off for a year-long trek to promote the welfare needs of our veterans. Her continuing concern for veterans and her "back to basics" approach in promoting their needs has been the message that she's portrayed during her year in office. She has traveled extensively carrying her "H.E.A.R.T.S. in Service" message to our communities and to our nation. It's been an honor to serve side-by-side with her. She's a long time friend but a member of the Griffith Zann Unit 594 in Houston, Texas. Welcome our National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Katherine Morris.

NATL PRES MORRIS: I bring you greetings from the very proud and largest patriotic women's organization in the world the American Legion Auxiliary. It is such an exciting time to be here in Nashville, Tennessee and especially here at the beautiful Gaylord Opryland Hotel conducting the business of The American Legion Family. You know after you find your way around, it's plenty to see and do in Nashville. And it's a wonderful opportunity to have some fun after a year of hard work on behalf of the organization that you and I love so much.

It has been an honor serving with my friend, my fellow Texan, Commander Brieden as well as the Sons of The American Legion National Commander, Neal Warnken. As we traveled across the country this year, we set the theme for The American Legion family by promoting our programs together, "Angels and HEARTS," which played big roles in my year as National President. The idea behind my "Angels in Action" theme was to celebrate our members willingness to watch over America's veterans and children everywhere. Closely related to the Angel theme is my belief that our American Legion family is made

up of millions of members with big hearts. They care about their families, the veterans in their lives, and they care about the communities in which they live. To me, "H.E.A.R.T.S. in Action" is a reminder to all of us that veterans should be at the very heart of everything we do. It is truly The American Legion family's heart and soul.

You might have heard me say before that in the business world we define success by profits, or some other yardstick tied to material well being. But in the American Legion Auxiliary, and our entire American Legion family, success is measured by the services offered the nation's veterans.

Mr. Commander, I wish for you a very successful Convention and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to bring greetings to this assembly this morning.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: What a privilege it's been to serve with Katherine this year. We've had a great year Madame President and it's been great to be part of the family.

We are privileged this morning to have with us Acting Secretary of the Army, The Honorable Les Brownlee, who returned just yesterday from Central Command Theater of Operations, visiting our brave soldiers serving in Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq. This was his fifth visit to Iraq and Afghanistan since June of 2003. Secretary Brownlee's distinguished service to this country has spanned five decades, beginning with his commissioning as an Infantry Officer in 1962. His numerous awards and decorations are a tribute to his unwavering commitment to the service of our country. Allow me to name just a few.

His was the distinguished honor graduate of his Ranger class. He served two tours in Vietnam where he commanded soldiers in combat and was awarded two Silver Stars, three Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart for his leadership and courage under fire. Last year he was inducted into the Ranger Hall of Fame at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Retiring as a Colonel in 1984 after twenty-two years of active service, Secretary Brownlee continued to serve our nation as a professional staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, ultimately being named Staff Director of the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1996, where he served until he was appointed as Under Secretary of the Army on 14 November 2001. He assumed duties of Acting Secretary in May 2003.

Serving as the Army's civilian leader in one of the most dynamic periods in the history of our nation and our military, leading an army at war that is literally transforming, while it's in contact. Please join me in welcoming the civilian leader of our nation's Army, The Honorable Les Brownlee.

Address: The Hon. R. L. Brownlee, Acting Secretary of the Army

John, thank you very much for that gracious introduction. You know I've been noticing that this little step down here gets such a favorable reaction I'm tempted to use it. I can't tell you what an extraordinary honor it is for me to have the opportunity to join all of you here in your 86th National Convention of a great organization, The American Legion. And I can't thank you enough for honoring me in this way.

By the way, this is a wonderful place for you to meet, a world famous hotel and convention center here in the great city of Nashville, Tennessee. It's an honor for me to be here today along with several other distinguished guests: Mayor Bill Purcell, Congressman Jim Cooper, and, I understand we will be joined later by one of America's heroes and one of my special heroes, Senator John McCain. He gave a great speech last night, too. And my good friend Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Tony Principi and later, our 43rd President and our Commander-in-Chief, President George W. Bush.

Almost a century ago, soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force met in Paris to

establish your organization, The American Legion. Since then, you have distinguished yourselves through your patriotism and dedication to those ideals to which our forefathers committed their all. Some of you here today fought in World War II, or Korea, or both. Others, the next generation served in Vietnam. Your children and many of their generation have served, or are serving now in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all the members of The American Legion for your unwavering support of the magnificent young men and women of our Armed Forces serving around the world and for their families here at home.

Your phone card program in particular has been a terrific morale boost to our deployed troops, by providing them a means to stay connected with their loved ones. We are a nation at war and you again have answered your nation's call.

This past June, the nation commemorated a significant date in modern military history, D-Day, the allied invasion of Hitler's Fortress Europe, spearheaded by the Airborne drops and amphibious landings of American and British troops on the beaches of Normandy in 1944. On that day, six decades ago, many of you, joined by America's allies, altered the course of history. While in the Pacific, allied forces were driving steadily toward the Japanese home islands and victory. All of you, through your courage and sacrifice, literally saved our world. And for those of my generation, you will always be our heroes.

The nation recently recognized the service and sacrifice of those great Americans who served in uniform in World War II, as well as those who served on the home front, with the dedication of the National World War II Memorial on the mall in Washington, D.C. There, this well and long deserved monument joins the memorials to the veterans of the Korean and Vietnam wars; all honored by steady streams of those who come to pay their respects, to show their gratitude and for those who were there, just to remember.

Like the men and women of the Armed Forces who served their nation in earlier conflicts, today's Army is poised to play a similarly critical role in the course of modern human history. Once again, American soldiers are following in the footsteps of their personal heroes and role models, their grandparents and parents who served with honor in World War II, in Korea, in Vietnam and on other battlefields.

Just as many of you here today served multiple tours in Vietnam, so, too, have many of today's soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coast guardsmen seen extended duty in combat in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Our Army now with a high percentage of experienced combat veterans, is again fighting tyranny and oppression under the inspired leadership of our President who clearly understands that it is better to take the fight to the shadowy lairs and hideouts of those who would seek to destroy us than it is to wait for their devious attacks on our cities and our families.

This time the threat is not an easily recognizable enemy. The distinguishable uniform, ominous symbols and trademarks of oppression might be missing. But the new threat is just as sinister and dangerous, and the imperative to defeat it just as important. Acts of terrorism, whether committed abroad, or on U.S. soil, threaten our culture, our prosperity and our way of life. The responsibility for fighting and defeating this evil scourge rests with our military services and our coalition allies.

We are now three years into the global war on terror and we are making significant progress. Our Armed Forces deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and in hundreds of locations around the world, are fighting and winning the crucial struggle against those who would impose their brand of intolerance and totalitarianism on others by employing the tactics of fear and violence. America's Armed Forces are not only providing the opportunity for freedom and democracy for the 46 million people in Iraq and Afghanistan, but at the same time they are protecting the American people by attacking the terrorist where they hide in

their home nest and spanning grounds.

Let me highlight just a few of the accomplishments made possible by our American forces and our coalition allies. In October, Afghanistan will hold its first national elections since becoming a separate nation in 1919. Over 10 million Afghans are already registered to vote and over 40% of those registered are women.

This past June, the coalition provisional authority in Iraq transferred governance to a new Prime Minister and governing council. This was the first step toward self-governance in a truly democratic environment and paved the way for representative government to be elected by the Iraqi people in December.

The conditions for these accomplishments have been set in great part by the service and sacrifice of your American soldiers. The characteristics of service that epitomize our American soldier today have proven to be timeless. They are the same characteristics that have been the hallmark of American soldiers since the time of the American Revolution. They have tremendous combat skills, resolance and courage in battle. They demonstrate great initiative and adaptability as their predecessors did in previous conflicts. And like previous generations, today's soldiers display empathy and compassion while helping the newly liberated peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan build democratic governments.

From training Iraqi soldiers to defend their country, to helping rebuild the infrastructure of a nation crippled by the misrule of a previous murderous regime, American soldiers carrying the values and ideals of our nation are lighting the path to democracy for those who have never known it. Besides their incredible professionalism, their unequal skill and competence in warfare, our soldiers have one other attribute that you should be very proud of. They carry your moral values, your sense of right and wrong with them to guide their actions.

Our successes in the war on terror are not without cost. Some of our soldiers have lost their lives and we mourn the loss of each and everyone. Many have been wounded. As the Acting Secretary of the Army, I have the special privilege of being able to visit with many of these brave young men and women as they are treated and begin the recovery from their wounds. I am always amazed and inspired by their spirit, their dedication and their love for their country.

Last December, I had the honor of presenting the Purple Heart to Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Brisco of the 5th Special Forces Group, severely wounded during an ambush in Iraq. Lead by the local American Legion Post, his hometown of Ames, Texas gave him a heroes welcome upon his return. Thank all of you for honoring him. We are honored that Sgt. 1st Class Brisco and his wonderful family are with us here today. Sgt. 1st Class Brisco lost his right arm in that ambush. He did not lose his courage nor his spirit. Sgt. 1st Class Brisco is here with his wife Beverly, their two children Rayna and Anneia. There are two other members of the Brisco family that this morning are in school and that's Ebony and Tashona. Sgt. Brisco, thank you and your wonderful family for your service and sacrifice.

I want to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation to my good friend Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Tony Principi, for his leadership, compassion and for the Veterans Affairs tremendous work in caring for our veterans under Tony's great leadership. Four months ago, Tony and I announced together a new initiative, the "Disabled Soldier's Support System." With the assistance of the Veterans Affairs Department, this Army program helps our most severely disabled soldiers and their families from the initial casualty notification and evacuation all the way through their return to home station, or their transition to civilian life. Working closely with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, we are assisting our disabled soldiers and their families as they recover and rebuild their lives. Most will begin new careers and new professions and jobs. Although their

physical injuries may preclude their remaining on active duty, they still have the intellect, character, integrity and self-discipline that made them such marvelous American soldiers. In the workplace, these outstanding men and women will continue to perform as the great Americans they are. And we appreciate your help in assisting their transition to new careers in our nation's workforce.

I'm always moved by our soldiers unanimous expressions of dedication, their commitment to service and their unwavering loyalty to their units and comrades in arms. I'm equally moved by the tremendous commitment displayed by the families of our soldiers and the support they provide. Their love and their loyalty to our soldiers are invaluable in every aspect of what our Army does. The devotion and support of our Army families represents all that we fight for and all that we cherish.

It's important to acknowledge the tremendous support that our Army has received from the American public. Communities, throughout the nation, have welcomed our soldiers home with wonderful ceremonies and displays of affection and appreciation. Airline passengers have given up their seats to soldiers returning home for well deserved leave. And soldiers have been applauded by their fellow Americans in airports, on planes, at sporting events and throughout our nation. These spontaneous and heartfelt expressions of appreciation have incredible meaning to our soldiers.

There are countless others in our nation who support our soldiers. Hundreds of businesses large and small stand behind our troops. They hold jobs for Reservists and National Guardsmen who are deployed for extended periods of time. School children, along with businesses and individuals donate supplies, send letters, baked goods and other items to provide comfort to our soldiers. All of these gifts of love and appreciation are special and meaningful to those carrying out the difficult missions in the war on terror far from home.

President Bush put these feelings into words in his last State of the Union Address when he so eloquently stated, "The men and women of the American military have taken the hardest duty. We've seen their skill and their courage in armored charges and midnight raids, and lonely hours on faithful watch. We've seen the joy when they return and felt the sorrow when one is lost. I want you and your families to know, America is proud of you." By their actions each day it is clear that America remains proud of those in uniform who serve our nation.

In closing, let me share with you a story of our soldiers we can all certainly be proud of. This past Sunday, as I was returning from Afghanistan and Iraq, I stopped at our hospital in Landstuhl, Germany to visit both soldiers and marines who have been wounded and are being cared for there. I presented Purple Hearts to several of our wounded soldiers. While I consider all of them heroes, let me tell you about one in particular. This young soldier was in the Intensive Care Unit. He had been severely wounded in Iraq only a few days earlier by an RPG and the doctors were working diligently to prepare to evacuate him to Walter Reed. I presented his Purple Heart as his mother and his brother looked on and afterwards, his mother said, "I know he is going to recover. And when he does, the first thing he will want to do is get back to his unit."

His story is not unique. Many of these young soldiers who have been very seriously wounded, even those who have lost limbs have expressed the same desire to rejoin their units to continue to serve their country and remain in the Army.

As the nation honors its veterans of the second World War this year, I think of the parallel between those great heroes and those who serve our nation today in uniform. Our soldiers today have inherited the difficult task of maintaining the freedom that each of you fought to defend in Europe, or the Pacific, in Korea, or Southeast Asia, in the Middle East, or other lonely and now quiet battlefields. Through courage and selfless service, our soldiers

have always answered the call to duty. They will continue to defend the United States, our freedom and our way of life. I agree with our President, "We will win the war on terror." Our soldiers will continue to uphold the traditions of service and sacrifice, of patriotism and courage, and the same dedication to freedom and democracy that characterizes all of you, the members of The American Legion.

God bless you and God bless this wonderful nation we all love and so proudly serve.

NATL VICE COMDR WONG: Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your outstanding service and leadership in providing the best to our heroes who are fighting and defending the freedoms all over the world.

I see that we're not quite ready for the next guest. Isn't this a great Convention and hotel? What I'd like to know how many of you actually figured out how this hotel is laid out? Not one. But none the less, it's a great hotel. I'm sure that you truly enjoy it.

The next man to address our Convention has stepped up to this lectern many times in the past. He's a friend and an advocate of our comrades.

He directs the federal government's second largest department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs, and national cemeteries for America's veterans and dependents. A decorated Vietnam combat veteran, he has worked on national policy issues and has held several executive positions in federal government throughout his career.

Please welcome the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and a fellow Legionnaire from Post 17 in Rancho Sante Fe, California, The Honorable Anthony Principi.

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

I'm honored to be with you to address my fellow Legionnaires, and men and women in uniform and, of course, the American Legion Auxiliary as well.

I want to tell you how very very proud we are of Acting Secretary of the Army, Les Brownlee. He is doing a phenomenal job leading the United States Army during this very very tumultuous time in our nation's history. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude; to National Commander for being a strong leader of a great organization, for standing side-by-side with the Department of Veterans Affairs for leading the advocacy to help improve the benefits and services that we deliver to America's veterans and, of course, to President Morris and all of the work that she and the members of the Auxiliary have done to be at the side of our nation's veterans.

I have a wonderfully prepared speech by my staff but I decided to set it aside this morning to talk to you for a few minutes from the heart. I want you to know how very proud and humbled I am to be your Secretary, because I believe that you individually and collectively as members of this great organization embody what it means to be an American. When your country needed you, you were willing to serve you. You answered the call. You were willing to lay down your life for this nation. But what is unique is that when you came home and hung up your uniform, you continued to served. You continued to serve your fellow veterans with millions upon millions of hours of volunteerism in our VA hospitals and our national cemeteries. You continued to serve your communities with American Legion Baseball, with the largest blood donation drives in this nation. You continued to serve your nation with programs like Boys State and Girls State, building the future leaders of this great country. Indeed, you embody the bedrock values and the quiet virtues that have made America great in the 20th Century and now in the 21st Century.

Now we face great challenges in the VA, but I'm very very proud of the accomplishments that we've seen over the past 3½ years, and they would not have happened were it not for your advocacy, working closely with me and the leaders of my department to insure that we made progress. It would not have happened without the support of our President and our members in Congress. Yes, we face great challenges, but never before in the history of my department, the Department of Veterans Affairs, our 75 year history, has our budget increased by such a level; from $48 billion when I became Secretary to $71 billion in 2005 which starts in just a few months. That is an extraordinary accomplishment.

Never before have we cared for more veterans in our VA health care system. One million more veterans have received medical care since 2001, and that is really quite an accomplishment. There are more that need care and we must stay the course.

We have made enormous progress in bringing down this terrible backlog of claims for things like disability compensation, pensions, death benefits for widows and widowers, and children of deceased servicemembers who gave their lives for this nation. In 2001, we decided 480,000 claims for disability compensation and pensions. And last year, I'm proud that we almost doubled that to 827,000 decisions on claims, many for our elderly veterans who don't have much time and need to get decisions on those claims. We're making great progress and we need to stay the course.

Today, we have the greatest expansion ongoing of the National Cemetery System. We will add 11 new cemeteries to our system by the year 2009. The President has authorized me to open up five before the end of next year and another six by 2009, which will represent almost the doubling of our internment space in our National Cemeteries, the greatest expansion since the Civil War. And sadly, we must take this course because so many of our veterans are passing from us.

In closing, like Secretary Brownlee, I've just returned from Iraq where I had the opportunity to thank this magnificent group of men and women who have gone in harms way once again. I always believe that I fought with the very best in Vietnam, and I still believe that in my heart. But I can tell you, America is blessed, so very blessed to have this fine group of men and women who have gone forward. Never before in our noble history of uniform service, have we fielded such a fantastic, courageous and compassionate group of men and women. I promise you that we will be there for them when they come home. We will be there to take care of them because they earned it.

God bless you. God bless the men and women who serve our nation in uniform.

NATL VICE COMDR WONG: While we are waiting for the Commander and the President, may I ask Maestro, Mr. Ole, give us some music to lead on to the next great event.

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Arizona Senator John McCain, American Legion Auxiliary President Katherine Morris, and American Legion National Commander, John Brieden.

Ladies and gentlemen the President of the United States.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: First, I want to take a moment of personal privilege because I think it's appropriate that we recognize with another round of applause a decorated aviation hero from our Vietnam War and a former Prisoner of War, and a proud member of The American Legion, U. S. Senator John McCain.

NATL PRES MORRIS: In the weeks ahead, two men are working hard to be elected President of the United States.

As the nation's largest wartime veterans organization, we are ready to hear from these

men because the policies they pursue will have a tremendous impact on our fellow veterans and the nation.

The first man to come before us here in Nashville has been with us several times before. He is a graduate of Yale University and served as a pilot in the Texas Air National Guard. He is a proven political and business leader.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: He was elected to lead our great nation in 2000 and he's been challenged by the economy and by the terrorist attacks on America.

Please give a warm welcome to an 11 year member of Post 77 in Houston, our fellow Texan, the President of the United States, George W. Bush.

Address: Hon. George W. Bush, President of the United States

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm honored to be here at your 86th national convention. There's another convention going on in New York you might have heard about. Tomorrow, they're going to choose a presidential nominee. I think I got the inside track. I'm taking nothing for granted, however. I'm taking nothing for granted, so Laura headed to New York this morning to make my case. But I do want you to know she sends her very best regards.

I also want to let you know that America's veterans are the heart and soul of this nation. When freedom was under threat, you risked your lives in places like Omaha Beach and Okinawa, Keshan, Kandahar and Baghdad. Because you served, Americans live in freedom. I'm proud to stand before you as your Commander-in-Chief and look in the eye and say, America is grateful for your service.

And America is grateful for the service of Senator John McCain. He gave a great speech last night in New York. He's a great American. He's a great American who gave his nation some of the most difficult and distinguished service in the history of our military. He fought for America, he suffered for America, he returned for honor, and his service continues today. I'm proud to have John McCain with us and standing by my side.

I have enjoyed working with the National Commander, John Brieden. Maybe we got along so well because we both speak the same language, Texan. But he served this August body with class and dignity, and I'm proud of your service, John. Thank you, sir.

And I was pleased to be introduced by Katherine Morris, as well. She, too, speaks Texan. I want to thank her for her leadership as the American Legion Auxiliary National President. I'm pleased to be here with my friend, Tony Principi, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I want to thank Les Brownlee who is with us, the Acting Secretary of the Army. I appreciate the Mayor of this great city of Nashville joining us. Mr. Mayor, thank you for coming. I appreciate Congressman Cooper from the state of Tennessee for joining us.

Most of all, I want to thank the Legion members who have been so gracious in your hospitality. Thank you and the Auxiliary members for welcoming me.

Since your founding, The American Legion has always been faithful to God and to country. You served our nation in uniform, and you still serve today. When Hurricane Charley hit Florida a few weeks ago, American Legion Posts gathered food and helped neighbors in need. In moments of crisis, Americans know Legionnaires always come through.

Members of The American Legion and the Auxiliary are also serving your neighbors every day, volunteering in veterans hospitals, sponsoring scout troops and youth baseball, and collecting scholarship money for deserving students. You've started

a scholarship fund for the children of troops killed since September the 11th, 2001, in the war on terror. Our country owes these families so much, and I thank you for showing the gratitude and the good heart of the United States of America.

The most important gift you give our country is the example you set for the men and women of our Armed Forces. In Afghanistan and Iraq and other fronts in the war on terror, today's servicemen and women are carrying on your legacy of selfless service and courage under fire. I know you share America's pride in them. They are serving our country with pride, and they are bringing honor to the uniform.

Our fighting men and women are serving America under a proud flag, and that flag should be cherished and protected. When John [Brieden] and your National Adjutant Bob [Spanogle] have come by the Oval Office, they always remind me about the Citizens Flag Alliance. I appreciate your leadership in that important alliance. Like you, I support a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from desecration. I think John McCain put it best when he said, American blood has been shed all over the world for the American flag, and I believe it deserves respect.

Our nation's veterans have made serving America the highest priority of your lives. And that is why I have made serving our Nation's veterans one of the highest priorities of my administration. To make sure my administration fulfills the commitment I have made to America's veterans, I selected one really fine man in Tony Principi. I am proud of the job that our Secretary is doing.

Thanks in large part to Tony's leadership, my administration has a solid record of accomplishment for our veterans. When my 2005 budget request is approved by Congress, we will have increased overall funding for our nation's veterans by almost $20 billion, or 40 percent since 2001. We have increased funding for our veterans more in four years than the previous administration did in eight years. We have increased VA medical care funding by 41 percent over the last four years. We're bringing care to more veterans more quickly. Since 2001, we have enrolled 2.5 million more veterans in health care services. We have increased out-patient visits from 44 million to 54 million. We've increased the number of prescriptions filled from 98 million to 116 million. We've reduced the backlog of disability claims by about a third. We will reduce it even further. We have cut the average time it takes to process disability claims by 70 days. We're getting the job done for our veterans.

We have focused resources on veterans who need it most, those with service-related disabilities and low incomes and special needs. We've established a new scheduling system to make certain that veterans seeking care for a service connected condition are the first in line.

For more than a century federal law prohibited disabled veterans from receiving both their military retired pay and their VA disability compensation. Combat injured and severely disabled veterans deserve better. I was the first President in over a hundred years to sign concurrent receipt legislation.

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

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

growing. When it comes to providing first-class care for our veterans, we are getting the job done.

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

We meet today at a time of war for our country, a war we did not start, yet one that we will win. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This will not happen on my watch.

The world changed on that terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, 2001, Afghanistan served as the home base of al-Qaeda, which trained and deployed thousands of killers to set up terror cells around the world, including our own country. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. I don't know whether you know this or not, but over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the coming October presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls now go to school for the first time. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

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

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had pursued and he had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He subsidized the families of suicide bombers. He and his henchmen murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of instability in the world's most volatile region. Saddam Hussein was a threat.

After September the 11th, one of the lessons this country must always remember is that we must take threats seriously before they fully materialize. So I went to the United States Congress, and members of both political parties, including my opponent, looked at the intelligence and looked at the background and came to the same conclusion, Saddam Hussein was a threat.

Before a President every commits troops, we must try all other alternatives to deal with threats. And so I went to the United Nations. I said to the free world, Saddam Hussein is a threat. They looked at the same intelligence and came to the same conclusion with a 15-to-nothing vote in U.N. Security Council. They said, disclose, disarm, or face serious consequences. The world had spoken.

But as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He ignored the demands of the United Nations. As a matter of fact, when we sent inspectors—or when the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq—he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make: do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and take the word of a madman, or do I take action to defend our country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we thought we would find, Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to the enemy, and that was a risk we could not afford to take after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

We will continue to work with friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. You cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must aggressively pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

In this different kind of war, we may never sit down at a peace table. But make no mistake about it, we are winning, and we will win. We will win by staying on the offensive. We will win by spreading liberty. We believe that liberty can transform nations from tyranny into peaceful nations. And so we'll keep our commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq. We will help them become peaceful and democratic countries that are allies in the war on terror.

Those countries are now governed by strong leaders who believe in the aspirations of their people. We'll help them in the political process. More importantly, we will train Afghan citizens and Iraqi citizens so they can defend their own country against a few who would stop the wishes of the many. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

We're doing the hard work of securing our country and spreading the peace, and those commitments are made by the men and women of our military. I've had the privilege of traveling to bases around our country and around the world. I've met with those who defend our security. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in really good hands.

And those who wear our uniform deserve the full support of the government. For the past years my administration has strengthened our military. We enacted the largest increases in defense spending since Ronald Reagan served as the Commander-in-Chief. We've increased military pay by nearly 21 percent. We provided for better housing, for better training, for better maintenance.

Last September, when our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and in Iraq, I proposed supplemental funding to support them in their missions. The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel and spare parts. It was important funding. We received great bipartisan support for that funding. All but 12 United States senators voted to support our troops in combat. My opponent chose to vote no on that vital legislation. When asked, he said, well, I actually did vote for the $87 billion, right before I voted against it. When further pressed, he said he was proud of his vote, and then he said it was a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

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

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're bringing hope to others, and we're making our country more secure. By serving the ideal of liberty, we are making the world more peaceful. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world' freedom is the Almighty God's gift to each man and woman in this world.

We have more work to do to defend our freedom and to protect our country. For decades, America's Armed Forces abroad have essentially remained where the wars of the last century ended, in Europe and Asia. Much of America's current force posture was designed to protect us and our allies from Soviet aggression, a threat that no longer exists. And that's why I announced a plan to transform our global force posture, the numbers, types, locations, and capabilities of U.S. forces around the world.

This new plan will help us fight and win the war on terror. This new plan will help us deal with the threats of the 21st century. It will strengthen our alliances while we build new partnerships to better preserve the peace. It will reduce the stress on our troops and on our military families. It was save the taxpayers' money, as we consolidate and close bases and facilities overseas no longer needed to face the threats of our time and defend the peace and freedom of the world.

This plan was carefully crafted over more than three years in close consultation with friends and allies around the world. We will have a presence, but we'll have a smarter presence to promote the peace.

Within hours after I announced this plan, my opponent came out against it, and that's his right to do so. After all, it's a campaign. He's allowed to say what he believes. The only problem is that he endorsed the idea just 17 days earlier. On August the 1st, he said, "I think we can significantly change the deployment of troops, not just in Iraq, but elsewhere in the world—the Korean Peninsula, perhaps, Europe, perhaps. There are great possibilities open to us, but this administration has very little imagination." Well, it takes a lot of imagination to come out against a position you took just 17 days earlier.

This world has changed a great deal since many of you have worn the nation's uniform. Today, our troops have the most advanced technologies at their disposal; weapons are more lethal and precise than any that were available for you. Yet, their success in the war on terror is made possible by the same thing that made your success possible: personal courage, dedication to duty, and love of our great country.

As our troops serve today in Baghdad and Mosul and the Hindu Kush Mountains and around the world, I know American veterans feel a special pride in them. They're carrying on your legacy of sacrifice and service. They're determined to see the mission through. America is proud of them. America will stand with them.

I want to thank you for standing by our men and women in uniform. Thank you for your idealism. Thank you for your example. Thank you for your dedication to God and country. And thank you for having me here.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Our next guest is right at home in Nashville. It's his home, even though he spends his workweek in our nation's capital where he is a member of the United States House of Representatives.

He is a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Budget Committee and the Government Reform Committee. As such, he plays a key role in legislation that affects our national security and the men and women in uniform.

He may be considered a freshman but with 12 years in the House of Representatives from 1982 to 1984, he knows how to get things done. Welcome The Honorable Jim Cooper.

Address: The Hon. Jim Cooper, U.S. House of Representatives

Welcome to Nashville. You are now in President Andrew Jackson's old Congressional District, and you are in the volunteer state, a tradition that includes such American heroes as Admiral David Farragut, Sam Houston, Alvin C. York the great hero of World War I and many, many others.

My particular gratitude today is to the great American Legion Posts in Tennessee, particularly those in our area and particularly to a great and good friend of mine J. B. Loring, who has helped to engineer this Convention. Thank you for coming to Nashville.

President Bush is a hard act to follow. I notice that many of you had to go to the bathroom—that's fine. Those of you who have returned we appreciate that. I almost feel like the poor fellow who was Marilyn Monroe's fifth husband. You know, he was the person who knew what he was supposed to do, he just wasn't quite sure he could make it interesting enough.

I wanted to share an experience with you that I had just yesterday. I had the privilege of visiting 4,000 men and women in uniform—no, not at Ft. Campbell although we're all proud of the 101st, right on our doorstep. I visited 4,000 men and women of the 278th Armored Calvary Regiment who are now training to go to Iraq. Right now they are suffering in the summer heat of Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Mississippi is proud. Most of these units are from Tennessee, the great Volunteer State, but there were units from Wisconsin, New York, Vermont, New Jersey, a variety of states who are all coming together in one cohesive unit to do a great job for our nation in Iraq.

I want to tell you that when you look at folks like that, the first impression you have is they're just kids. In fact, they are our children and our grandchildren. In fact, they look a lot like you did just a few years ago when you served in World War II, and in Korea and Vietnam, and Lebanon in Panama and Grenada, and in the first Iraq war, and all the struggles and conflicts in between. We are thankful for your service to our nation.

The kids that are serving today, as the President mentioned, probably have better gear than you did. One of the first things you see is a camelback on everyone of their backs. You see gortecs, camouflage; you see body armor with saggy plates that can stop a 7.62 bullet. You see holographic sites, you see all sorts of night vision equipment and you see very light new machine guns that are deadly; precise at 600 yards. That's just the light stuff. The heavy stuff they've got the M-1, A-1 Abrams tanks; the Bradley fighting vehicles, the tow missiles, the mortars and all manner of air support everything from UAV's all the way up to outer space in our satellites, and everything in between; called in with laser precision. It's amazing.

When you look at our kids, even though they look just like you, you wonder: do they have your courage, do they have your character, do they have your discipline, do they sense your duty to country? Well, that's a very tough question because as you so well know, you are the greatest generation. Are these folks going to measure up to your high standards? Most of the planet should stand in deep gratitude to you, not just America. Because it's because of you and your service that we live in freedom today.

The men and women in uniform today; they are all volunteers, they're probably better trained even than you were and they have the best weaponry that man has ever known. In many ways, they are the ultimate warriors. But as the President mentioned, this is a different war than any we have ever experienced before. We face a shadowy transnational enemy. We're not facing a religious war, but we're facing an asymmetric war against some religious fanatics who are perverting their own religion. In this struggle, we have never relied so heavily on our Guard and Reserve. Community op-tempo, of our active duty troops is higher than it's been since World War II. A lot of folks have a hard time understanding that. There is great stress on our men and women in uniform in active duty. So they need the relief of the Guard. But many Americans are not aware that almost half of our soldiers in Iraq in the very near future—almost half are not active duty but our citizens, our neighbors, neighborhood warriors who are going to be serving almost half the capacity.

Our citizens soldiers are mentally prepared today for about an 18 month tour of duty. But I'm worried that they're not really mentally prepared for a fight to the finish. I had a famous cousin, General Austin Schofner, the longest serving marine in the Pacific

Theater in World War II. He survived the Bataan Death March. He led the only successful escape from a Japanese Prisoner of War camp and then he volunteered to return to duty as a Marine. I wonder if this next generation is producing such heroes? Well, I think it is. I saw them yesterday in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, suffering in that Mississippi heat. I see them everyday on our television screens going through unspeakable horrors in nations, sometimes we can't even name, around the world. But the real heroes in the future may be the ones who can still think clearly in 120 degree heat while they're wearing full body armor. Or the ones who can speak Arabic well enough to diffuse either an IED or riot. Or men and women who are perceptive enough to really tell the difference between a national builder and a warlord.

I urge you to share your experiences with the troops. I urge you to lend that experience so that they will have the patience that it will take to fight this long conflict. Because those who don't remember their history, are doomed to repeat it. You need to share your history. Speak to local veterans groups, go by the Armories, share your thoughts in writing or in e-mails; let your neighbors know what you've been through because that will give them and their families the strength that it takes to endure and to prevail in this conflict.

Meanwhile, we in Congress are doing our best to fully fund the war. Right now—and I think this should be a source of pride—we are spending more on our nation's military than the total spending of every other nation on earth put together. Our men and women in uniform should lack for nothing; they should have the best. And we also need to serve those, as President Abraham Lincoln put it, "Those who have borne the battle, and his widow, and his orphan."

We've had several big issues in this Congress that are turning out in a more favorable direction to veterans than they have in the past. But we still can and must do more. The leadership of your American Legion is helping in this fight but it's still a struggle. I support complete relief for our retired disabled veterans so that they can get both the benefits. Why? Because they've earned both. This so-called issue of concurrent receipt that we've been fighting for so long is really an issue of whether you should face a 100% tax on your disability benefit. That is an outrage and just because the tax has recently been lowered to 50%, it's not enough—we need complete relief.

I support full military benefits even after you start drawing Social Security. Why? Because you've earned it. I support for our Guard and Reserve, because they are carrying such a heavy portion of the battle now, lowering their retiring age from 60 to 55. Why? Because they are earning it everyday.

And for all the great progress that's being made with our Veterans Administration—and we are proud of that—more can and must be done. Those of you who are treated in veterans facilities see needs and shortcomings almost everyday. We need to plug those holes because you of all people in this country deserve first class medical care, no second class care for you.

Thank you for coming to our city of Nashville. We love your service to our country.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Our next guest is the fifth mayor of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County. As mayor, his priorities are good schools in every neighborhood, safe neighborhoods in every part of the city and a quality of life shared by all Nashville citizens. I had the opportunity to meet him the first time backstage at the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night. And now he joins us today. Welcome the Honorable Bill Purcell, Mayor of Nashville.

Address: The Hon. Bill Purcell, Mayor of the City of Nashville

It is a great honor for me to be here on this stage with you, and to now realize that all of The American Legion knows that you and I first appeared together on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night.

He's a great leader in so many ways and you know that. He leads in ways that are I think incredibly important, everything we all care about. I think everyday this week the news programs across this country and the mayor of Nashville started the day with Commander Brieden. Each day we closed the day out and so it will be throughout this week. But you need to know one other thing, he's also a great man for people that he's only just met. He had just met the mayor of Nashville on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry and he turned to me and he said, "Mayor, I need you to know something. As you are speaking to our American Legion on Tuesday, all of the women will be leaving. I want you to be ready for this and prepared for it. I want you to know in advance what's gong to happen. I think it's only fair." I said Commander you know, the important thing here is that I knew this was going to happen but also you need to know that as a husband and the father of a daughter, I'm actually very used to this. (Laughter.) Every time I start to talk I look up and the women are headed for the door. So it's a special pleasure to be with the men of The American Legion here at this time and to have been on the stage that was graced obviously by our Commander-in-Chief and by Secretary Brownlee, and Secretary Principi, and also Mrs. Katherine Morris who I know is doing work elsewhere now, and with J. B. Loring who sits behind me and will speak with you in just a moment. He is a veteran in every sense of the word. He's also a veteran of our Metro Council. He has worked incredibly hard. I know at a national level Bob Spanogle works so hard and has worked so hard to make this meeting possible.

But here locally, J. B. has wanted to host this here in Nashville. He wanted it to be in his councilmanic district. He wanted you to come—as Mayor, I'm here to tell you I want you to come back. Come back because you had a good time. Come back because there is more to do. Come back because you're going to need to find members of your family and members of your delegation who are still wandering in this—(Laughter.) Years from now you'll want to come back and find those people and see how they're doing!

The men and the women of The American Legion are bound together through the legacy of service and devotion to our matchless country. It's a legacy of freedom that you have saved and preserved, and you pass along to us all even in this very day.

Nashville is one of America's greatest cities. But today, I've seen it become even greater as I stand in the presence of so many great Americans. You know, intimately and intensely, the realities of what it means to serve our great nation. But I hope I have some small sense as well.

This year, June 6th, I had the opportunity like some who are here, to stand there in Arromanches facing the beaches of Normandy as our Commander-in-Chief, representing us all, gathered together with the leaders of most all of the free world; celebrated and remembered those who were present and those who could not be present who had 60 years ago come across that channel and onto those beaches and up into the nation of France. I sat there sharing with all, I think, the world, certainly all of America, the incredible sense of gratitude to those men who were there and again those who could not be there.

You need to know one other thing because at that moment what came most clearly into my mind was another Bill Purcell, my father, who not many months later found

himself taken Prisoner of War there in Alsace and transported to Stalag 7A outside of Munich, Germany. It were those men and the women who worked with them, it were those allies coming together who came on those beaches and also who entered in through Marseilles, who swept across France and on into Germany and came to Stalag 7A and freed my father so that he could live the American dream and come back to the United States of America. And I could be the Mayor of the city of Nashville. (Applause.)

That's the heritage that has been passed along to me by you and by my dad. I'm blessed to have a father and so many others as a role model. I'm blessed to live in this country and in a very real way, I'm blessed to be here with you this morning.

So, I'm here formally to say welcome to Music City. I want you to know you have all of my best wishes for a great stay. I'm also here and more importantly to say, thank you for all that you have done. I and the people of Nashville are grateful to you. May God continue to bless this American Legion, the city of Nashville and America.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Welcome our comrade, our friend and our host, the President of the National Convention Corporation of Tennessee, J. B. Loring.

Welcome: Jennings B. Loring, President
The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Tennessee

I just can't imagine being on this stage following the President, the Congressman, the Mayor and me from Donelson.

Welcome to Music City, U.S.A., Nashville, Tennessee and another great American Legion Convention. Tennessee has waited 86 years for this major event and you are looking at a group of Tennessee Legionnaires who are proud as peacocks.

Please join me at this time in thanking our National American Legion leaders and the many local Tennessee volunteers who have made this Convention such a huge success. If you have any spare time while visiting the Convention, please visit some of our many attractions such as: the Ryman Auditorium, the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Parthenon, the world famous Palace across the street from the hotel and many other things. And take a ride on the General Jackson Showboat. Also if time permits, you will enjoy visiting Nashville's city cemetery where the Captain, William Driver, who named the United States Flag "Old Glory," is buried.

As this Convention draws to a close time, restraints will keep you from visiting many of the attraction. However, I have obtained permission from Mayor Bill Purcell authorizing you to remain with us for two more weeks. By that time you'll learn your way around this hotel. Thank you for coming to Nashville. We hope you enjoy your visit and at the end of the Convention have a safe trip home.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Now is the 2003-2004 Department Commander of Tennessee from Post 21 in Rogersville who happens to have been a high school classmate of Ron Books our Executive Director of Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Buck Barrett.

Welcome: Bascom Barrett, 2003-2004 Department Commander
The American Legion of Tennessee

On behalf of the 32,693 American Legion members in the Department of Tennessee, I welcome you to our beautiful state and the 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. Hopefully, your stay here has been enjoyable and that you will

continue to enjoy yourselves. If you find that you have run out of things to do here in our great city of Nashville, we have many other exciting places across the state to visit, such as: The Bristol Motor Speedway on the east end, and Graceland in Memphis on the west end, and many things in between.

We feel very fortunate to be able to have hosted this Convention. However, as some of you know, there is much work in hosting a convention. I will not begin to try to name all of the wonderful volunteers, both Auxiliary, Sons and Legionnaires who have contributed many hours to this work, but I would like to say thanks for all their work in making this a success. One gentleman has contributed more than the average Tennessee Legionnaire. Now I'm not trying to take anything away from Dick Holmes and the National Staff on the work that they have done. But this man has contributed all of his extra hours and dedicating his effort. We would not have these smooth operations that we are seeing here today. Adjutant Mike Hammer should take a bow.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you both Buck and J. B. They may be the ones on the stage talking but all across this Convention Center there are volunteers who are working. I've been part of National Convention and know what it's like with the workers. So, when you see these folks from Tennessee who are doing a great job behind the scenes, tell them thank you because this is an outstanding Convention and it's not by accident. It's because people are working hard and we need to say our thanks.

As we gather for Convention, we do so with a heavy heart. One of the men who has served The American Legion as National Commander has transferred to Post Everlasting.

J. Addington Wagner, Department of Michigan, National Commander 1955-1956 passed away July 12, 2004 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Our time on earth is short. Commander Wagner—like many others—lived to serve his fellow veterans. Through that service The American Legion and America itself has prospered. And in fact, the future will be better.

At this time we'll drape the Photo of Mr. Wagner, please uncover and please rise.

...At this time the delegation rose.

National Commander's Report To Convention
John A. Brieden, III, Texas

Now I have an opportunity to talk about this last year. In fact, it is hard to imagine it's been one year ago that I stood before this Convention and first thing we tried to talk about was "vision." I tried to use an example, the mini–series *Lonesome Dove*. In fact let's watch a video clip and let's talk about vision.

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

One of the things that we talked about last year was the fact that the mini–series made it look like the vision was what had already happened. We talked about a vision of what was to come and what we could do about it. Now the first thing that I have to laugh about here is the fact that I understand there is a 'pool' out there. There are some folks who are saying, how long is it gonna be before he jumps off the stage and starts walking amongst the audience. Well, I've been told that I can't do that. However, I just went and got a wireless mic and here we come!

It seems that I had it on mute? (Laughter.) What can I say!?

I want to talk about a number of things that we've done this year. We've had a lot of accomplishments and many of them have dealt with our military. First of all, I want to

talk about Concurrent Receipt or Disabled Veterans Tax. You've heard a few folks mention that, when our retired military can't draw their retired pension and disability at the same time without being offset.

We've worked for a long time on Concurrent Receipt and let me tell you, it's like beating your head against the wall. But this year we took a *big step*. It wasn't what we wanted. For those who are 50% or more, they'll be able to draw both—it's phased in over ten years. We didn't want that. But the government never wanted to say that a person could draw both. Government never wanted to say we could do both, but they have now and we will continue to work because we want those others with less than 50% to draw their disability and retirement as well. And we want that phase-in to be dropped. So it's something that we'll continue to work on.

We worked on a pay raise for the troops and we had a couple of pay raises that have been signed. I've been out with the troops, and the first thing they say is, "Thank you for what we've done."

We've worked on benefits for the National Guard and Reserves. They, too, need TRICARE benefits. In fact, a lot of them lose medical insurance when they're called to active duty. We need to make sure to take care of them and their families who are back home without medical insurance.

We need to make absolutely sure that the G.I. Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill includes National Guard and Reserve who have been called up, more often spending longer time on active duty than anytime since World War II. They need to be included as well.

We need to make sure those returning have a VA to turn to. That means it needs to be funded. Our biggest problem with VA is there's more people seeking treatment than they have money to treat. Not long ago someone was doing an interview with me and really was wanting me to say some negative things about Secretary Principi. I told the person that I wanted it to be understood that if I were Secretary of VA, and if I thought I'm a veterans' advocate, and I had this many people and this much money, I'd have to make some tough decisions. I'm not sure I could do any better than he's doing.

We need to make absolutely sure that we have VA funded. That's the reason we're for mandatory funding. Mandatory funding has been interesting. Past Commander Ron Conley worked with the VFW and the DAV. You remember the little sheet that said, "This We Believe." Of course we've continued that. You've seen the pamphlet "Honor America's Commitment" with nine National Commander's signatures. Who said veterans can't get together and work together. That says we need mandatory funding.

Not long ago, I was sitting in front of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. He said that mandatory funding is going to be tough. And I said if you'll just fund VA we won't be having this discussion. But since you won't fund it fully, then we have to have this discussion because we need to make absolutely sure VA has the funds to adequately treat those who have earned this benefit.

And of course, you're all familiar with CARES, the process of looking at VA trying to make sure that we're most efficiently using the money. The thing The American Legion has said from the *very beginning* is that this should be a needs driven exercise, not a budget driven exercise. On a national level, there have been 38 hearings dealing with CARES. At every single one, The American Legion was represented and made sure that our voice was heard. You should be proud of that. We gave input along the way.

I had a chance to visit with Secretary Principi back in the October and November time frame. There were things that we talked. As we discussed CARES and talked about our concerns about CARES, I told him, "You had a pilot project in Chicago and when you closed the Lakeside facility, you dumped them all into that west side facility. What

happened?" He said, "Well, we maxed it out and we put the extra overflow over here and over here." I said, "That's not good." And he said, "But we're going to build a new bed tower." I said, Why the hell didn't you build it first before you moved them?"

In Las Vegas in May, when the Secretary announced his findings on CARES, he said, "As we do some of this consolidation and change, we will not close any care until we have the new facility built and remodeled and ready to go, so that there is no stoppage in care and coverage for the veterans."

We talked some with him that time about health care for veterans and about the problem of closing. Sometimes just the numbers say that people will have to drive many, many miles to get care. And that's not good. I said, what's even worse, you don't understand those of *us* who live in the rural area. I said if you put care too far, we're not coming.

And the other thing that I was impressed with in Las Vegas was when the Secretary said, "We have a rural assessment and no veteran should drive more than a certain distance to get outpatient care. We will build 156 new priority clinics to make sure that rural veterans are served."

We've had input into CARES. Now does that mean what's there is perfect? No. But it's going to be phased in over a 10 or 20 year period. And as it's phased in, there will be continual times that we have a chance to give input. We need to still be involved in that process to make absolutely sure that every decision is made based on needs and not on budget.

There's a lot of other legislative things we've done this year. You heard a lot about the flag today, didn't you? We've been pushing to have that flag vote. There's times it has not looked real favorable. It was stuck in the judiciary committee in the Senate. They were breaking quorum so they could not bring it up to pass it to the floor. We notified 80,000 people who we had the e-mail addresses from our Legislative Action Center, and them that we wanted them to contact their congressman or senator. Say, "Get it out of judiciary. We want a vote. And it happened.

The President just told me awhile ago in this next week and a half, it's going to come up on the Senate floor and we will have a vote. We expect some delays, we expect some amendments to try to throw it off course, but they will have a vote. Our objective is to get the votes and pass it. And our objective is if we fail in that, to get them on the record because they always say, "Look at my record and judge me based on that." Well, I want it on the record so that we can judge them on that when we go to the ballot box.

This has been an interesting year. Pledge of Allegiance declared unconstitutional. We filed an Amicus brief to make sure that we were part of that case. Boy Scouts—they discriminate, don't they?! We filed a brief and defend the Boy Scouts. We're out there fighting for God and country, and we have been and we are now and we will in the future.

We continue to do good things all around our communities. We're doing good things out there that a lot of folks never see or understand. Sometimes it's really visible. One of the biggest things that happened this year was the World War II Dedication. Thank you because you were the largest fund raising organization for that. But that is only half the story, because The American Legion recognized that the World War II generation was getting older and many would not be able to attend the ceremony in Washington. In fact, many of them would never ever be there and to see it. We made a decision that we needed to have a Dedication Day in every community in America. When we put that out I kind of cringed because I figured that people would say, "Oh, my God, another hair-brained idea from Indianapolis." But you grabbed it, and ran with it.

There are things that happen in communities all over that we can't document. We don't know because they didn't let us know. But we can document seven to eight thousand communities that held Dedication Day ceremonies, prayer breakfasts, and fund raising along with it, recognizing World War II veterans, saying, "Thank you for your service."

Congratulations, what a great job you did. The press picked it up. America knows who did that. That was one of the best things that we did this year.

In addition, we have our TFA where we help families and kids in need. We've paid out almost a quarter million dollars this year. For the Children's Miracle Network, in conjunction with the Sons of The American Legion, and Auxiliary we've raised almost $5 million this year. For the Legacy Scholarship Fund, where we're having to build an amount to pay for the future children of those who have been killed on active duty since September 11, 2001, we've now built it up to almost three-quarters million dollars. For the Child Welfare Foundation, we've raised almost a million dollars this year.

For the National Emergency Fund, we've paid out almost $68,000 in benefits to Legionnaires and Auxiliary members across this nation. When I was touring in California, we went down to the area of the fires and had a chance to see some of the homes that were just rumble. The people came up and said that they had a check within days from The American Legion. Thank you for what you've done. That's the kind of thing that The American Legion does on a day in and day out basis. Most folks don't know it. You should be proud of what we accomplish.

This year I've traveled. Boy, have I traveled.

...At this time the delegation listened to Johnny Cash.

I've been in all 50 states this year. Puerto Rico, District of Columbia; been to Europe: France, Germany, been to Asia, Taiwan, Korea, Philippines, I've been everywhere. Your hospitality's been wonderful and I've enjoyed taking a look at what you accomplish in your communities. It's been fantastic.

My travels and the visits with the troops have been special. We have good young men and women serving our country. They're doing one heck of a job. I have really enjoyed that. But what was the most defining moment of this year has been for me—and I didn't really intend going in, but it's something that just kind of happened— was visiting those who are coming back wounded.

My very first trip to Walter Reed [Army Medical Center] was a defining moment when I saw the attitude of these young folks. We've gone back again and been to Bethesda Hospital and been to Brooke Army Medical Center to the Burn Center there. When we were in Germany, we went to Landstuhl where they evacuate the folks initially from Afghanistan and from Iraq. These young people are absolutely amazing. I have been so impressed with the way they take adversity and just keep going with a great attitude. I think it's exemplified in a couple of stories. I'll tell you a couple that probably gives as good an idea of what we're facing.

First trip into Walter Reed, I went into a room and a Sergeant First Class laying up in bed—lost his right leg right below his knee. In talking with him about what's going on and what he was going to do in the future. I finally asked if they were going to medically discharge him? He said, "Absolutely not. I will not let them." He said, lifting the stump of the leg, "You see that right there, that drain in there, that's coming out this afternoon. It's going to take a few weeks for that to heal enough that they can fit the prosthesis. Once I get the prosthesis I get to go into rehab, and when I get to go into rehab they're never going to see anybody who works as hard as I work, because my intention is to be six weeks from today back in uniform, back on duty and back with my troops because

they need me."

That kind of attitude I've seen over and over. I was at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri and the 5th Engineer Battalion which just returned from a year in Iraq. We had a chance to visit with some of the troops and talk with them and what they're doing. Boy, they're proud of what they've done. In fact, they're upset that the press is not reporting all of the story. They're only reporting the negative things and that's a small part. There are so many good things going on and it's just not being reported. And they voiced that.

But as I was walking out there was a staff sergeant who ran over to me. He said, "You remember me?"—I've only met three or four people this year. (Laughter.) He smiled at me and as soon as I saw that, I did remember that toothy smile. The first time I met him he was in Walter Reed. Both legs were injured from an IED explosion that killed the driver of his Humvee. His mom was right there beside him. As we talked about how he was getting along, he was up on crutches, trying to do some rehab but he wasn't quite to the point of being able to walk. I asked her what the future will hold. Mom says, "Medical discharge. I want you to know he served his country, done his thing and I want him home." He says, "Nope. My buddies are still over there and I want to be with them." When I saw him he had just come home from Iraq with the rest of his battalion. Now that's the kind of troops we have. (Applause.)

There is the story that probably you've heard me tell. In my very first visit to Walter Reed in October, we went into Ward 57 where the amputees are. I saw someone laying up in bed that had two arms, two hands, two legs, two feet. So I asked, "Tell me what's going on?" He said, "Well, I was pulling guard duty in this sandbagged position. They attacked me from three sides. I took six rounds in the torso." Then he smiled and he said, "But I had body armor on; it didn't wound me." But the force of it knocked him over the sandbag. He was laying out there and—wham!—right in the knee he caught a round. I asked him when did this happen. He said in May. I asked if they had put him back together and if he was in rehab. He said, "No, we're having some problems. Infection." This is the 21st Century, we've got miracle medicines right, we can handle that. He said, "Well, they tried. The doctor came in the other day and said, 'Son, this infection is going to kill you unless I take your leg.'" He told me that at 2:00 p.m. that afternoon he was going to surgery. I thought about what he'd just said. How do you respond to that?

Then I realized that in every other room I went in there was a mom, or a spouse, or kids, or a whole family gathered around. I didn't see anyone with him, so I asked him about it. He said, "Don't worry, they've been here. I want you to know I have five kids: 14, 11, 8, 4 and 2. Have you ever seen five kids in a hospital? I told my wife to take them back to Ft. Stewart, Georgia. Get them back in school. Get some order in their lives so it's going to be good for them." I realized he intended to go to surgery that day all alone. And then it hit me. The family was back at Ft. Stewart, Georgia all alone.

Now the following week, we were in Indianapolis for National Executive Committee Meeting. I talked about my visiting and supporting the troops, visiting Walter Reed and told that story, looking out to my right where the folks from Georgia were. I realized I didn't want them to miss that. So as I told that story. Take it back to Ft. Stewart, Georgia! They didn't miss it. The next morning, when we gaveled the NEC meetings to order—had the pledge and invocation and seated the group—Charley Knox, the Department Adjutant, jumped to his feet and said, "Mr. Commander, last night we had people at their house and we told them we're going to take care of them."

You want to talk Family Support Network, that's family support. I can tell you that there are places we do a really great job with family support. I can also tell you there are some places that we need to do better, and we can.

Our biggest job today is to make sure we support the troops, because we've got good young men and women who are serving this country and they deserve it. That was brought home on the World War II Dedication weekend. We had some great things going on. That morning, I flipped on the TV, since I wanted to see if it was going to rain. Every day it seemed like the news media had been out to the Memorial. They talked to some World War II veterans about their experiences and put it on the news next day. That morning, from the day before, they asked some guy if he was a World War II veteran? He said yes. They asked him to tell about his experience and what was really a life changing event for him. And he says, "Let me tell you, I didn't serve one single day that I doubted America was behind me." We have young men and women serving today and they deserve the same thing. (Applause.) Our job is to support the troops.

If you've heard me speak anytime in the last few years, I'm sure you've heard me talk about my dad. (And I don't know if he's back or not, but hopefully he is.) But you know the story, I won't repeat the whole thing. Basically, Dad told me, "Son, you have a problem. Your problem is you really think you can make a difference." Dad, I can tell you that the 2.7 million members of The American Legion have made a difference this year. I hope you're proud of us. (Applause.)

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your National Commander. It's the kind of thing that many people never have an opportunity to do. I know that a guy who puts on a red hat is not the one who actually does the work and achieves the things that meets the goals. It's people in blue hats all across this country, working and doing the things that's not necessarily fun. For your work and your efforts and your meeting the goals, thank you so much for this year. (Applause.)

I call on our National Adjutant, Bob Spanogle from the Department of Michigan. to issue the official call for the Convention.

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

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Call for the 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. By the authority of the National Executive Committee, the 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is hereby called to meet in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31-September 2, 2004.

The Convention business sessions will be held in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Delta Ballroom, Level 2.

Purpose

The Annual National Convention is the legislative body of The American Legion. The Convention is called for the purpose of setting the programs of The American Legion for the ensuing year amending the National Constitution and By-Laws and for the transaction of such other business as may be brought before it. At 12:00 o'clock (noon) of the final session or at the conclusion of all other business of the National Convention, which ever first occurs on Thursday, September 2, 2004, officers for the ensuing year will be elected. These being the National Commander and the five National Vice-Commanders in that sequence.

Representation

Representation in the National Convention shall be by Department and in

accordance with the provisions of the National Constitution. (Section 3, Article V)

Vote

"...Each department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention August 2, 2004, and whose registration fees as fixed by the National Executive Committee for its total authorized delegate strength have been paid and one alternate for each delegate." (Section 3, Article V)

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

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

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

Alternates

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

National Executive Committee

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

Department Officials

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

Convention Committees

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

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

Employment & Veterans Preference
Other Economic Matters
Finance
Foreign Relations
Legislation & Rules
National Security Committee; Joint Meeting (Includes
Aerospace, Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, Law and Order,
Merchant Marine, Military Affairs, Naval Affairs)
Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
Claims and Rating
Hospital and Medical Services

That completes the Call to the National Convention Mr. Commander.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I now officially declare the this 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion is regularly convened.

Certificate of Appreciation
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

The man who has served as our National Chaplain this year is truly dedicated to the principle of "God and country." His prayers have been an inspiration and have brought smiles to our faces. He is an ordained minister in the Lutheran Church and has served pastorates in two St. Louis churches prior to becoming the pastor of First Lutheran Church in Neosho, Missouri in 1998. His involvement with The American Legion includes service as the Post, District and Department Chaplain as well as Post Commander. He demonstrated his devotion at the World War II Dedication when he had some ills and his doctor said he should stay home and in bed. Not only did he show, he was magnificent. It's an honor for me to present a Certificate of Appreciation, marking his year of service, to our National Chaplain, Bill Doubek.

ANNOUNCER: The Certificate reads: Certificate of Appreciation, presented to Rev. Dr. William J.P. Doubek, appointed and served as National Chaplain of The American Legion, 2003-2004. Given in recognition of faithful and honorable service to The American Legion.

NATL CHAP DOUBEK: My Homiletic's professors told me years ago that if you preach for less than 10 minutes you're going to lose your job. If you preach more than 14, your going to lose your job. I only ask for a couple minutes here to say thank you to Commander John for the opportunity to serve this past year; to National Adjutant Bob Spanogle whose name gets mispronounced more than my own. To Marty Justus and Robert Caudell of the National Staff, to Past National Commanders John Geiger and Joe Frank. To the Department of Iowa who helped my Legion dad and my mom keep me straight and out of trouble. To the Department of North Dakota who especially the Post in Minot, who accepted a 20 year-old buck sergeant who couldn't drink in a 21 state, but they let me come in and be a member and have a beer there. And finally to my Department of Missouri, my home. Especially to the 11th and 12th Districts, 10th District and 15th Districts, as well as Post 385 and 163, who allowed me to serve as a Post, District and Department Chaplain.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: He whispered in my ear, what a fast year. I think I have to agree with that.

At this time I'd like to call on Past National Commander Ron Conley of Pennsylvania to present a Plaque of Appreciation to the City of St. Louis, Missouri for hosting the 2003 National Convention.

Presentation: Plaque of Appreciation to the City of St. Louis, Missouri
For the 2003 National Convention
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania, National Commander

It's an honor for me to be here this morning to help present this plaque to the city of St. Louis. Every city we go to seems to pour out their hospitality in their treatment of The American Legion. St. Louis was no exception. It was an exceptionally great convention. I enjoyed it. I know I spoke to a lot of people and they enjoyed it, and the National Organization enjoyed it because the people in Missouri made more money on that convention than they've made in a long time, hosting that convention.

So it's a great honor and privilege to present to the City of St. Louis this plaque of our appreciation for the tremendous job that they did in hosting our convention last year.

Bob would like me to read the plaque. It says: In appreciation of the hospitality of the City of St. Louis and commemorating the 85th Annual National Convention of The American Legion. St. Louis, Missouri 2003. It's signed by myself, by Jim Mareschal, who was the President, and Robert Spanogle, the Adjutant.

PRES MARESCHAL: I want to take this opportunity to thank the delegates of The American Legion who came into St. Louis and made it one of the most successful conventions that The American Legion has had in its 85 year history, when they came into St. Louis. Our theme was "Welcome Home." As you all know it is the home of The American Legion where it was first started in the United States. Thank you for coming home and making that a successful convention. Anytime you want to come back home, you're more than welcome.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: What a lot of folks don't know is back in October, I was at the Pentagon meeting with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was called away from appearing at our Convention to be at a memorial for Bob Hope. Delores had asked him to speak. He said, "I feel terrible that I missed it but I felt that I needed to do it." I said, that's fine I understand and he really was doing what he needed to do. He said, "Well, is there anything important that happened at the convention in St. Louis?" I looked at him, smiled and said that there was a hell of an election!

Your program says introduction of the new National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. I want to deviate slightly before we do that because in the year 2003-2004 Neal Warnken was an outstanding National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion. He had quite a track record, meeting their membership goal, in fact, exceeding their membership goal. In the 50th Anniversary of the Child Welfare Foundation, the Sons of The American Legion was the largest fund-raising organization with over $314,000 raised for Child Welfare. And that's in addition to Children's Miracle Network and all the other things they do.

I think it's only right that we ask Neal to step up so we can acknowledge him.

Remarks: Neal Warnken
National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

PAST SAL COMDR WARNKEN: Yes, we did have a great year. If I could sum it up in one word, I would say it was successful. But it was due to the hard work of all the Legionnaires, all the Legion family, and I'm very proud to be a part of this organization.

Something that was near and dear to my heart all year long was the Child Welfare Foundation. Commander, you asked us to step up to the challenge. I've got to tell you we did. When I went to our members, I said if we could step up to the challenge, we would reach an all-time high for the Child Welfare Foundation. We achieved over $300,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation this last year which put us over $1.00 per member.

Commander, with their hard work and dedication and with the way we promoted family this last year, I think we did make a difference. I appreciate you for everything that you've done for us as an organization and thank you from the deepest friendship of my heart. Commander, it's been an honor and a privilege to work with you throughout this year.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you for being part of the family.

PAST SAL COMDR WARNKEN: I would be remiss in my duties if I didn't introduce my wife, Patty. I must also say hello to my parents, Dave and Lorraine Warnken and to acknowledge the Kansas delegation.

I take this opportunity to introduce to you a very distinguished gentleman. And when I say distinguished, he comes from a very big sort of town compared to my town. He comes from the great state of Iowa. Mike is a great leader and will do a great job in carrying on from where we've come and where we're going. I'm very proud to call this man my friend. Welcome the new National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion, Mike Deacon.

Address: Michael Deacon, Iowa
Newly Elected National Commander
Sons of The American Legion

First and foremost, I'd like to introduce my wife, Sandy Deacon, Past Department President from the Department of Iowa and the man who is going to keep me straight where I'm supposed to be, the National Adjutant, Mr. Brian O'Hearne.

It is really a privilege to be here. I've always said, we are the family; it has to be that way. When you're born into a family, you basically have to take what you get. You don't have a whole heck of a lot of choice. But when you choose to belong to this family, The American Legion Family, it means so very much because you want to be involved in taking care of our veterans, being involved in our children and youth programs, and protecting Old Glory. That's what we do best.

It just is so very fortunate for me to be able to be here. I had the distinct privilege of having my father, who is a World War II veteran, put my gold cap on me on Sunday afternoon. That was the biggest honor I could ever have.

Commander John, Commander Neal, and President Katherine, they set the bar very high this year for The American Legion Family. We're going to do our very best to continue that tradition to make it a family and make sure that we do everything to help the veterans and our children and to do the very best we can to protect Old Glory.

Again I thank the Department of Iowa for their support. They did the very best they

could to raise enough money to keep me out of their state this coming year. (Laughter.) We look forward to continuing the tradition of the Sons of The American Legion. I would ask you one favor. Those of you who are out there who pay dues for your grandchildren, your grandsons or your great-grandsons, please let them know they belong to this organization. Heaven forbid one of you pass away and we lose a great Legionnaire. But then we also lose an SAL member who didn't even know he belonged to the family. Please make sure if you do pay dues for a younger member that they know they belong to this family and they always have a place to go.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thanks Mike and thanks Neal.

Our next guest has been with us many times in the past three years. He is the President of the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. In this capacity he has traveled to The American Legion meetings and conventions to assist us with the induction of members into ANAVICUS—Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada United States unit.

The shoulder-to-shoulder relations that we share with our comrades to our north have grown stronger with each passing year. In 1948, the President of ANAVETS attended an American Legion convention and it has continued over the years. (By the way, it is ANAVETS, did you catch that? For years we called it ANAVIC. Have found out they really are ANAVETS, but ANAVICUS is what they are known here. We've had the wrong name for years.)

Here to bring greetings as a demonstration of the long-standing ties between the two countries and the two organizations committed to their fellow veterans is the President of ANAVETS, Bob Cassels.

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

It's a privilege for me to be here again to bring greetings from the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada. We are Canada's oldest veterans association formed in 1840, so we're 160 some odd years old. Just this morning I thought I'd been the President that long because I was out with Indiana last night. (Laughter.)

I was listening to the Commander's comments and I read his write-up in your brochure for the Convention. I listened to the Padre the other day on Sunday at your ceremony and he kept saying, and it stuck with me, "Listen to the politicians." He said it many times after he said some of his prayer. In saying that it made me think what we go through in Canada. I can see that you're dong the same thing when you're doing things for your veterans. Politicians say a lot of things and if you don't push them to do it, they don't do it. Talk is quite cheap but when it comes to the voting, as your Commander said, he wants to have a count on the vote and he wants to know who voted for it. So he knows who to vote for when he goes to the elections.

We have the same problems. I have been dealing with our government since 1982 as a member of the executive of the Army, Navy, and Air Force called ANAVETS. And over these past four years, we've had some very good success working with the Royal Canadian Legion, our sister organization in Canada, the National Council of Veterans Associations. Between the three associations we have been taking our government to task more so in these last few years than we were before because of the new veterans that we have today, those people who are serving on peacekeeping missions, as they them.

These people are being tasked. They come home, they're home for two or three

months, and then they're gone again. This is starting to tell with the PTSD and all the things that are happening to them. They're getting medical discharges which means they don't get a full pension. If they didn't get their benefits, with people like you working for your veterans, and us working for our veterans, they wouldn't get looked after. You have to be there. They need you the same as our veterans need us to make sure that the government lives up to the commitment they have said they would, looking after you when you come home.

We've been very successful in the last two years. We have a VIP Program back in Canada which is for the veteran who comes home and he doesn't want to go in a hospital but wants to stay in his own residence. The government pays so much per year for lawn care, snow removal, in-house maintenance for them, and meals-on-wheels if they require that. It's called the VIP Program. And if the veteran passes away, his wife would get that for 12 months. And then somebody turned the key and that was the end of it. She got nothing. We lobbied the government in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003, and we finally got through. They now qualify that spouse to collect that VIP Program for inside and outside maintenance for her house for the rest of her life. That was quite a feat with our government and it went back to 1990, we had them take it back that far.

I heard you say about education for the children of the people serving in the Armed Forces, who unfortunately, pay the supreme sacrifice for the freedoms that we enjoy. Their children would not get their education paid for. It was [available] until 1995, and for some reason it got removed. We put that on the table. If they lose their life while serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, the government of Canada will pay for the education of those children. We were successful in getting that along with VIP.

It's a privilege for me to come here. I've been here a few times. My first time in Indianapolis was in 1990. I was President from 1990-92, and guess they thought I did something wrong because they brought me back and put me in. They're going to try and straighten me out, get me to do it right. But before I leave, I would like to make a presentation to the National Commander of a portfolio that we use. It has our crest on it and it says, "ANAVETS." Our crest in the center and then underneath it says, "Shoulder-to-Shoulder." And that's how we work, shoulder-to-shoulder to make sure our veterans and their families and dependents are looked after.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Bob, thank you for being an ally and a friend. We really do appreciate that.

For some reason, historians are among the most unheralded of any writers. And when it comes to writing the history of war, that becomes doubly true. Our next guest is a writer and historian. In fact, he's a highly regarded writer and historian. He has written on the countdown to using the atomic bomb in Japan, the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis*, and now has written a story that Legionnaires tell every year. It's called "No Greater Glory," and it's the story of the Four Chaplains and the sinking of the *USAT Dorchester* in World War II. Welcome to Nashville, author and historian Dan Kurzman.

Address: Dan Kurzman, Author
North Bergen, New Jersey

I'm so deeply grateful for this opportunity to speak to you guys from every state in the Union, especially about a subject which I know is very close to your hearts. My book *No Greater Glory*, tells the story of the four immortal chaplains whose memory you honor every February 3rd. To honor these people who died in the *[USAT] Dorchester*

which went down after being sunk by a German U-boat as the ship approached Greenland in World War II. The sinking caused the death of more than 2/3 of the 900 men aboard. And this was one of the worst sea disasters of World War II.

As a foreign correspondent and historian, I've written about many extraordinarily courageous people. I wrote about them for example in my book *Fatal Voyage*, the sinking of the *USS Indianapolis*, and in *Left To Die*, the tragedy of the *USS Juno* which involved the famous five Sullivan brothers.

But I've never encountered any heroes greater than the Four Chaplains in all my experience. I hope my book will contribute to the feeling of interfaith harmony that pervading this country and much of the world when the Twin Towers in New York crumbled. I hope, too, that it will contribute to the sense of national unity that can meet the challenge of those who claim that God wants them to hate and kill those who do not practice their means of worshiping Him.

No Greater Glory, I should point out, is not only about the Four Chaplains, but also about the terrifying experience of their shipmates aboard the *Dorchester* in the freezing water. I'm still haunted by the image of the corpulent young who tried to escape from the sinking through a portal but got caught in it and went down screaming. I can't forget how some men jumped overboard only to be ground-up by the [ship's] screw. Only two of the 14 lifeboats aboard proved usable. The others were frozen to the ship or turned over when people piled on, sometimes crushing to death the men at the bottom of the pile.

Most passengers froze to death in a great watery graveyard studded with Christmas-like blinking red lights that were attached to life jackets to attract rescuers. But even more would have died if the Four Chaplains had not distributed life jackets, including I might say, their own to the men and persuaded many of them to leap into a great icy void in the middle of the night.

Who were these great heroes? One of them, Father John Washington, was so determined to serve in World War II that he cheated in an Army eye test after the Navy rejected him because of a bad eye. He covered the bad eye twice and passed the test. You could see he was quite determined to get into the Army.

As the *Dorchester* was going down, Father Washington not only gave up his own life jacket to a man who didn't have one, but he searched the ship for a second one, not for himself but for another man who was without one.

Rabbi Alexander Goode, a brilliant idealist wrote a book showing how Judean Christian values are the moral background for democracy and predicting of post war spiritual revolution that would lead to an era of world brotherhood.

Although the Rabbi could have been a great engineer, he chose the clergy because he felt it would give him the means to pursue his dream. And with Pearl Harbor, he volunteered to serve overseas in a war he thought would help him realize this dream. But he never got the chance to carry on the struggle. When he couldn't fit his life jacket on a man who lay wounded on the deck, he unlaced his own boots and used the laces to tie the jacket around the man. Perhaps he must have felt the man could drift on when the ship sank. Rabbi Goode thus gave his own life in the hope of saving a man who stood almost no chance of surviving.

Methodist minister George Fox was abused as a child by a sadistic father. He ran away from home at 17 and, lying about his age, joined the army and fought in World War I. He felt that by helping others fight evil he could undo some of his own hurt. In that war, Fox won the Silver Star and the French Croix de Guerre for saving the lives of men who had been gassed by the enemy, giving them his own gas mask and carrying them to safety. Severely wounded himself, he returned to the U.S., joined the ministry

and in abject poverty raised a family while moving from village to village, helping impoverished people solve their problems. When World War II broke out, he volunteered for service in this war, too, though he had not fully recovered from the wounds he had suffered in World War I.

Dutch Reformed minister Clark Poling, the son of a famous radio evangelist, Daniel Poling, had wanted to be a lawyer but he decided to follow in his father's footsteps when he climbed to the top of a mountain one day and somehow felt himself communicating with God almost like Moses. When World War II erupted Poling hoped to join the infantry but finally volunteered for the Chaplain's Corps when his father convinced him that proportionately more Chaplains were killed in battle than fighting men. Clark Poling wanted the job with the greatest risk. Why should others take more chances than he?

And so all four men, filled with love for each other and for all humanity, met their destiny together, expressing this love with a supreme sacrifice. As the ship went down, they linked arms, uttered their individual prayers and sank into an eternity in which their memory will be forever enshrined.

I'm now heading for the exhibit room where I'll be signing books until 3:30 today.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Dan. This afternoon or tomorrow afternoon you may want to buy a copy of the book and have it autographed by the great author.

The Chair recognizes Herm Harrington of New York, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs for the purpose of a report.

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

Forty-four members and guests of this Section on Credentials and Other Internal Affairs met at 9:00 a.m., August 29, 2004 in Cheekwood G & H, Magnolia Mezzanine, Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee.

Herman Harrington of New York was elected Chairman, and Larry J. Besson of Illinois was elected Secretary.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried to accept the delegation strength as reported by the National Adjutant certifying membership 30 days prior to the National Convention. It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the report be based on the provisions of Section 3, Article V, of the National Constitution, to-wit: Five delegates for each Department, plus one additional delegate for each 1,000 members or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the opening of the Convention (August 2, 2004); and one alternate for each delegate. In addition, in accordance with Section 3, Article VII, members of the National Executive Committee which committee includes the National Commander, who exercises his vote only in his capacity as Chairman of the National Convention, and five national Vice Commanders are delegates to the National Convention. All living Past National Commanders are members of the National Executive Committee without vote and life delegates to the National Convention with vote, which is exercised with their respective Departments.

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

In accordance with the membership report certified to the Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs by the National Adjutant August 2, 2004, and in

accordance with Article V of the National Constitution, the voting strength of the 55 Departments is 3,013 allocated as follows:

Alabama	30	Montana	18
Alaska	14	Nebraska	59
Arizona	50	Nevada	15
Arkansas	26	New Hampshire	31
California	141	New Jersey	80
Colorado	31	New Mexico	19
Connecticut	35	New York	186
Delaware	17	North Carolina	54
District of Columbia	9	North Dakota	29
Florida	136	Ohio	150
France	9	Oklahoma	35
Georgia	57	Oregon	31
Hawaii	9	Pennsylvania	240
Idaho	18	Philippines	7
Illinois	139	Puerto Rico	15
Indiana	128	Rhode Island	15
Iowa	76	South Carolina	33
Kansas	53	South Dakota	32
Kentucky	37	Tennessee	39
Louisiana	42	Texas	95
Maine	34	Utah	15
Maryland	84	Vermont	23
Massachusetts	68	Virginia	62
Mexico	7	Washington	43
Michigan	97	West Virginia	34
Minnesota	119	Wisconsin	81
Mississippi	25	Wyoming	15
Missouri	66		

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

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: You heard the Chairman make the motion. Do I hear a second? ...*From the floor* Second.

All in favor indicate by saying "aye." Opposed "no." The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs–Section I is adopted.

The United States of America has many partners around the globe in preserving peace. Among them is the Republic of China. Taiwan is a strategic island nation and realized four decades ago that it was best to have a cabinet–level organization to administer the complicated tasks of coordinating and planning operations to assist and settle retired officers and men and provide care for them. Thus was born the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Servicemen. Today it's known as the Veterans Affairs Commission. With us today in Nashville is a man who is fully dedicated to these retired members because he is one. The Deputy Minister of Veterans Affairs

Commission, Lt. General Gong, Yi-min.

Greetings: Lt. General Gong, Yi-min, Minister Veterans Affairs Commission, Republic of China

I feel great honor to have this opportunity again to address your National Convention, here in the beautiful city of Nashville. First, I would like to extend a warm greeting and appreciation for the General Kao, Hua-chu, the Ministry of the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, who asked me to thank you for the continued support of my country in the past year, and wish you great success in 2004 National Convention.

The American Legion and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China have been close in association for over 40 some years. Over the past two decades, we have exchanged visits and experience of serving veterans and have built up a sound relationship. The American Legion has also passed a resolution during your National Convention urging your federal government to support the Republic of China.

Thus, our two organizations have maintained a long and lasting relationship. We are very appreciative, and look forward to working even closer with The American Legion. In order to defend freedom, peace and security, veterans gave the best part of their lives. After they retired, they certainly deserve decent treatment and respect from government and their fellow citizens.

The American Legion coordinates with the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs and take actions to organize veterans and non-government organizations for the dignity and benefits of veterans. This comprehensive system and spirit deserve our sincere respect.

Commander Brieden and many of your past leaders have visited us in Taiwan. I am looking forward to the pleasure of many more of the visits in the future, since we also benefit for our mutual visits. We set up our VA system following the U.S. example. This year will be the 50th Anniversary of the VAC. We are proud of our continuously improving veterans in home care, medical care, educational association and employment assistance, and other services.

I want to extend our appreciation to you for all of the support you have so kindly given to the Republic of China. And I sincerely welcome each one of you to visit us in Taiwan, when you go to west Pacific area. Those who have been there before will tell you we don't just have impressive scooters, we also have the computer industry, the National Palace Museum, the very beautifully and neatly maintained metro system, tasty food and most of all a very commendable veterans service system.

Now I wish to honor National Commander Brieden with this Cloud Banner with Cravat for Chen Shui-bian, President Republic of China, and a plaque from the Veterans Affairs Commission to express our gratitude for his efforts in strengthening our mutual relationships. I ask Mr. Jason C. Shieh to read the citation. Thank you again for inviting me, and I wish you a successful Annual Convention.

MR. SHIEH: Certificate accompanying the Award of The Medal of Cloud and Banner. Mr. John Brieden, National Commander of The American Legion, has distinguished himself by his outstanding contributions to the promotion of friendly relations and cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of China. In appreciation of his meritorious assistance, National Commander John Brieden is presented the Medal of Cloud and Banner with Cravat number 3613, by the

Government of the Republic of China in accordance with Article 11 of the Armed Forces Decoration Regulations. Signed by Chen Shui-bian, the President, Yu Shyi-kun the Premiere, Li, Jieh, Minister of National Defense.

There is another plaque with inscription. Presented to Mr. John A. Brieden, National Commander The American Legion. In appreciation of his outstanding contributions to the enhancement of friendship and cooperation between The American Legion and the Veterans Affairs Commission of the Republic of China, General Gong, Yi-min, Minister, Veterans Affairs Commission, the Republic of China, August 31, 2004.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Jason. Hopefully they can still hear me as they depart. My visit last fall to the Republic of China was an outstanding visit. We had an audience with the President; had a very nice chat.

I want to emphasize they are a country that shares freedom with us. They've got a private enterprise system that has made it a prosperous country and are the example for that part of the world on what can happen when liberty and freedom and free enterprise is the rule. I think that's one reason why we need to make sure that the Republic of China is somebody that we fully support on a regular basis.

The Chair recognizes Marty Conatser of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules, for the purpose of making a report.

Before I have you take it completely, National Vice Commander Todd White will you please assume the chair as I have some duties with the American Legion Auxiliary.

...At this time National Vice Commander Todd E. White assumed the chair.

Report: Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules
Martin Conatser, Illinois, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules met at 10:00 AM on Sunday, August 29, 2004 in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. Forty-six (46) delegates assigned to this Convention Committee were in attendance, plus sixteen (16) guests. Following the preliminary activities to officially organize the Committee, the Permanent Chairman and Secretary were duly elected. I, Martin Conatser, a delegate from the Department of Illinois, was elected Permanent Chairman. Leo P. Burke, a delegate from the Department of California, was elected Permanent Secretary.

The Committee proceeded to the business agenda by considering the Rules of the Convention. A motion was unanimously approved by the Committee to adopt the Standing Rules of the Convention as they appear in the Uniform Code of Procedures for Organizing National Conventions of The American Legion. A unanimously approved motion allowed the Permanent Chairman and Permanent Secretary to make technical corrections to the Committee Report, as necessary and appropriate.

The final unanimously approved motion authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules. The Legislation and Rules Committee did not receive any resolutions for consideration or action.

However, the Committee heard remarks from Peter Dickinson, Communications Director for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. Mr. Dickinson discussed the legislative priorities of Representative Chris Smith of New Jersey, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

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

Our most important issue of VA health care continues to be in the forefront. The Congress has not adopted the Fiscal Year 2005 Budget and no appropriation has been completed for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The President's budget request of $26.4 billion for VA medical care is clearly lower than the recommendation by our National Commander John Brieden of $30 billion. It is not clear when the appropriation process will be completed as we enter into the final phase of the 2004 presidential election cycle. It is possible the appropriation for the Department of Veterans Affairs may not be completed until after the November elections. The message is clear—we must, along with our fellow veterans' service organizations, urge the Administration and Congress to adopt mandatory funding for veterans' health care.

Mr. Chairman, on September 21, Legionnaires from across the country will accompany the newly elected National Commander to Capitol Hill. The purpose of this visit will be to discuss the legislative mandates adopted by the delegates at this National Convention. The highlight of this event will be the National Commander's testimony before a joint session of the congressional Veterans' Affairs Committees.

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

NATL VICE COMDR WHITE: Do I hear a second? ...*From the floor* Second. I've heard a second, all in favor so indicate by the usual sign. "Aye." All Opposed? Motion carried. The Report of the National Convention Committee on Legislation and Rules is adopted.

At this time the Chair will recognize Kenneth Danilson of Iowa, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Finance, for the purpose of making a report.

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

Forty-six (46) members met at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Canal D, Delta Mezzanine at 9 a.m. on Sunday, August 29, 2004, in Nashville, Tennessee. Paul M. Allen (Minnesota), National Finance Director, opened the meeting as staff liaison and made general announcements concerning convention activities. He then informed the committee that nominations were in order for Chairman and Secretary. Kenneth D. Danilson (Iowa) was elected chairman, and Carl E. Levi (Tennessee) was elected secretary, by unanimous vote.

The Chairman introduced the National Treasurer, George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Indiana), who updated the committee on the status of the U. S. economy and its effect on the investments policy of the national headquarters. The Treasurer stated that since August 2003, the financial market has been concerned with the return of inflation as a threat to the American economy. Today, with the economy adding jobs and consumer and wholesale prices beginning to rise, the specter of inflation seems to be under control.

However, the potential threats ahead are real. Will the federal government act too quickly in its fight against inflation? How will China's fight against inflation and efforts to slow down their own economic growth affect the global economy? How will the

transition to sovereignty in Iraq ultimately impact economies around the globe? And, finally, how will the pending election effect economic growth and earnings in the coming year?

Despite the aforementioned issues, there is an expectation that the U. S. economy is poised for a period of moderately paced expansion, perhaps reflecting an annualized rate of 3% Gross Domestic Product growth for the last half of 2004, following the robust growth we have enjoyed since the third quarter of 2003. The days of record monetary stimulus in the form of low interest rates are behind us, but with the recent job creation and still historically low interest rate, the economic expansion has shown signs of sustainability going into 2005.

Treasurer Buskirk then recommended that national dues be set at $9.00. A motion from Myron Kirby (Illinois) was made that the 2005 per capita dues remain at $9.00. Roger Messier (Virginia) seconded the motion, and it was adopted by unanimous vote.

The Chairman then recognized Dennis Henkemeyer (Minnesota), Chairman of *The American Legion Magazine* Commission and Daniel S. Wheeler (Virginia), the Executive Director. Mr. Wheeler reported that the Magazine is projecting a year-end surplus of $2,500,000, and that the Magazine has not received any postage increase this year. He also informed the committee that the paper market is tight but stable with a possible increase next year. Mr. Wheeler reported that advertising sales are on track to reach their goal of $8,750,000, plus they are in the process of negotiating with a new advertising sales contract.

National Finance Director Paul M. Allen reported that the 2003 Crowe-Chizek certified annual audit, which was distributed to each delegate prior to the convention, and published in the convention program, shows our total assets were at $144,104,676, a 2.7% increase over last year. He also informed the committee that our 2003 year-end surplus was $1,881,757, and that we are anticipating a $658,129 year-end surplus in 2004. The national financial status is very sound.

Gaither Keener (North Carolina) moved to empower the Chairman and Secretary to write and/or amend the report on behalf of the Convention Committee on Finance. Eugene Pytka (Rhode Island) seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote. As there was no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:47a.m.

As a duly elected delegate from Iowa, I make a motion to approve this report.

NATL VICE COMDR WHITE: You heard the motion is there a second? ...*From the floor* Second. Hearing a second all those in favor so indicate by the usual sign. "Aye." All opposed? Carried. The report of Finance is adopted.

I call on National Adjutant Robert Spanogle for administrative announcements.

Announcements: Robert Spanogle
National Adjutant

The Western States Caucus will be held right after the recess of this session of the convention in the Washington Room.

We will convene the opening session of the second day of the National Convention at 9:00 a.m. The National Commander has put together a wonderful agenda. The first speaker tomorrow will be General Richard B. Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff. Following him will be The Honorable Tom Ridge, the Secretary of the Department

of Homeland Security. Following him will be The Honorable Phil Bredesen, the Governor of the State of Tennessee. Following the Governor will be Lt. General Steve Blum who is Chief of the National Guard Bureau. Following that, we will have an address by The Honorable Jerry D. Jennings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/Missing Personnel Affairs. Following that we will have the Democratic Nominee for the President of the United States, Senator John F. Kerry of Massachusetts.

Then we will go to greetings by John Furgess, the Commander-In-Chief, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. Following that will be an address by Major General Patrick H. Brady, United States Army, Retired, Medal of Honor recipient who will give us a report on the Flag Amendment.

Tomorrow morning, this hall will be magged because of the security surrounding both the nominees of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. We will open the doors at 6:30 a.m. so you can enter the hall and get through the mags and, of course, leave all the pocket knives and other matter at home. When they collect them in the big boxes I have no idea where they go. There must be a sale of that stuff some place. (Laughter.) We will open the doors for a joint session with The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion.

NATL VICE COMDR WHITE: Delegates at this time, will you please join me in a salute to the Flag of the United States of America? By the numbers. One! Two!

This Convention will stand in recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow.

...At 12:45 p.m., the Convention recessed to reconvene the following day, Wednesday, September 1, 2004 at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
SECOND DAY

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

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

...At 9:00 a.m. the Delegates assembled for the second day of the 86th Annual National Convention and the following proceedings were had:

Call to Order
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We will salute the Colors of our Nation by the numbers. Ready. One! Two!

I now call on the National Chaplain, Bill Doubek for the Invocation. Please uncover.

Invocation
Rev. William J.P. Doubek, Missouri, National Chaplain

Be with us oh Lord as we gather, and let the beauty and the wisdom of Your Holy presence guide our every thought and word and action. Erase from our minds every worldly ambition, giving us instead the bounties of Your wisdom and of Your understanding.

We are human and weak, and we pray that You give us strength. We are often occupied with the struggle for living. Please grant us the gift of charity, that in helping others we may gain a broader knowledge of how to live. Amen.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Please remain uncovered and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our great Country.

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

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I now declare this Convention in session.

These are extraordinary times and every once in a while there is an extraordinary individual. After the parade on Sunday evening, one of our Legionnaires slipped and fell off a moving Opryland tram. As the Legionnaire rolled towards the wheels of the tram, a Gaylord employee, Michael Morgan, in heroic fashion and with regard to possible personal injury, threw himself between the Legionnaire and the tram saving the Legionnaire from certain injury and possible death. Would Michael Morgan please join me at the lectern please. (Applause.) Michael is a former Marine (Hoorah.) and in the greatest tradition of the Marine Corps, we appreciate your heroic actions.

Our first speaker bears the extraordinary burden of being the principle military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. He is a proven
leader and a friend of The American Legion. He is with us again, as our forces remain committed to the war on terrorism. He's here to share with us his insight into complex problems that our forces face.

A 1965 graduate of Kansas State University, he entered the United States Air Force through the ROTC program. His career has taken him from flying cargo planes to advanced fighters, to key leadership positions both at home and abroad. Welcome to

Nashville and this Convention, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, Air Force General Richard Myers.

Address: Gen. Richard B. Myers, Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Air Force

Thank you, John, for the kind words and the opportunity to join you today to address this very distinguished group. And a little bit noisy early in the morning, that's good.

When I saw the invitation, it said "Keynote Speaker," I said, "I wonder who else is speaking." Then I saw members of Congress, Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, Governor of the State of Tennessee, and of course, the President and Senator Kerry—and I said, "Who are they kidding, I know I'm just a backup." (Laughter.)

This is an opportunity I'm really happy to take because that speaker list is a reflection of the importance of this great organization and the work that you're doing on behalf of our veterans. Since the founding of our nation, over 40 million Americans have put on a uniform and answered the call to serve. As this audience knows so well, whether marching, sailing, or flying from duty at the loneliest outpost to defending our homeland, you all have formed a line of honor that stretches across our Nation's history.

Many of you have faced the horrors of war, you've been courageous and relentless in upholding the oath to serve our country. You've placed the freedoms of our nation and our allies before your own safety, and during untold sacrifices and long separations from family and friends. You've created a legacy of service that stands as an example for generations to come.

And, John, I thank you for your leadership of the Legionnaires; and for reminding Americans across this nation, of the role our Armed Forces has played in preserving our freedoms. Thank you very much. To the veterans in this audience who have defended our nation so well with honor and courage at every turn, thank you for your continued selfless service.

As Chairman it really is a humbling experience going to work each day, knowing that I represent more than 2 million men and women, active duty, reserve, guard who proudly serve in the roles that many of you once performed. This morning about one-fifth of our force is serving on distant shores. Many of them including those in Afghanistan and Iraq, go bravely in harms way day in and day out.

So, this morning I'd first want you to know that the legacy you all have worked so hard to create is in very good hands. And then, I'd like to take a moment to share with you some thoughts about this war on terrorism.

This past June, I had a chance to travel to France, the birth place of The American Legion 86 years ago. I was hosted by the citizens of Foix Marles and together with a distinguished group of American veterans, we celebrated the 60th Anniversary of the D-Day invasion. We know the story of these brave men, part of the greatest generation. President
Eisenhower marked their calling when he issued the Normandy invasion order with these words. "The eyes of the world are upon you." On that hallowed ground, heros from across small towns and cities and farms, all across America displayed relentless determination and courage. And it was certainly an honor to talk with these heroes and shake their hands at that 60th Anniversary Celebration.

When I visit our troops around the world today, I see the same determination and courage from our men and women in uniform, the same ordinary citizens, if you will,

doing extraordinary things as they carry-on your legacy. Most importantly, they are safeguarding the freedoms you fought so hard to secure. Let me share a few examples with you.

I was in Jalalabad, Afghanistan three weeks ago with Secretary Rumsfeld. We were visiting a provincial reconstruction team. There are 16 of these teams setup to assist the Afghan government aid the Afghan people. This particular team was led by an army lieutenant colonel reserve officer, civil affairs. He told us how he was working with the local government to refurbish schools and build health clinics and dig wells so they could have safe water to drink. He made it sound real easy when in fact, the security situation and just the living conditions were a real challenge. He had also invited in the governor—the Afghan Governor of the Nagahar Province. He came to this meeting with some tribal elders. And they told us that when the Soviets were there, they were not too welcomed. But he said in contrast, the governor said, "We welcome you Americans. We fully support your work and we want you to stay." That is, I think, a direct reflection of the great work of this team bear in mind, led by a Lt. Colonel in a very lonely outpost, his leadership and the leadership of all of his team members.

Make no mistake about it, they are making a very real difference in very challenging circumstances, helping to restore hope to a region that had only known oppression for most of the past decade. They are making a huge, positive impact.

I spent yesterday afternoon and evening with the Screaming Eagles with the 101st Airborne Division. I was wondering if there might be any veterans from the 101st here. Sounds like someone had a bad night last night. (Laughter.) Actually, I met one of the veterans from the 101st going to breakfast this morning, so I know there are a couple of you out there. It was a great honor to go up there because that's a terrific outfit. Let me just talk about it for a second.

Right before the biggest military operation ever undertaken by this nation, the 101st Commander said, "We shall be called upon to carry out operations of far reaching military importance, and we shall habitually go into action when the need is immediate and extreme." I should tell you, though, those words were spoken by the 101st First Division Commander, Major General William Lee, over 60 years ago. The Division was preparing then for their historic role in World War II. But the words are as true now as they were then.

Today's 101st moved a unit the size of a small city across the world and successfully defeated a brutal dictator. With the help of the joint team, the Division's entire set of vehicles, air craft and equipment were moved into the theater of operations in just 10 days. Through some long hard days and nights of ferocious combat, the Screaming Eagles displayed flexibility, lethality and tremendous fire power as they conquered a pretty stubborn enemy that certainly didn't always play by the rules. And they never lost their focus about what the mission was about. Within two weeks of arriving in the ancient city of Mosul in Northern Iraq, they rebuilt the Khosar Bridge and facilitated the first free election in Iraq since the rise of the Baath Party. These are the soldiers of the 101st.

Through one project at a time, about 4,700 projects in all, the 101st set Iraqi citizens on a course to rejoin the community of nations. In the long road to reestablishing a working

community, a somewhat skeptical local Iraqi politician in Mosul said, with a raised voice, said, "How are you gathering your information, all you folks in the 101st?" He said, "I challenge you to go out into the streets and get the opinion of the 'lowliest, dirtiest man.'" And in true Screaming Eagle fashion, Specialist Bernard White answered,

"As a matter of fact sir," responding back to this Iraqi, "We already have." Now remember, this is Iraq, and this soldier asked for opinions and he got questions and answers from Iraqis. A dialogue that would have been unheard of, just a few short months before the 101st arrived.

These are just a few stories. I wish you could meet some of the troops. I hope you have a chance to see some of the folks who are on this stage and throughout your stay here, of course, and hear their stories first hand. What I think you'll see is the same thing we see in you who have served: a humble confidence, a steely determination and, most importantly, what you'll see is that they represent the values of the American people. And believe me when I tell you that I think our most potent weapon in our arsenal is in all of our values. Your legacy's deed is in good hands by today's generation of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines.

These servicemen and women, like those before them, understand they are in a global struggle, a struggle of ideas trying to eliminate oppression and hardship. They know this conflict will be long and it will be a tough fight. They know their mission and they absolutely know what's at stake. They also realize the rewards are great, the same rewards we all strive for: freedom for ourselves, freedom for our friends and freedom from fear.

In this war on terrorism, the enemy we face is very different. They're not quite as predictable as some of our past enemies. They're extremist who know absolutely no territorial or moral bounds. This enemy takes full advantage of the information age communications and they pursue weapons that can cause mass death and destruction. And they can reach our homeland. They can certainly, and have, tested our will and resolve. They provoke fear and they target innocent civilians. We see this almost, unfortunately, on a daily basis as Iraqi citizens and Afghanistani citizens, and other citizens of this globe die at the hands of these extremists.

The enemy is also very adaptable. So we must be flexible and versatile as we prepare and execute our missions. Fortunately for us, flexibility and versatility, are key strengths of our U.S. Armed Forces. In the face of this threat, one that I believe is the most serious that frankly this nation has ever faced, you can count on the U.S. military's resolve. It is firm.

Thomas Paine perhaps said it best when he said, "It is not a field of a few acres of ground, but a cause that we are defending. And whether we defeat the enemy in one battle, or by degrees, the consequence will be the same." The message is clear. For this war on terrorism, failure is not an option.

While our services still have separate cultures, and a healthy level of competition which is all good, we've learned how to fight as one joint team very well as the world saw in Iraq and Afghanistan. During Operation Iraqi Freedom, when some pundits erroneously declared that the ground advance was "bogged down" and "stalled," during a sandstorm, they missed the deadly precision attacks and all-weather capability of our joint and combined team. During that blinding sandstorm —there was some great video from the embedded reporters and I think most of us got a pretty good feel for the conditions at the time where you couldn't see very far—the coalition air power worked together with precision ground units to destroy two Republican Guard divisions, two divisions while we were stalled and bogged down. Army, Air Force, Marines, and Navy worked very close together.

But defeating violent extremists is not simply a task for your Army, your Air Force, Marines, the Coast Guard, the Navy. It would be a mistake to think that the military can win this war against extremism alone. It's going to take virtually every agency of our

government working closely together: the Department of Defense, obviously, the Department of State, Homeland Security, Treasury, Justice, Commerce, all organizations that deal with information sharing and law enforcement, plus, our coalition partners and the entire international community.

We are also moving forward on a more flexible force posture. We realize we can't overly concentrate military forces in a few locations tailored for specific scenarios. We have to operate from the premise that our forces probably won't fight in place. That's more of a cold war mind set. So to address the uncertainty and global challenges of the 21st Century, we are going to posture for quicker deployments. We aren't simply going to be the first with the most. We're going to be the first with the best.

The emphasis on troop counts that Napoleon would have appreciated is pretty much becoming outdated. Effective military capabilities rather than numbers of personnel, or units, enable us to successfully execute our global security commitments. In today's security environment we have to defeat threats to our homeland as far forward as possible. At the same time, we enhance stability and predictability for our service personnel and their families, allowing them to stay longer at assignments and reduce the frequency of their moves.

Obviously, we require much of our force, those in uniform and the families who support them. They're up to it. They're the right men and women for the job. Last night my wife, Mary Jo, and I had a chance to have dinner with about 20 to 25 families E-6 and below out at Ft. Campbell, and their wives. What a terrific group. I wish you could see them all, the military members, their families, a few young children. They know what this is all about. They know this is their moment in history and they're eager and willing to serve.

Your legacy of dedication, selflessness to serve, and to act on behalf of others in the face of danger has never been more important than right now as we fight this war on terrorism, this war against extremism. And we can't forget. It's very important that we remember that we all we all have a role to play in wining this war. With programs like Boys Nation, League Baseball and the Spirit of Service Awards you bestowed on those outstanding members of the Armed Forces yesterday, there is no doubt that all of you continue to serve. And I thank you for that legacy of service and for all the countless individual deeds you do to make this organization a shining example of the values and ideas that truly make this nation great.

The American Legion is keeping the notion of service alive by taking care of our veterans. You've been a great voice on issues like pay and health care benefits, POW/MIAs, and taking care of our families and building relationships in our local communities. Day in and day out, you confirm to our men and women who are serving today in a very tangible way how much our country honors their service and their sacrifice. In my view, your role is more important than ever as we continue to face the uncertain challenges of this global war on terrorism. You demonstrate virtually daily the heartfelt gratitude to our veterans and our commitment to serve those who have served America.

Those in uniform today seek to live up to your legacy of service. Let me salute you one more time for the support you give them, for the example you've provided them. In our times of trial you were there, and you are still there for America. May God bless you for that. And may God bless the men and women who are serving in uniform today. And may God bless America.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Gen. Myers.

He made a couple of points that I think are important. Number one, when we came home and took off the uniform, we did not take off citizenship or patriotism; we still serve America's Legionnaires. And I think the other thing that was important is he talked about supporting the troops. General, we've got good young men and women serving this country. We're proud of them and I hope you'll tell them that we're proud of them.

In the global war on terror and the ongoing operations in Iraq, it's the men and women of the National Guard who are shouldering a heavy burden. They, too, are our comrades. And I'm proud of what The American Legion has done in supporting their families and reaching out to these servicemembers.

With us today is the man who has the responsibility for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs, plans that affect the Army and Air Force National Guard. He has commanded at every level to include Special Forces operational detachment, a light infantry battalion, and infantry brigade. He's also served as a division support commander. He understands deployments as he served as the Commanding General of the multi-national north of the operation joint force Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2001-2002.

I've had the opportunity to visit him in the Pentagon. And earlier this year as we talked about family support, he sent a letter to all the Adjutants General nationwide and said he wanted them to work with The American Legion and The American Legion's Family Support Network because they will be a force multiplier for them.

Please welcome the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lt. Gen. Stephen Blum.

Address: Lt. Gen. Stephen Blum
Chief, National Guard Bureau

I appreciate the invitation and the opportunity to come down here and speak with such an August group of great Americans. We stand on your shoulders. Those who serve today stand on the shoulders of those who served before us. As I look out into this sea of blue and red and white hats, I see people that served all around our globe in conflicts of the past and are still serving as Gen. Myers said today.

Your part that you play in the defense of our nation in support of our soldiers is essential both to the spirit, and the fighting spirit of our young men and women all around the globe today. Your National Commander has wisely chosen the outreach to our families, the families of these veterans who are deployed in very harsh conditions around the world for some very long periods away from home in harms way. Your support to their families and their communities is absolutely essential, as you well know, to their fighting spirit overseas and to the spirit and the courage and the backbone that that family has to maintain during that period of sacrifice while their loved ones are serving in uniform. Thank you, American Legion, for what you do for the veterans past, present and future of this nation.

I'd like to take a couple of minutes and talk to you about your Army and Air National Guard because many of you know the Army and Air National Guard has a very different organization than it is presently and will be very soon in the future.

In the past your Army and Air National Guard was largely a strategic reserve force, a deterrent force, to be held in the rear—over structured, under resourced—to be fleshed out, to be filled by a draft, to be then equipped and trained and sent to reenforce, augment or support the Army or the Air Force in a time-phased deployment sequence overseas against the symmetrical threat, mostly the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. But today your National Guard is quite different than that National Guard. It is today a joint and

expeditionary operational force.

In the past, at the end of World War II and Korea, and then shortly for awhile after the end of Vietnam, a small percentage of the guard members were veterans. Today, as I stand and speak before you, over 60 percent of the Army and the Air National Guard are combat veterans today.

Gen. Myers, the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff told you, about 20 percent, one in five, of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our armed forces are deployed right now. In the National Guard that percentage is higher than active duty. Twenty-seven percent of the Army and Air National Guard are deployed around the world today. As I speak to you this morning, over 100,000 citizen soldiers and airmen are deployed in 44 countries around the world executing, taking the fight to our adversaries on the global war on terrorism.

In the next two years, at our current rate, eight out of ten of our members serving in the Army and Air National Guard, citizen soldiers, citizen airmen, will be combat veterans of this war. And this is a long, protracted war where we send soldiers for one year. Boots on the ground in places like Afghanistan and Iraq and where our Air National Guard citizen airmen rotate on a more frequent basis for shorter periods of time, but they, too, also serve at an unprecedented rate. The Army and the Air National Guard have never been used more than they are being used today. They are defending your homeland right here in America, every day guarding critical infrastructure and Department of Defense key facilities. At the same time, they are responding to the 54 governors to reduce human suffering and loss of life and property such as you saw in Hurricane Charley, or you see with the forest fires in the west and northwest, or the flooding that you see going on in the middle Atlantic states even this morning. And at the same time, they're keeping the peace in Bosnia, Kosovo and the Sinai. And four combat brigades, soon to be seven combat brigades, ultimately nine combat brigades out of your Army National Guard, will have deployed to include the 278 ACR right from here from Tennessee that is getting ready to go to Iraq right now. They're in intensive training to go now.

And there was talk years ago about the National Guard Divisions being cold war relics and unnecessary. There are only eight of these divisions. When the 42nd Division Headquarters deploys to Iraq on the next rotation less than a year from now, that will mean that seven of the eight National Guard Division Headquarters will have deployed overseas in the global war on terrorism within the last five year. So soon all eight of eight will be used and all 18 Division Headquarters in the Army will have engaged in this fight against the global war on terrorism. That is a different National Guard than you father's National Guard, or your older brother's National Guard. And it is a different National Guard even than we saw deployed for Operation Desert Storm.

You have a ready, accessible, reliable and we don't talk about a relevant force anymore, we have become the essential force. Forty percent of the American soldiers in Iraq are guard and reserve. *Forty percent!* And they're doing everything from combat to combat support, to combat service support, right alongside the Marines and their active army counterparts on the ground over there.

They are shouldering a great responsibility in the defense of this nation and they should, because this nation should never send its sons and daughters to war ever for anything, anyplace without the National Guard going because when you call out the National Guard, you call out America. And you send America's hometown to war.

And if anybody tells you that people join the National Guard to avoid the draft, I would like to explain something to you. The draft ended 31 years ago. And if there is still

somebody serving in the National Guard to avoid the draft, they've probably deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, Haiti or Guantanamo Bay, or they're standing guard here in the United States and somebody missed the point.

These young men and women that are answering the call to Colors today are the finest that I have seen in my 37 years in uniform. None of them has to be here and all of them responded when called. Not a single citizen soldier failed to report when called to duty. And that is very strong testimony to how good the all volunteer force is working. The volunteer total force works and is being tested in the crucible of a long protracted war while we're sustaining casualties. Don't let anybody tell you that generation X, Y or whatever we're calling the young people today are not up to the task. They are up to the task.

Working in the Pentagon, you get to work awfully close to Washington, D.C. And in Washington, D.C., there's a lot of doubt some days as to about what we're doing. And should we do this, and should we be doing that and during this season it's particularly an unusual time and lots of questioning going on. But I can tell you, having traveled to Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Guantanamo and about 27 other places around the globe, that we have our citizen soldiers and airmen deployed; young men and women right out of your families, right out of your communities, right out of the places you work, right out of your neighborhood, right out of your churches and synagogues and mosques. Those people that come from your zip code know what it's all about. They know why they're there. They know what they're doing is important. And they know they must not, cannot and will not fail you or this nation.

I will show you a little video clip—don't put it on just yet because I want to set it up a little bit. This is a great video clip because it has my two favorite kinds of music in it, country and western. (Laughter.) The second part that I like about this film is I asked to have this thing put together and it was finished in two days by two non-commission officers. Two Sergeants put this film together.

Every piece of film that you see except for a half of second when you see the World Trade Center being attacked is just stock film footage. Every other piece of film, every face you see is a National Guard face. Every piece of equipment you see is Army and Air Force equipment that's issued to, maintained and operated by the National Guard. And every mission you see being performed in here is not staged. Not one piece of footage in here is staged. This is actual film that we were able to compile by calling the States and saying, send me some snippets of what you've been doing since 9/11. This is what your National Guard has been doing for the last two and three quarter years. It's also what your National Guard has been doing for the past 367 years. We just didn't have video in those days.

In this film you'll see, for those of you who have never looked through a night vision device—remember black and white television?—a night vision device which kind of makes it look like you're looking through green and white television. It's kind of black and white with a greenish tint to it. So when you see these images, realize these pictures are being taken in the dark of the night when nobody can see unless you have one of these devices to look through.

You will see a young National Guard soldier from Florida, Specialist 4th Class, Jeffrey Wurschoe from Gainesville, Florida raising the American flag and flying his state flag underneath in the middle of a combat operation because he is so proud that he's a Florida guardsman, proud of his country, and proud of his membership in the National Guard of the state of Florida. By the way, he took both of these flags with him. He didn't buy them in the PX, but brought them from home and flew them in the combat zone to

send a message to our adversaries: first, that America was behind this fight; and second that the State of Florida was behind him and his unit.

Jeffrey Wurschoe was an 82nd Airborne soldier who left active duty, joined the National Guard, went to college, left college when his unit was called up and went and guarded a Patriot missile battery in Jordan before the start of Iraqi Freedom. When the 4th Infantry Division couldn't get basing rights from Turkey and we couldn't get the northern front going, we used United States Special Operations Forces on the ground, the United States Air Force air power, we coupled the Special Operations Forces with Pershmerga Freedom Fighters from the Kurdish people in the northern part of Iraq. And we pulled Jeffrey Wurschoe's National Guard Unit off of guarding a Patriot Missile battery in Jordan and made them part of the northern offensive. So he switched missions from guarding a fixed facility to doing a combat night attack two days before the start of major combat operations in Iraq. And what you'll see is some of the unusual looking special operations vehicles breeching a berm coming out of Jordan into Iraq.

You'll also see Jeffrey Wurschoe later in this film again. Unfortunately, this time he's being carried up appropriately the ramp of an Air National Guard C-130 to take his remains home. After the combat operation which they did magnificently, they switched to something we call stability and support operations which is very difficult, sophisticated and intellectually challenging military operations on the ground. This is when an American soldier has to be everything from a social worker and police officer to a combat infantryman, and those mission ranges change very fast. Jeffrey Wurschoe was assassinated in a school yard when he went to get a soda pop. His buddies loaded him in the back of this—you'll see him in a flag draped coffin going up into the back end of this C-130 to bring him home to Gainesville, Florida where Specialist 4th Class, Jeffrey Wurschoe was given the largest funeral ever held in the city of Gainesville, Florida. Every business and school closed, every elected official attended, people from all the churches and community centers came out where they lined the streets for this fallen American veteran who knew why he was there.

We can go ahead and show the film now. I think this best captures the essence of why I'm so proud to be the Chief of an organization of 460,000 citizen soldiers and airmen like the ones that I just described to you.

Thank you for having me here today. God bless The American Legion for what you do for our veterans and thank you so much for this new partnership that John Brieden has formed between the National Guard and The American Legion all around the country where you have adopted armories and units that are deployed. I just can't tell you how much we appreciate and really feel proud of what you continue to serve and how you continue to serve our nation.

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

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: In looking for leadership qualities in an individual, those of us who have served often look to veterans. Our next guest is a veteran. He grew up in a veteran's public housing in Erie, Pennsylvania. He was drafted, disrupting his law school education to serve in Vietnam as an infantry staff sergeant. There he earned a Bronze Star for Valor. I first met him when he was Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. But the biggest challenge of his life was yet to come. Following the terrorist attack on America in September of 2001, he was put in charge of the Department of Homeland Security.

He had to put together 180,000-plus employee agencies on the fly, while working

tirelessly to strengthen our borders and to provide for intelligence analysis and infrastructure protection. The Department must also improve the use of science and technology to counter weapons of mass destruction and create a comprehensive response and recovery division.

Now that's a daunting challenge. Many said it would take five or six years just to put the Department together. But he has proven to be a man equal to the challenge. In spite of many attempts, we have yet to have another attack on U.S. soil. Welcome the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, The Honorable Tom Ridge.

Address: The Hon. Tom Ridge
Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

I'm certainly honored to join you at this your 86th gathering of The American Legion National Convention. If you don't mind, I'd like to say a very quick hello to some of my fellow Pennsylvanians who continue to serve so well. I understand you're the largest delegation; maybe the loudest (Laughter.) I know I have quite a few of my Legionnaire friends in that delegation. I'd be remiss if I started naming them. I'm just grateful that they're all here and some of them took time to see me before I came on stage.

I worked with The American Legion in Pennsylvania for six years, nine months and five days. That was until I got the phone call. We worked closely with the Legion on issues ranging from employment and housing opportunities, and medical care. They represented the Legion honorably. They served their fellow veterans ably and with great compassion and it's great to consider them friends and to be with them. To all my fellow veterans who are here and Legionnaires, let me say that on behalf of Post 773, if you're ever up in northwestern Pennsylvania, it's a little community called Mill Creek, 773, drop in sometime. The drinks are on us. I can just hear the leadership [at the post] saying, "Where is Ridge now, let's send Sarge the bill." But that's ok I'll pay it, not a problem.

But my Post is just like yours. The conversations are lively, and the connections run deep. The same is true of this convention. The conversations are lively, emotional and animated. And without a doubt, the connections run deep. We make sure of it. You make sure of it. You join together. We join together to remember so that others will not forget. We join together so those who fought for freedom benefit from freedom economically, medically, socially. We joined together because we know we are needed again now more than ever because we know we are all called to serve as long as we call ourselves free. That's the credo of the American soldier, the veteran and Legionnaire.

It was the way of citizens who joined together more than 228 years ago to fight for freedom, to fight for the chance to call a land a country, to call a people a citizenry and to call a way of life America. And when that battle for freedom was won, George Washington declared that liberty was finally staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people. General Washington was the soldier's soldier and he understood freedom's greatest companion is fellowship unity, everyone pledged to freedom's cause, everyone is protector, everyone freedom's beneficiary.

You can certainly read about it in the United States Constitution. And if you haven't looked at your own Constitution in a couple of years, I encourage you to take a look at the Constitution of The American Legion. The very essence of Washington's words are found in the Preamble, specifically in our shared commitment to "Inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation," in our shared commitment and "safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy," in

our shared commitment and "to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness." In this Preamble, in your Preamble , in your pledge, the connections we have to one another are very well defined—soldier to citizen; citizen to duty; duty to country; service above all else. A uniquely American heritage of selfless service, of epic bravery and sacrifice alight many a soldiers' path throughout history.

Upon the north bridge of Concord, through the scorched earth of the Western Front, amid the steep ravines of Guadalcanal; along the landing at Inchon, on the incline of Pork Chop Hill, amid the heat of the Mekong River Delta, on the seas of the Persian Gulf and the dirt roads of Kosovo, atop the rocky terrain of Afghanistan and the sniper-laced streets of Baghdad, many a soldier has fought with courage to serve the cause of freedom.

Many people in this audience, many of our fellow veterans here today, have people they care about, people they love; relatives, friends who are presently wearing the uniform of this great country. They are fighting in places of great hardship and they are serving with great determination and great heart. And so what I would ask those of you who have a relative or friend wearing the uniform of this our great country, stand so we may salute you and honor them in doing so. If you've got a family or friend please stand and be recognized.

You know of service and you know of those who continue to serve and by recognizing you we salute everyone of our servicemen and women. And may you and the people you care about know they serve a grateful nation. We support our troops. We honor them and we pray for their comfort and their safe return. America's brave soldiers are without a doubt, the finest in the world. God bless them all.

Unlike previous wars, the war on terror is not fought on foreign soil alone. I stand before you today during a period of heightened alert. It's been nearly a month since we received very specific credible information that al-Qaeda had its periscope on some of the buildings of our financial service sector. We also know that they aim to attempt to disrupt our democratic process. And let us assure you; let me assure you, that our efforts will be to disrupt their destructive designs. We'll continue to be as comprehensive and as robust as humanly and technologically possible.

We continue to build partnerships with our friends. My friend, the Governor of Tennessee, is going to speak with you momentarily. He represents the 50 governors from our states and the governors of our territories who, along with our mayors, are extraordinarily important partners as we work together to secure this country. We continue to employee people and technology to make us safer everyday. We continue to work closely with professionals in the law enforcement and intelligence community here and around the world to obtain information that will help us prevent another attack. Because we know that terrorists in the 21st Century represent a daunting enemy.

They represent no country, no flag, no cause, no people. Yet they do have access to technology to money and to willing recruits. They are methodical and maniacal in their weaponry and their will. They will use chemical and biological and radiological nuclear weapons if they ever get their hands on them. And before them lays a map of the entire world. They seek to hide behind our freedoms. But they should know that our freedoms have no shelter for those who hate, murder and destroy.

It's been three years since 9/11, three years since the nation went from unprecedented grief to unprecedented guard. By now terrorists should know America will never utter a valedictory to freedom. There will be no farewell to service and devotion to country. Not on our watch, not ever. Americans do not live in fear. We live in freedom and will never let our freedom go.

We are resilient and readily adaptable, innovative, focused and we are resolved. We always have been. And that is why when tragedy struck the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, the citizen soldiers who fought on Flight 93, when families and friends were lost in the enormity of the task before us was clear, America said simply and rightly, "Let us begin." It was indeed clear that we needed to attack terrorists on all fronts, on new fronts, in an untold new number of ways. We needed a nimble government structure, a national and international dialogue and we needed all of it fast. And so we went to work.

We called on the best and the brightest minds. We sought out the most advanced technologies. We began to build and bolster security throughout the country. We've worked to reduce the vulnerabilities that were exploited on September 11th, and to think analytically and clearly about those that could be exploited in the future. We examined our critical infrastructure, our transportation system, our borders, our ports and, of course, the skies overhead. Nothing was or is beyond our scope of analysis and review.

The President's actions were swift. He called and asked me to join the White House as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security. And from Day One there I joined him as I continue to do each morning with the CIA Director, his Attorney General, the FBI director and others to address the latest intelligence reports, the latest threats. A twice daily video teleconference meeting with the broader intelligence community was established. The President created the Terrorist Threat Integration Center and began consolidating terrorist watch lists under the guidance of the new terrorist screening center. He swung open diplomatic channels to establish immediate security protocols and mutual standards for protection across land and air and sea.

We struck terrorists in their safe havens, at their training camps in Afghanistan and ran the Taliban out of a country that was yearning to be free. I had the pleasure of meeting a couple of the men serving in the Special Forces that had spent a little time with you this morning just off stage. The very tip of the spear of homeland security is the extraordinary work that these men and women are doing overseas on our behalf. We're proud and grateful for their service. You know they had a safe haven in Afghanistan but they weren't safe any longer and they won't have it anymore. And that's the work that they're doing all around the world.

Now certainly securing our homeland and protecting our citizens is a monumental task. We must guard thousands of miles of borders, shorelines, highways, railways and waterways. And such a task required a monumental effort which is why the President made one of the most important decisions of his Presidency when he created the Department of Homeland Security. This department, the combined efforts of nearly 180,000 men and women and 22 component agencies, provides a central point of command for the protection of our country, as well as a common vision for the preservation of our individual liberties. The result? We are more secure today than we have ever been. We took the challenge head-on and you can see and feel the differences in ways large and small. Let me just share a couple of them with you.

Before September 11th, as I had mentioned to the Auxiliary, think about what airport security was really like. The well-intentioned clerk behind the counter simply asked you if you had that bag in your possession every since you left your home. How many of you said, "No, I got it from a perfect stranger when I walked in the front door?" You had no reason to do much more than that other than run you through a metal detector. September 11th changed a lot of things. And today we deploy newly trained screeners and thousands of Federal Air Marshals. We've hardened cockpit doors on the aircraft, introduced state of the art technologies, from which the curb to the cockpit have been made airline travel safer.

Before September 11th visitors at our borders faced an inspection process with people representing the same government in different uniforms. We've unified that process to present "one face at the border." We've deployed advanced technologies, the United States VISIT System, the student exchange program, special lanes for pre-cleared travelers and cargo that come across our borders so that we can welcome the free flow of people and for trade but keep terrorist out.

The U.S.-VISIT System, an interesting program, uses the smart technology of biometrics to speed the entry of foreign travelers. Since we began that program this January, eight million passengers have been processed. And yet more that 8,000 have been either apprehended, or prevented from entering the country. We've done this because there's information that was available to us because we had access to their photographs and their fingerprints.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program is a program that was developed in close collaboration with the colleges and universities in our countries. As a result, last year during the enrollment season of August and September, we welcomed and we want to continue to welcome, foreign students into our country. We welcomed over 300,000. But at the same time we turned nearly 200 away at our ports of entry. We don't know what their intentions were but we know they weren't registered to go to school. They were therefore not admitted.

Before September 11th we never looked in a container of cargo until it reached our shores. Our objective is to push our borders out, make our borders the last line of defense, not the first line of defense. We have nearly 20,000 containers that arrive everyday in this country. But today as we gather, as I speak, there are U.S. Inspectors in Rotterdam, in Singapore and Hong Kong, and 22 other international ports of trade working along side our allies to target and to screen this cargo.

Before September 11th our national stockpile of medications to protect Americans against the bio-terrorist attack was drastically under supplied. Today, we have stockpiled a billion doses of antibiotics and vaccines, including enough smallpox vaccine for every man, woman and child in America. Now there is much more to tell and there is much more to do.

Before September 11th our first-preventers and first-responders lacked the financial resources and equipment they needed to respond together to the scene. And yet today we have allocated or awarded more than $8.5 billion for our partners at the state and federal level. We have and will continue to develop new standards for interoperable communications equipment and protective gear for those who protect us.

Before September 11th agencies in the Federal government saw very little need to share information among themselves, let alone down to our partners at the state and local level. And yet today secure communications technologies and expanded clearances along with our Homeland Security Advisory System, we've created a two-way flow of information., actionable information that our partners at the state and local level can use to help prevent a terrorist act.

Now this is just a brief glimpse of some of the protective measures we've put in place. There may be some who would be tempted to minimize these security enhancements, and they would be wrong. In every way possible we've made a real difference in securing our people and our homeland, and there are certainly more changes ahead. The successful integration of people and technology for a greater purpose has had a genuine result. Thanks to the new layered protections across land, air and sea, our nation is better protected and more secure today than ever before. And of course, there is still plenty of work left to be done. But we will sustain our effort. We will not

falter. And we will get it done.

As any soldier knows, the tactics of war require setting priorities. You can't do it all at the same time. Deploying resources strategically and effectively targeting the biggest threats and infiltrating the more nebulous ones. A war as vast and as visceral as this one requires adaptability, creativity, unity on all fronts. That's why homeland security has been derived from the ground up. It's a national strategy, ladies and gentlemen; it's not a Federal one. It's a philosophy underpinned by shared responsibility, shared leadership and shared accountability, a shared imperative to get the job done because we know we cannot secure the country from Washington, D.C. alone. It must be a priority in every city, every neighborhood to that matter, for that matter, every home in America.

This homeland security in the 21st century is really about the integration of a nation, and integration of nations working together led by national leaders and national organizations such as yours; but also governors and mayors and airline personnel and border patrol agents, the intelligence community, police officers, fire fighters, business leaders, citizens and freedom loving people everywhere. This integration is important. So I'm grateful to The American Legion Family for an organization as interconnected as yours is highly important to this security philosophy.

Today marks the first day of National Preparedness Month. The American Legion, I am proud to say, is one of 80 members of a very broad coalition that is committed to spreading the message of individual preparedness through September. Remember the words of your own Preamble where you talk about individual obligation and mutual helpfulness. We're living those words, not just within your organization but as part of this coalition. The reach you provide through your 2.7 million members adds extraordinary value to our efforts. And as part of this undertaking, members of the Legion's nearly 15,000 Post have and will be encouraged to consider setting up shelters, emergency command centers, providing certain team training, deployment sites and others as part of this effort.

I'm grateful for your time and expertise in these efforts. I also want to commend the Department of Florida. You should be especially proud of the role you played in Hurricane Charley's aftermath. You deserve public recognition of that effort. Thank you for your service. I thank the national organization for your service, but I'm certainly not surprised by it. I've been told that, to directly support homeland security, your National Security Commission formed the Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee with members located in every major community across this country. I understand that later tomorrow you will be voting on resolutions authorizing the Legion's official affiliation with Citizen Core. I hope you approve the resolution and encourage you to vote for the resolution. I suspect that you will because you will add great strength to the Citizen Core and where Citizen Core Councils don't exist, we might find the leaders to create them within your organization. Everyday The American Legion finds ways to serve their country through your good works and your good citizenship. So it's quite obvious that your connections to your country continue to run deep.

Like many of you, when it comes to my thinking about my time in the service or my time in combat, I don't normally dwell on it but I do draw from it. All parents are anxious about their sons and daughters who serve, whether in this country or elsewhere. But when I was in Vietnam, my dad wrote me a letter every single day. Now with all due respect to the Department of Defense and the Department of Army, the delivery wasn't real regular. But sooner or later, I got those letters. He'd clunk out a letter to me on that manual typewriter, the old kind. Some days it was a couple of sentences, some days was a paragraph. One time it was a play-by-play description.

I pictured him with the earphones on watching the Super Bowl to make sure that his son got the description of the game, from the first snap of the ball to the winning touchdown, which I think was a 46-yarder.

And like a lot of us do when you get something from home and you think it's of mutual interest to your buddies and your comrades, you pass it around. So some of my teammates, some of my comrades-in-arms, read that letter. I hope they felt connected to it. I hope they felt connected to my dad at that time because on that occasion we were all his sons. We were all his heroes. We were all his fellow sports fans.

Soldiers share. We share letters and we share photographs. And we share candy and if somebody in the rear doesn't consume it before sending us down the empty package. We share tough and demanding time. And we share extraordinary experiences and that experience in the service taught me a lifelong lesson that connections run deep. And we've all seen the depths of such personal connections in may ways, through the love of family and friends, through heroic feats of bravery and compassion, and just last year when I attended a naturalization ceremony in Los Angeles.

If you ever doubt why we send men and women to faraway places, to potentially sacrifice their lives—and many do—to preserve our freedoms but promote freedom around the world, you should go to a naturalization service. Several thousand people from over 140 countries were sworn in that day as new citizens. Some were already wearing our country's uniform. They had awaited citizenship, but they had not waited to fight for freedom's cause.

The joy of liberty—the character of a welcoming nation—the resolve of a willful people. When will the terrorists realize they have no foothold in a country where freedom is ever and always on the march. In his first inaugural address Ronald Reagan told the story of Martin A. Treptow, a small-town barber who in 1917 joined the celebrated Rainbow Division. He lost his life on the Western Front, but he did not lose his connection to posterity. President Reagan made sure of that. For on Treptow's body was found a diary and in it he had written the words "My Pledge." And under that heading he had declared to his country and I quote, "America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost as if the issue of the whole struggle depended upon me alone."

Blessed are generations of soldiers who have served with such spirit and devotion. For today we are citizens of a strong, free and great nation. Here liberty is not an ideal or an aspiration, it is an indivisible cause, a way of life. So prized that for generations we have pledged all we are and all we hope to be to its preservation. And why is that so? Because out of the difficulties of battle; out of centuries of conflict; and, yes, even peace, we have learned—freedom is not a given, it's a bugle call hundreds of years old. So let us continue to heed it. Let us fight as if the whole struggle depended on each one of us alone. But let us know that we are all in this together. Because here in this hall of thousands, in this nation of millions, our connections to one another run deep. That is the credo of the American soldier, the veteran, the Legionnaire. That is the way of citizens, the kind of citizens General Washington knew Americans would always be.

Thank you for your kind invitation to join you this morning. To be among my fellow veterans is to be among friends. I thank you for your friendship, for your service, for your sacrifice, and for the unyielding honor you continue to bestow upon your country. May God bless our soldiers. May God bless you all. And may God continue to bless the freest, greatest, most treasured place to call home. *Our home*, the United States of America.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: It is a pleasure to introduce our next speaker, as we

are certainly enjoying our time as visitors to his city and to his state. He is the 48th Governor of the state, having won election to that post in 2003. Before that he served as the mayor of Nashville. He is a man who proves that his belief is in community involvement. He is a founding member of Nashville's Table, a non-profit group that collects overstocked and discarded food from local restaurants for the city's homeless population. He also founded the Land Trust for Tennessee, a non-profit organization that works to preserve open space and traditional family farms. Welcome Governor Phil Bredesen.

Address: The Hon. Phil Bredesen
Governor of the State of Tennessee

I have the privilege of having a few minutes to address you and want to do two things this morning in my time with you.

First as Governor of Tennessee to welcome you, on behalf of its people, to our home to Tennessee. And second to tell you a little bit about why I admire, not only you, not only the people here, but the organization you represent, The American Legion.

It is fitting that in the mist of our Nation's war on terrorism, you should hold your convention here in Tennessee. The Volunteer State has a long tradition of distinguished military service, a long distinguished military tradition. Our first Governor John Sevier in the Battle of King's Mountain during the Revolution; Andrew Jackson a great general and a great president; and especially the hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans who have served and protected over the years, over the centuries really, and do so around the world even as we speak. I know that for each of you, as for every Tennessean, we pray everyday for the safety and the safe return of every one of these soldiers who are serving our nation. The men and women who have put their lives on hold in so many cases and answered the call, the volunteer call to go abroad and to serve their nation. The Volunteer State has earned its nickname and it's something that we are very proud of.

I have welcomed a lot of groups to this hotel over the years. But I have never performed this duty with more pleasure or more pride than welcoming you today, The American Legion. Welcome and we're glad and honored that you're here.

You have heard and will hear again many tributes to yourselves, to the men and women that you represent here today, to their courage; to their sacrifices; to their patriotism. Our President was here yesterday. Senator Kerry will speak here later this morning. Whatever your politics, I know that the words of tribute from these men means a great deal to you and a great deal to those who you represent.

I also would like to pay tribute to your organization. I admire The American Legion for many things, but I think sometimes we forget just how tirelessly and effectively it works as an advocate for the rights and the well-being of its veterans. You know the problem: you're a hero while you're serving, but then you get home and those issues of health care and veteran's home and survivor benefits, well, that's all very complicated and we'll study on it and see if we can afford it and so on....

We have the best equipped and most technologically advanced military in the history of the world—ten times over. But one thing has never changed. One thing has never changed and that is that steel and electronics don't fight wars, men and women do. I believe in my heart as an American that we would be well-advised as a nation to pay as much attention to the needs of those men and women, to the needs of those men and women when they serve and after they come home, to pay as much attention to those needs as we do to the needs of all that essential but lifeless technology. The American

Legion—and the reason I admire it so much—is an organization , it's *the* organization that is keeping these issues front and center. It's making sure that America doesn't forget when the shooting stops is making sure that America honors its veterans, not only with words on special occasions, but with deeds day in and day out as well. I admire you for it very very much.

Welcome to Tennessee. We are glad and honored that you're here. Please have a successful meeting. Enjoy yourselves while you're here. And travel safely back to your homes. God bless each and everyone of you. God bless the United States of America.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: At every meeting of The American Legion, we pause to remember our comrades who last we knew were listed as prisoners of war or missing in action. We take the time because Americans must never forget that some of our comrades still are not at home. With us today is the man responsible to the Secretary of Defense for policy, control and oversight of all matters pertaining to missing personnel.He is charged with leading efforts for the fullest possible accounting of our POW and MIA brothers from all conflicts. We have met with him on a number of occasions. He is a true advocate for the POW/MIA issue. Please welcome to Nashville the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs, The Honorable Jerry Jennings.

Address: The Hon. Jerry D. Jennings
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
POW/Missing Personnel Affairs

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about our worldwide commitment to account for our missing warriors, to bring home our heroes from distant lands. You've each honored your nation through your service and sacrifice. You know better than most why bringing our missing Americans home is a sacred commitment. That mission rests squarely on our shoulders, but it would not be possible without the strong support of The American Legion and other veterans organizations.

We've had the pleasure as mentioned, of providing periodic updates to your senior leadership. You should know that their strong support is indispensable for our success with this mission. Your resolutions about POW/MIA accounting also speak loud and clear of your commitment. For that my fellow veterans, we are most grateful.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said recently that the brave men and women who serve today whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, or in other theaters of war on terrorism can do so with the full confidence that if they are captured, become missing, or fall in battle, this nation will spare no effort to bring them home.

This is our solemn pledge, however long it takes, whatever it takes, whatever the cost. And this is our pledge to the families of the missing and to you their comrades, that your government will not rest until all come home.

More than 140 years ago, President Lincoln, desperately seeking to hold our nation together, spoke of those brave men who are now on the tented field, or nobly meeting the foe on the front, that they who sleep in death are not forgotten by those in the highest authority. And should their fate be the same there remains would not be uncared for. It was the great dedication of a great national cemetery near that battlefield, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

In perhaps the most eloquent 272 words in American history, the President spoke to the families of those lost and to the soldiers still in combat. He spoke of the honor that

we must pay to those who've made the ultimate sacrifice, to ensure their sacrifices were not in vain, to ensure that this nation should never forget.

Today, we find ourselves facing the same challenge. Today, our President is equally commitment to the families of the missing from past conflicts and to the soldiers still in the field. President Bush has repeatedly reaffirmed his continuing personal commitment to the entire POW/MIA community, especially to the immediate families, relatives, friends and supporters of these brave individuals.

So I stand before you today to reaffirm that pledge on behalf of your government. And on behalf of those 600 men and women around the world who are working on that commitment, that mission every hour of every day, you'll find those 600 people slogging through leach-infested swamps in Vietnam; hacking through dangerous jungles in Papua, New Guinea; scaling cliffs in Burma; working carefully in your unexploded ordnance in Cambodia and Laos; plowing through dusty archives (the dusty archives of our former enemy in Russia), or applying their scientific expertise in the most modern laboratories in the world all in pursuit of this noble cause.

You are aware of our personnel accounting mission, our global effort to search for the missing from all wars. We've reported to you often on that. What you may not be familiar with is that we also have the personnel recovery mission in the Pentagon, which includes combat search and rescue. The results of this mission can be seen on distant battlefields where hundreds of lives have been saved in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the first time in U.S. military history, all who became isolated in those conflicts have been brought home.

In Iraq alone our rescue forces have recovered more than 75 of our people alive. But in spite of our commitment to recover yet today's servicemembers from today's battlefields, our mission to account for those who fell in past conflicts continues, however long it takes, whatever it takes, whatever the cost.

Now a quick recap of the personnel accounting mission. More than 1,800 unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, 729 have been identified and returned to their families since the end of that war; 8,100 missing from the Korean War. When you think about that number, when you look around this room as crowded as we are, we're talking about this number plus 1,600 still standing outside. Those are our comrades missing from the Korean War. We've recovered 200 from that war; 126 from the cold war, 27 accounted for. And the big number, 78,000 missing from World War II, with 400 recovered. As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has said, "We will leave no one behind in Iraq, Afghanistan or any of those missing from World War II, Vietnam, Korea, the Cold War or any past conflict."

Today, right now, our teams are operating inside North Korea bringing home the remains of those missing from the Korean War. This past Memorial Day, I welcomed the containers for 19 of our missing from North Korea, the largest number we've ever removed at one time from the North, north of the DMZ in that Peninsula, working behind the lines of a country with which we are still technically at war. We're still bring them home. For nine consecutive years, we've been bringing them home. Our teams are working in the Chosin Reservoir area, Unsan County and everywhere where Americans were lost.

In Southeast Asia and with the cooperation of the government and governments all Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, our work goes on around the clock. With teams of often 100 specialists we're investigating, excavating burial and crash sites long obscured by fading memories and dense jungle.

At my request, recently the Vietnamese this past July committed to reopening the

central highlands to our teams. They've been closed for three years due to local unrest. Read that to be human rights problems that we've identified. The Loa government agreed to allow us access to archives which maybe prove useful in our missing in Laos. And Cambodia continues to grant us virtually unlimited access in their country. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, a staunch supporter of our POW/MIA activities, continues to be personally committed to our work, and even took time to personally open our second annual POW/MIA Consultations last month. These annual talks along with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and the U.S. are the only forum in which senior POW/MIA representatives from each country meet together to capture lessons learned and to force together a common vision for the future on this important issue. And while they do not take the place of our bilateral discussions and interactions, they do provide an extremely useful forum.

But what you should know, what you must know, were it not for the cooperation of these countries that I've mentioned —Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia —our mission would not be possible. In other areas of the world—Burma, China, Russia, Papua, New Guinea, France, Germany —the recovery effort continues.

Let me tell you about one case, this one from the Korean War. It illustrates the extent to which we've gone to bring our servicemen home. It also demonstrates the complexities of the case, cases that we work.

Air Force Capt. Troy Cope was flying near the Yalu River, the border between China and North Korea when he was jumped by a flight of four MIGs in 1952. During the ensuing dog fight he lost contact with his wingman and apparently crashed just inside China.

After years of inquiry and research, contact with the Chinese seeking answers all without results, our researches finally located some very telling documents about this crash. Witness statements were located from the crash site. Interviews were conducted with the Soviet pilot who shot him down. And we found these documents not in China but in Russia. Armed with more detail, we were able to find the crash site. It was in a developed area of the city of Dandong in China. Our teams were sent there where they did recover remains. And they are now undergoing forensic examination. We're optimistic about the outcome. But only time will tell if Capt. Troy Cope has finally come home.

Our work in Russia is conducted through the U.S./Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA's. It was established by former Presidents Bush and Yeltson. The commission has broad support across our government with commissioners from the congress from the executive branch. The President appointed me this year as the new U.S. Chairman of that commission and I look forward to leading our delegation just this month in meetings with our Russian counterparts.

Through the commission, we've conducted more than 1,000 interviews, gained access to tens of thousands of pages of documents in Russia and Eastern Europe, and clarified the fates of more than 260 Americans missing from the Korean War. We're the only nation committed to the fullest possible accounting of our missing. No one does it exactly like we do. But others study what we do and how we do it. Israel, for example, is one nation that comes close to us in embracing the POW/MIA cause. We've shared experiences and lessons learned, and we will continue to benefit from our close consultations with each other.

Our government, any government, has incredible power over our lives. The government can tax us, regulate us and take our loved ones and place them in harm's way. But with the power to place them in danger comes an obligation. There is no greater

debt that a government can owe *you*, its citizen, than to return your loved ones to you with honor.

Our obligation today is both to future generations of those who go in harm's way and to the past. That, my fellow Americans, is our solemn pledge, however long it takes, whatever it takes, whatever the cost.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The American Legion, as the Nation's largest wartime veterans organization, is now honored to welcome the second man to appear before this convention campaigning for the job of Commander-in-Chief.

I have a comment that I want to make first though because he's been castigated in the press for the past few weeks for breaking tradition by appearing during his opponent's party convention. Let me set the record straight. He is upholding tradition that all major presidential candidates appear before The American Legion. The date and the city of this convention was decided six years ago. And it's not our fault that someone else scheduled a convention on top of us.

NATL PRES MORRIS: Our next guest is a graduate of Yale University, who entered the Navy after graduation, becoming a Swift Boat officer, serving on a gunboat in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. He is now serving his fourth term in the United States Senate, representing the state of Massachusetts.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Would you please welcome to our 86th Annual National Convention first Senator John Glenn and his lovely wife Annie and the Democratic nominee for the President of the United States, Senator John Kerry.

Special Address: Senator John Kerry
Democratic Candidate for President of the United States

I'm proud to be here and I'm proud to be a Legionnaire. And I sure am glad to hear from John that I am upholding a tradition by being at the major convention that's taking place in America. John, thank you and thank you to all the Legion for honoring me by the opportunity to be here with you today.

I want to begin by thanking someone who served in two wars. When he was in the Pacific he flew with Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox. I'm sorry for some of you. Ted Williams was his wingman. Then he came home to serve Ohio and to serve his country in the United States Senate after he served all of us as an American hero when he went into space. No one will ever forget when John shot off on his first space flight and Scott Carpenter offered a prayer that is indelibly in all of our minds when he said, "God speed, John Glenn."

And then, when at the age of 77, he returned to space for his last trip. I think every single one of you will agree he's a remarkable guy. I do have some exciting news. I promised John that when I get to the White House, if he wants to, he can go into space one more time. Without missing a beat, John said, if he does go it'll save the government money because now it gets the senior discount. Will you guys all join me, ladies and gentlemen, in saluting an American hero John Glenn? *[standing applause]*

I also want to thank John Brieden our National Commander and his wife Terry. When I was talking with John out there before I came out this morning, I was talking about all his years of service, and the years he's put in on behalf of all of us as veterans. I know that everyone of you join me in thanking both he and Terry for their great sacrifice and commitment to the Veterans of our country. We are deeply appreciative.

I also want to thank Katherine Morris, the President of the American Legion

Auxiliary and her husband John. I've seen the work the Auxiliary does and the ladies of the Auxiliary are absolutely extraordinary in their commitment and their faith and they're upholding the values of the Legion. And we thank them.

Allow me to be parochial for a moment if I can. I want to recognize the Massachusetts State Commander Milton Lashus and my friends in Post No. 63 in Salem, New Hampshire. I'm honored to be here with them. I also want to recognize Past National Commanders Judge Jim Dean and Bill Detweiler, and Jim's wife Carolyn. I want to thank them particularly for coming up north. They shared with us moments of the Democratic Convention as observers. But I think they shared a lot in being there and they brought something to us. And we're grateful to them for doing that.

Earlier today, because they were at the convention as observer, they gave me three pieces of advice about this speech. Rule No. 1: Absolutely no balloons. I said, "No problem." Rule No. 2: Absolutely no confetti or streamers. I said, "No problem." Then they told me Rule No. 3: Keep your speech under 10 minutes. I said, "Now we've got a problem."

Eighty-five years ago, The American Legion was founded by and for our Nation's veterans. As one of those veterans who had benefitted from your advocacy and as one of your members, I am honored to accept your invitation to be here today and proud of what The American Legion does every day to advance the ideals of America.

You are the citizen soldiers who know that our service does not end on the battlefield— it begins there. You know that the pledge we took to defend America is also a pledge to protect the promise America offers. And let there be no doubt—when I am president, you will have a fellow veteran in the White House who understands that those who fought for our country abroad should never have to fight for what they were promised at home.

In the spirit of all the men and women in uniform who we honor here, I want to be clear: as president, I will always remember that America's security begins and ends with the soldier, sailor, airman, Marine and coast guardsmen—with every man and every woman in our armed services who has ever stood guard at the gates of freedom. Today, I salute each and every one of you for your commitment, strength and extraordinary courage. America says thank you—and we all join in a special salute to Greatest Generation vets whose memorial finally stands proudly in a place of honor on the Mall in Washington. Thank you for your extraordinary example as citizen soldiers.

I also want to speak directly for a moment to those currently risking their lives as faraway as Iraq and Afghanistan. America's prayers are with you. We honor your service, thank you for your sacrifice and we pledge to stand with your families as you stand for ours. These young men and women are the best of America.

In March of 1919, five months after the November Armistice ended the war that was to end all wars, members of the American Expeditionary Force gathered in Paris to establish our American Legion. Their cause remains our cause to this day: "For God and Country we associate ourselves together."

This is not only a pledge, but a principle that we have carried to war and lived in peace. We know that with the privilege of freedom comes an obligation to give back, to serve, and to risk on behalf of others. That's something I carry in my heart and in my gut and I know you do, too.

And while your service and sacrifice are well known, what is not as well known is how hard we fought after we returned from service to keep faith with our fellow soldiers. After returning from Vietnam, I saw vets who weren't getting the care they needed—so we fought hard and got additional funding for V.A. hospitals, and hospital care for places

that couldn't provide it. To help those veterans having difficulty adjusting after the war, we founded the first medical assistance programs in the country, and put together the first ever outreach groups to help those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

We stood with veterans by getting the GI Bill extended so those returning from war could improve their lives. And we fought hard for increases in veterans' allowances and for living expenses so veterans were able to go to school and open the doors of opportunity. I stand here proud that we kept faith together. It was veterans fighting for veterans. We veterans made that happen. We should be proud of what we accomplished for our fellow servicemen and women.

In recent weeks, you have heard from some who have claimed that the job is getting done for veterans. Well, just saying the job is getting done doesn't make it so. My friends, let me tell you when the job will be done.

The job will be done when 500,000 veterans are not excluded from the VA healthcare system; when we stop closing VA hospitals, so that veterans don't have to struggle or travel extraordinary distances to get the care they need. The job will be done when the government stops asking veterans for increased co-payments, enrollment fees, and other charges to shift the burden of care to other veterans and drive more than a million veterans out of the system.

The job will be done when 400,000 military retirees get full concurrent receipt. If you earned a pension "it's yours" just like in the private sector. If you get a disability payment, it is because you have suffered. I don't believe you subtract what you suffered from what you earned. The job will be done when there are no homeless veterans on the streets of America; when 320,000 veterans are no longer waiting for decisions on disability claims and another 100,000 are no longer awaiting appeals decisions. The job will be done when the VA Secretary doesn't have to complain that he needs $1.2 billion more, because he was turned down by a White House that spent the money on tax cuts for those at the top instead. I believe veterans come first.

The job will be done when we repeal the tax on military widows. And, mark my words, the job will be done when the family of 21-year-old Jay Briseno, a veteran facing a lifetime of disability, doesn't have to sleep at his bedside because the VA can't afford to give him the round-the-clock nursing care he needs. That's not right, that's certainly not compassionate, and that won't happen when I'm president. We will always fight for them and we will fight for all our fellow veterans because we know that the first definition of patriotism is keeping faith with those who wore the uniform of the United States. And from standing with John McCain to find the truth about what happened to our POWs and MIAs in Vietnam, to writing the legislation that provided help and health care to the victims of Agent Orange, I am proud of the fights we have won for our fellow veterans.

At this moment, we have the most exhaustive, comprehensive effort to account for missing or captured in the history of human warfare—and America should be proud of that. As president, I will lead the fight for a Military Family Bill of Rights and mandatory funding for Veterans health care. That's keeping faith. We not only honor those who have served, but we will stand by those who are serving today.

We are a country at war—not only in Iraq, but a global war on terror against an enemy unlike any we have ever known before. In all corners of the world, our soldiers lives are on the line. More than a 150,000 troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are away from their families—and thousands more are in harm's way elsewhere. We owe them the truth, we owe the American people the truth. And I'm here today to tell you the truth as I see it.

I can't come here and fulfill my obligation as a candidate for President of these great United States and not give you a serious appraisal of the challenge we face in Iraq and the war on terror. No one in the United States doubted the outcome in Iraq or how swiftly the war would be won. We knew we had the best-trained troops in the world and true to form, they performed magnificently, and we are all proud and grateful. But the certainty of winning the war placed the most solemn obligation on the civilian leadership of this country, to make certain that we had a plan to win the peace.

The Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki told Congress we would need several hundred thousand American troops to win the peace and do the job properly. His candor was rewarded with early retirement and his advice ignored, sending a chilling message through the ranks of the professional military. By dismissing the State Department's plan for post-war Iraq and proceeding unilaterally, the civilian leadership simply did not put the mechanism in place to secure the country. They were unprepared for the looting, insecurity, and insurgency that burst out with the fall of Saddam's regime. They failed to secure Iraq's borders, and so allowed thousands of foreign terrorists, Islamist militants, and intelligence agents to penetrate and destabilize post-war Iraq.

Amazingly, they had no real plan for post-war political transition. All of this happened despite clear and precise bipartisan warnings from Congress, and regional experts. Then, as the challenge grew around our troops, the civilian leadership failed to respond adequately; failed to share responsibility with NATO , the greatest alliance we have ever built; failed to share it with the UN, which offered assistance; failed to share reconstruction or decision-making, as a way of inviting others to shoulder the burden; and failed to provide the security on the ground necessary for post-war reconstruction. They rushed and short-changed the training and equipment of the Iraqi police; they failed to recruit enough experts in the language and culture of the region and used those they had ineffectively.

The civilian leadership disbanded the Iraqi military completely so there was no internal structure to maintain order; chose consciously to put an American, instead of an international face on the occupation; failed to prepare for a large number of prisoners; and most significantly, failed even to guard nuclear waste and ammunition storage sites, despite the fact that weapons of mass destruction was their fundamental reason for the war. And some of the weapons we didn't guard are the very weapons being targeted at our troops today.

As a result, today terrorists have secured havens in Iraq that were not there before. And we have been forced to reach accommodation with those who have repeatedly attacked our troops. Violence has spread in Iraq; Iran has expanded its influence; and extremism has gained momentum. No, I know that some of these things are hard to listen to. I know that it's always tough to talk the truth to power, but I think the President himself on Monday admitted that he miscalculated in Iraq. In truth, his miscalculation was ignoring the advice that was given to him, including the best advice of America's own military.

So when the President says we have the same position on Iraq, I have to respectfully disagree. Our differences couldn't be plainer. And I have set them out consistently. When it comes to Iraq, it's not that I would have done one thing differently, I would've done almost everything differently. I would have relied on American troops in Tora Bora when we had Osama bin Laden in our sights trapped in the mountains. I would not have sent Afghans up into those mountains, who a week earlier had been fighting on the other side. I would have sent the best trained forces in the world to get the Number 1 criminal and terrorist in the world.

I never would have diverted resources so quickly from Afghanistan before finishing the job. I would've given the inspectors the time they needed to do the job, not because that might have done the whole job of getting the weapons, but because by doing so we could have brought other countries to our side, which is the way you provide our troops with the best protection and the way you provide America with the greatest chance of success. I would have made sure that we listened to our senior military advisors.

I would have made sure that every soldier put in harm's way had state of the art body armor; state of the are Humvee's; and the equipment we needed. I would have built a strong, broad coalition of our allies around the world because every one of you sitting here knows, no matter what—take away party affiliation, this isn't Democrat, this isn't Republican, this isn't Independent—this is just common sense. Every one here knows that the best way to protect the troops is to make sure not only do they have the equipment, but that you're going from the maximum position of strength. And, if there's one thing I learned from my service, which is a difficult time as we all know, I would never have gone to war without a plan to win the peace. That, I think, is critical.

The bottom line, fellow Legionnaires, is that I don't believe we had to be shouldering nearly the entire financial cost of this war "more than $200 billion" and shortchanging investments in education, veterans' health care, and our safety at home. But the question now is not just what we should have done, but what we can and must do now in Iraq. I don't think we need what President Bush has defined as a "catastrophic success." I think we need a real success. We need to bring our allies to our side, share the burdens, reduce the cost to American taxpayers. We need to share the burden and reduce the risk to American soldiers. And together, we need to more rapidly train Iraqi police and military to take over the job of protecting their country. That's what I'll do as Commander-in-Chief—because that's the right way to get the job done and bring our troops home as fast as possible.

In an interview two days ago, the President said we can't win the war on terror. I know he said something different to you yesterday. I absolutely disagree with what he said in that interview in a moment of candor. With the right policies, this is a war we can win, this is a war we must win, and this is a war we will win. We're the 'can do' people, and there's nothing we can't do if we put our mind and muscle into it. In the end, the terrorists will lose, and we will win because the future doesn't belong to fear, it belongs to freedom.

Let me tell you how we are going to do that. To win the war on terror, we will add 40,000 active duty troops to our military, *not in Iraq*. Nine out of ten of our Army divisions are now either in Iraq, going to Iraq, coming back from Iraq, or getting ready to go to Iraq, even as Iran and North Korea get more dangerous. Our troops are overstretched, overextended, and under pressure. I intend to double our Special Forces to conduct anti-terrorist operations. I'm going to provide our troops with the newest weapons and technology to save their lives and win the battle. And we will end the backdoor draft of National Guard and Reservists that is taking place today.

To win the war on terror, you have to know who the terrorists are; you have to know where they are and what they're hiding,; and you have to know what they are planning. And you have to be able to get them before they get us. Now how do you do that?

Last year, I called for the creation of a national intelligence director. I believe we should have moved earlier and more decisively to strengthen America's intelligence gathering ability. Why? We need the best intelligence in the world, so that policy is guided by facts and facts are never distorted by politics. And to get that, to have the best intelligence in the world, to know where Osama bin Laden is, to know who is plotting

what before they come, you've go to have the best cooperation that we've ever had from every country on this planet. I know we can do a better job of building that cooperation. But to do so, we must use every tool in the American arsenal: our diplomacy, our economic policy, our non-governmental organizations, our humanitarian organizations, our values and our ideals. I will do that as president. And I am convinced that if the United States reaches out in a way that we have traditionally with the great alliances of World War I and World War II, and all through our history, including the Cold War. Those alliances have been the bedrock of our strength. I believe we ask to do a better job of revitalizing those alliances and taking pressure off of the American taxpayer and the American troops.

I want to speak today about one other great challenge. When the troops who are fighting for us over there come home, we owe them an America where they can get the ability to plan a future; get a job that lets them get ahead; an America where military families are part of a growing middle-class, not struggling to join it.

In his 1933 address to this convention, Franklin Roosevelt said that "You men of the Legion have been willing to fight for the benefits of American life. [And] you have been willing to live for American unity." My friends, I believe that the full duty of the Commander-in-Chief is to lead an America where the benefits of American life are available to all who risked their lives defending our country. This is the one hundred percent Americanism that the Legion has always stood for.

Our citizen soldiers are hardworking, middle-class Americans who live by real American values: faith and family, service and sacrifice, responsibility and hard work. They need jobs, health care, and a good education to live those values. But for the first time since the Great Depression, America has lost jobs, 2.7 million manufacturing jobs in the last four years alone. More than 45 million Americans don't have health insurance at all, and some 25 to 30 million don't have it for part of the year. Five million Americans have lost their health care coverage since the year 2000. And this year alone, more than 220,000 more Americans couldn't afford to go to college. I believe we have an important obligation and I think you share it.

When our soldiers come home and need a job, we believe they deserve better than four more years of rewarding companies that take our jobs overseas. Our plan will close those tax loopholes and actually provide new incentives to create the manufacturing jobs right here in America and to increase the numbers of high paying jobs that we need. When our soldiers find those jobs, we believe they deserve more than finding a job that pays on average $9,000 less than the job that we lost that goes overseas. Our plan will create the jobs of the future that pay more, not less, jobs where after a week's work in America, people can pay their bills, provide for their children, and lift up the quality of their lives. And we can do this by moving into new manufacturing techniques; by doing science and research, by pushing the curve of discovery as we did in the 1990s when we not only paid down the debt, we not only balanced the budget, we not only cut the deficit, but we created 23 million new jobs at the same time.

When our soldiers plan the family budget, we believe they deserve more than four more years of a government that's going deeper and deeper into debt. There is nothing conservative about building up deficits as far as the eye can see. Our plan will cut the deficit in half over the course of the next four years and we will do it by passing the reforms John McCain and I have fought for together to end corporate welfare and by making government stay within a budget, just like you do.

When our soldiers pay their taxes, we believe they deserve better than a fiscal policy that has actually over the last four years raised the tax burden on middle-class and

lowered the tax burden for the wealthiest people in America. We believe that our soldiers, when they return, deserve a tax policy for the middle class and for working families that will help them pay for health care, child care and sending a son or daughter to college, which is why we provide a $4,000 tuition tax credit to help parents be able to do it.

And when our soldiers and their families get sick, I really believe that it is part of the moral fiber of our nation, the richest nation on the face of the planet, the only industrial nation in the world not yet to do this, to understand that people deserve more than four more years of rising health care costs, unaffordable prescription drugs, skyrocketing premiums, and no plan to do anything about it. Health care costs are crushing businesses and individuals alike. It is one of the reasons so many companies are deciding to move offshore because they need to get out from under.

We have a plan to make America more competitive by getting the greed and waste out of the system. It's not a government plan. There's no new bureaucracy; we don't order you to do anything; you choose your doctor; choose your plan,. But we provide powerful incentives that people will grab a hold of, and that will save the average family up to a $1,000 a year in their premiums. It is the first proposal that I will send to the United States Congress next January. We will make health care affordable and accessible to all Americans. I intend to follow it up immediately by sending back to Congress the flawed prescription drug bill that prohibits Medicare from actually negotiating a lower price so that you, the taxpayer, and you, the senior, can actually put money in your pockets instead of putting it into the pockets of the largest drug companies in America. I'm going to send that bill back, and we're going to get a real Medicare prescription drug benefit for seniors in our country.

My friends, I have a deep belief that the United States of America has an obligation to see to it that America is not the only industrialized nation in the world that doesn't understand the truth about health care. Senators and congressmen give themselves the best health care in the world, and they give you the bill. I believe that every American's family is as important in their health care as any politician in Washington, D.C. and we're going to see to it that you get the health care you deserve. It is not a privilege for the wealthy, the connected and the elected—it is a right for every single American.

Sixty-one years ago, a World War I veteran sat down on a cold December day and thought about the 15 million men and women who would soon return victorious from the Second World War. In the middle of a war, he was already thinking about what kind of America they would come home to, and dreamed about what kind of America they deserved.

A first lieutenant who had joined the Army Air Service, he probably thought about his own trip back to America after World War I; the water beneath him as his boat glided toward the land he loved after a tough war. He probably recalled the hope that came with his first knock on the door of a home he had left years ago; the look of possibility on the faces of wife and children he hadn't been sure he'd see again.

And on that December 15, 1943, in a Washington, D.C. hotel room, this veteran who didn't forget, drafted in longhand a piece of legislation that would secure that hope and that possibility for all who returned home to the land that they loved. Since its passage sixty years ago, the GI Bill of Rights has provided education and training for nearly 8 million Americans, housing for nearly two million families, and led to the creation of the great American middle-class that we are now trying to save.

And for all who know the ideals upon which this organization was founded, it should come as no surprise that the author of that bill was 1st Lieutenant Harry Colmery,

an American Legion National Commander. For that act and for his vision, Commander Colmery was an American hero, and he deserves the Medal of Freedom that Congress has called on the President to award him. But to truly honor his memory, we must commit ourselves to the work of building up the great American middle class. We have to get over the divisions; we have to find a way not to have politics that looks for the lowest common denominator, but one that reaches for the highest common denominator, one that finds it possible for people to be able to find the common ground together.

John McCain found that common ground with me when we traveled back and I stood in his prison cell. He and I coming from very different places, but we worked together for our country, to strengthen our nation.

For our soldiers, to their families, and all those hardworking Americans who are looking to build a better life, we have to pursue a path that once again places the American Dream within reach of every American citizen. And I promise you this, if I am your next President, I will serve with the pledge of The American Legion in my heart, to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America and safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: This meeting will come to order.

Our next guest hails from right here in Nashville. He's a retired Army National Guard Colonel who served on active duty with the Ameri-Cal Division in Chu Lai, Vietnam. He served for 20 years with the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs, retiring as the assistant commissioner in 2002. We've crossed paths over these last couple of years a number of times and the thing that I think exciting for me is the fact that I can call him my friend as well as a fellow veteran. He's a life member of several national veterans organizations, including The American Legion Post 5 here in Nashville. Please welcome the newly elected Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, John Furgess.

Greetings: John Furgess, Commander-In-Chief
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States

You're exactly right, we are friends. I want to first and foremost thank you for your service not only to our great American Legion, but to veterans all across the country, John, and really around the world. Let's applaud our Commander one more time.

My fellow Legionnaires, I do want to bring you greetings this morning on behalf of the 2 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and our wonderful Ladies Auxiliary. Your National Commander was with us in Cincinnati just a couple of days ago at the national convention there and brought your greetings and did a remarkable job.

I have with me this morning a long time friend the State Adjutant Quartermaster of the VFW in Tennessee, and the newly appointed National Chief of Staff of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Make welcome from Nashville, Ronnie Davis.

My fellow Legionnaires, not quite three months ago, I stood with your National Commander on the beach at Normandy. What a remarkable experience that was. The night before, which was June 5th, we stayed at the beautiful hotel in downtown Paris, France where The American Legion was founded. And quite honestly, I didn't rest very easily that night. It wasn't because it was not a beautiful hotel, because it is, Pershing Hall. It wasn't because the room wasn't nice because it really was. But it was because I knew the next morning I would leave that hotel at 2:00 a.m., travel by car out to Normandy three hours away, and then take part in a very minor role the 60th Anniversary

of that great Armada, that greatest military operation ever and to look into the eyes of some of those veterans who were there 60 years earlier. What an awesome experience.

And then as they led us through the cemetery to the platform, the very first tombstone in that beautiful cemetery, the very first tombstone was that of one Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. Medal of Honor recipient, June 6th, 1944. That's a feeling that came over me then and a moment in my life that I will certainly never forget.

I want to congratulate not only the National Commander but the National Adjutant Bob Spanogle. I've known Bob many years. He's such a hard working individual, he's Mr. American Legion around the country with the other veterans organizations. I'd like to take a moment just to thank him personally for all of his dedication and hard work. Robert, we're proud of you my friend.

Secretary Tom Ridge touched on a wonderful point earlier this morning and I want to followup that point. It's the Preamble of The American Legion that first caught my eye when I joined Post 5 here in Nashville, 32 years ago, 1972. They've done wonderful, wonderful work all these many years and continue to work for The American Legion and all veterans.

But it's the action words of that Preamble that got my attention then and has been part of my life even until this very day. Those action words that we associate ourselves together and your inviting me here this morning is a perfect example of that. And we hope to do more of that in the future, veterans working together which is so very important.

But listen to these other action words that were written so long ago that are so true this very day. To uphold and defend, to maintain, to foster and perpetuate, to preserve, to inculcate, to combat, to make right, to promote, to safeguard and transmit, to consecrate and sanctify. Just as true today, if not more so, than when those wonderful words were written long ago.

I noticed that the first National Commander of The American Legion served the year my dear mother was born here in Nashville, and that was 1919. And then I looked a little further and noticed that the only Tennessean every to serve as National Commander of The American Legion served the year I was born, Langley Field, Virginia, and that was 1943, Roane Waring. Many veterans today can tell you of Roane's dedication and hard work on behalf of The American Legion.

As I had the great honor of introducing our National Commander John Brieden at Cincinnati just a couple of days ago, I did for him a survey because I wanted to know how many delegates in that audience that morning were also members of The American Legion. And we found out loud and clear, didn't we Commander, that there were many there. So now I want to see this morning. How many delegates here are members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars? Let me here it. Commander, two good responses.

Thank you, my fellow Legionnaires. Our mayor has welcomed you to this beautiful city; our governor has welcomed you to this beautiful state; you've heard from the President of the United States; you've heard from the Democratic candidate for president. This is a great convention and a beautiful hotel. But as proud as I am of this cap, and quite frankly I worked very hard to be elected to this position, I'm also proud of this. My Blue Cap Legionnaire, Post 5, Nashville, Tennessee, Music City, USA.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you Commander-in-Chief and I just told him off the mic that we wish him a great year and we look forward to working with him and the VFW as we continue to work for veterans this year.

The campaign to restore centuries of protection for Old Glory continues. Once

again, the House has passed the Flag Protection Amendment. It awaits action in the U.S. Senate. The Citizens Flag Alliance continues to be active. To bring us up-to-date on what needs to be done now, I present to this body the Chairman of the Board of the Citizens Flag Alliance, and a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his life-saving actions in Vietnam.

If you will please rise and join me in rendering the proper honors to a true American hero, Major General Patrick Brady, U.S. Army, Retired.

Hand Salute...

Special Report: Flag Amendment Campaign
Maj. Gen. Patrick H. Brady, US Army (Ret.)
Chairman, The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc.

As always it's a great event for me to be with you, to have my wife here to be with what I've always called "America's Nobility," that's our veterans. You, indeed, are the vault for the values of America. And I'm going to report to you now on our efforts in behalf of Old Glory.

As the Commander mentioned, we had another victory in the House. That's the fifth time that it's been through the House of Representatives. We had hearings in the Senate and that is very very significant. Senator Hatch made it very clear to me and those of us who testified there that this issue is kept alive *only* through the efforts of the Citizens Flag Alliance and The American Legion. Now we've been promised a vote before the end of this congress and we may be about three votes short. Five new senators have not voted on this issue yet even though they voiced opposition. Let me tell you who they are so that you can get after them in your state: Senator Cantwell from Washington, Senator Clinton, New York; Corzine from New Jersey; Carper from Delaware, and Senator Pryor from Arkansas. So you need to get after those folks.

I met with Senator Clinton at her request. She agreed that the Supreme Court had made a mistake and she initially thought that a statute might work. Hopefully, we convinced her that it would not. She was very receptive, not argumentative, like many lawyers are. Most importantly, she agreed to reconsider. Sincerely agreed to reconsider.

Senator Feinstein, who you know is a strong supporter, very articulate for our cause, told us that she would go sit down and talk to Senator Clinton about this issue. She could be very helpful in this next vote.

Both Democratic candidates for president have voted against the will of the people on the flag amendment. But that was before they entered the national stage. And I believe that if they hear from enough of you they will, like Senator Clinton, reconsider their positions. I think we know that politicians have been known to change their minds.

But we need to bring a message to them this election. We need to tell them that we realize sincerely that there are good and great Americans on both sides of this issue. And there are some who think it's hokey. They think it's a waste of time. And it would be hokey, it would be a waste of time, if our fuss were about flag burning or flag burners. No matter how emotionally this affects many people, flag burning is a petty act done, surely, to attract attention, to attack our country, our traditions and patriotism. But it's a petty act nonetheless.

So I want to make it clear from the beginning that our primary concern is not flag burners. They are with us always, along with others who hate America. Our concern is the Constitution and those who have amended our Constitution without the approval of the people by inserting flag burning in the Bill of Rights, and by others who would deny

the people the right to decide this issue. This struggle for our flag has been long and fatiguing, but we're energized in this effort by our contract with patriotism. And that's the oath we took to protect and defend our Constitution and that oath defines Patriotism.

All Americans take that same oath when the recite the Pledge of Allegiance. That's the bottom line. By defending the right of the people to protect the flag, we are once again defending our Constitution. The Supreme Court made a mistake when they said that flag burning was speech. And it's the duty of every American to correct any error by any element of our government. Flag desecration is not speech and it desecrates our Constitution to say so. A review of the magnitude of great Americans who support this fact confirms it's not speech.

Baseball great Tommy Lasorda spoke to common sense for the dictionary and for three out of four Americans when he said, "Speech is when you talk." Justice Hugo Black spoke for every Chief Justice of the United States and Justices on Supreme Courts in the last century when he said, "It passes my belief that anything in the Federal Constitution bars making the deliberate burning of the American Flag an offense." U.S. Representative John Murtha spoke for 70 percent of the Congress when he said that "Burning and destruction of the flag is not speech. It's an act. An act that inflicts insult, insult that strikes at the very core of who we are as Americans and why so many of us fought and died for this country."

General Norman Schwarzkopf spoke for our warriors when he said, "I regard the legal protection of our flag as an absolute necessity and a matter of critical importance to our nation." He clearly saw it as a defilement of our Constitution.

Now we've heard from opponents of the flag amendment that our troops fight for the right of flag burners. Now who among them would stand before the men and women of our fighting force and tell them that they are fighting and dying on the streets of Baghdad so that their flag can be burned on the streets of America. And if you add to this mighty armada the legislatures of all 50 states and you heard what our President said yesterday, no reasonable person could deny that the courts made a mistake.

James Madison the author of the First Amendment, also condemned flag burning and so did his friend Thomas Jefferson. The framers intended to protect political speech, the persuading power that moves people to the ballot box. And it moves those elected to the will of the people. Flag burning is the persuading power of the mobs. But the communist Gregory Johnson said when he burned the flag that started all this, said "Red, White and Blue, we spit on you." Now that may not add to the political dialogue but it is certainly protected by our Constitution. What he did, burning the American flag, is not. Then, too, common sense tells us that the framers who did all this when they talked about expression, chose the word "speech" because expression can be so many different things.

Legalized burning of the flag goes beyond destruction of our Constitution. It also desecrates our values as a nation. Burning the flag is wrong but what it teaches is worse. It teaches our children that the outrageous conduct of a minority is more important that the will of the majority. It teaches that our laws need not reflect our values, and it teaches disrespect for the values embodied in the flag of the United States.

Now some are concerned with the number of efforts that are being made to amend the Constitution. Why is that? There's no concern when the courts amend the Constitution. They do it frequently and they do it illegally. Why does the majority only count when it wears black robes and not when it wears working clothes.

Some in this country view the ballot box, which is the will of the people, like Dracula views the cross. In fact these people also view the cross the way Dracula does. But look what the majority in the courts have done with pornography, with prayer, with

the Ten Commandments, with the Pledge, with the Boys Scouts and now with marriage. There have been over 11,000 attempts to amend the Constitution and only 27 have succeeded. The people take this responsibility very seriously. And every time that they have done it, it has improved our Constitution.

An amendment that addresses the Bill of Rights could start a great debate and awaken the people to what is being done to their Constitution. It could start a process to recapture our Constitution. It could rebut pornography, restore prayer and preserve marriage. Once the people are aware they will be outraged and they will act. We've seen that outrage after the Super Bowl and the impact that had on the moral midgets that we have in our media. And we saw the people's outrage in California. They fired their governor and that sent a message to all politicians. We need to send that same message to the courts. The Constitution is too important to be left to the courts and so is the flag. They both belong to the people and it's time for the people to decide.

This is an election year and most voters are very busy. They are working hard, you're caring for your children; you're caring for your communities. Many don't have time to study the issue in depth. So many depend on litmus tests. Name recognition is important to a lot of people. Is the candidate a Democrat or a Republican; a Christian or an atheist; for or against certain things. And sadly many just look for a handout. I hope that this election will look more at what's in the candidate's heart than what's in their hands.

There's no one litmus test of any candidate that will tell us all that we need to know. But there is one that comes very close. If we ask where does that candidate stand on the right of the people to protect their flag, we will learn a lot about that person.

Now I was amazed in my testimony to hear United States Senators who defended flag burning saying this, "that we are not a nation of symbols." Symbols define what we are. A candidate who supports the right of the people to protect their flag will understand the importance of symbols in a democracy. They will know that a wedding ring is not just a piece of metal. A cross is not just a piece of wood. A tombstone is not just a piece of marble. And the American flag is not a rag.

Symbols house the treasurers of our life, our hopes, our dreams, our ideals. They enshrine our memory, the one enduring priceless pearl of all we own. They are also in the mausoleum of all we have been, just symbols: a medal; an old boot; a uniform; a triangular flag. They warm us, they inspire us, they ring every bell in our being. Good candidates will understand. Veterans or not, the horrors of combat, the noise the confusion the fatigue, the fear, the terrifying, unmistakable, indescribable, unforgettable smell of blood. They will understand that of all the horrors of combat none is worse than the loneliness.

And in death and near death experiences, the warrior is ultimately alone. Just him with his fears and his hopes. And what do they do? In their loneliness, soldiers look to symbols for comfort. A letter, a photograph, a holy medal or a lock of hair. And they will understand, these candidates will understand that the greatest conqueror of fear, the greatest conqueror of loneliness, the greatest symbol of hope and the constant companion of our troops and their supreme inspiration is Old Glory. No other symbol, nothing says it better that you are not alone.

And the candidates who can pass that flag litmus test will realize that for many veterans all, much of what they have, their very dignity, is based on their service and their sacrifice under that flag. It was the defining moment of their lives. An attack on Old Glory is an attack on their very dignity.

Whether or not they have served is not important, or how they feel personally about

the flag. But such candidates will know enough to have compassion to defer to those great blood donors to our freedoms, those who have sacrificed and served for our Constitution as symbolized by our flag. And they will restore Old Glory to the dignity it deserves as a shroud to their memory.

In the past you know we've labored hard to get candidates to use the flag. We know there are two senators who credit their stance on the flag with their victory. And I know one former senator who lost because he did not use it. But it will be used in this election. Values will be very important in this election and you've heard the two candidates.

The Vice President and others at the highest level of our government have already begun to use the flag issue. It will be more used than ever before. No senator would knowingly lose an election over this issue. And we need to convince them that they could. And veterans are back, and veterans are back with a vengeance. Your voice will be heard this election louder than at any time in my memory. Both sides are courting the veterans. Senator Kerry has Vietnamized and veteranized his campaign. He is seldom seen without his band of brothers. President Bush knows he may have won the Presidency because of the veterans vote in Florida. Many believe, and if you look at the Legion Magazine this month, many believe that veterans will decide this election. You are back and you are powerful and your voice will be heard. We will never ever, we're never going to have a better time to make our case for the flag.

You guys know that whenever I talk to you I have to brag on my daughter. The last time I was with you I mentioned that she was in Iraq. She was married six days, separated then from her husband for over a year. She's home now in Heidelberg and she's pregnant, of course, with little Patrick. I should brag a little bit and say she's got a Bronze Star as a lieutenant. I never got a medal until I was a major, I don't think. But she got a Bronze Star as a lieutenant.

And I can tell you that I have been almost dead many times. But I can tell you that nothing that I ever experienced when in combat can compare with having her there. It gives you a new appreciation for those of you—the mothers and wives—as it did me to have to go through that, to stay home like we did and go through all that. It's tough, it's agonizing not to be able to fight anymore, to have to send your children. But we can fight in other ways. We can continue to fight for our Constitution through the flag amendment. Never forget, if that flag is precious enough to cover the coffins of our dead warriors, it's precious enough to be protected. We owe it to those warriors.

Thank you very much. I have another duty to do here. You may know or may not know that, I was appointed by President Bush as a Commissioner on the Battle Monuments Commission. I would like now, on behalf of the Battle Monuments Commission to make a presentation to The American Legion. Wherever you were this last May 29th, that was the day we, after many years, finally dedicated the World War II Memorial. You know how emotional that day was if you were there. Hundreds of thousands gathered in Washington. Millions watched on television across the country. I don't think that the city of Washington has ever seen anything like it.

Now, on behalf of the Battle Monuments Commission, I thank The American Legion Family for your long standing support of this historic tribute to the greatest generation. You were the first veterans organization to make a significant commitment to the memorial and you followed through on that commitment with nearly $5 million in donations.

You attended the many design hearings required to get the memorial approved, leading important and dignified veterans present to counter the few that opposed our

efforts. And I can tell you the opposition was some of the most incredible I've ever seen. We would have gotten it done a lot earlier if it had not been for that. It's an understatement to say that this memorial could not have been built without The American Legion's active participation in the process.

I encourage you to continue your efforts by promoting the World War II Memorial Registry, and you've got to do this. You can't put millions of names on a piece a stone but you can put their names into the ether or the internet or whatever that is, for your friends and this is for the women, Rosie the Riveters, this is for everybody. There's no charge to do it. My father was with Darby's Rangers in World War II and an uncle in the Navy and so I'm going to make sure that they're in there. And if you have any problem, you let me know.

On behalf of our former chairman Marine Corps Commandant, General P.X. Kelly—what a name. P.X. Kelly; he should have been in the Army—and The American Battle Monuments Commission, it's my honor to present to you this token of our appreciation for your generous financial support of the project. We hope that this canvas, a reproduction of the official World War II portrait, will hang proudly in your headquarters as a visible reminder of the important role that the Legion family played in the establishment of a national tribute to the service and sacrifice of our greatest generation. I thank you for your service to our Nation and your service for our flag. As I said, you are the vault for the values of this country and we just ask God to bless you for all you do.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you General Brady. I want to tell you that we appreciate your commitment to preserving our rights with Old Glory. The American Legion will continue to stand with the Citizens Flag Alliance and be steadfast in our commitment until we win.

It's a pleasure to have on stage a representative who serves our servicemembers and their families—The Fisher House Foundation. Fisher Houses are strategically located near major military hospitals and some VA hospitals. The facilities provide reasonably priced lodging and services for families visiting their loved ones while they're hospitalized.

Early in my tenure as National Commander I was sitting on an airplane and had the book out ready to read and the gentleman next to me had his book out ready to read, but we introduced ourselves and started to talk. It was Dave Kocher, who is Executive Director of Fisher House. We never opened our book on the trip. What struck me was not only does Fisher House do this, they said the young people serving in Afghanistan and Iraq and for those that are coming back wounded, they are waiving the fees and completely absorbing the costs. In fact, when the Fisher Houses are full, they then tell the families to go out to guest housing or out into the hotels in the public and they'll foot the bill.

Dave Kocher told me yesterday that in San Antonio last month they paid over $5,000 to local hotels to make sure that families of young soldiers at Brooke Army Medical Center, the Burn Center, were in fact not paying anything for the lodging while they were there with their families.

Joining us today in Nashville is the Vice President for Communications for the Fisher House Foundation. He's a retired Army officer and a member of Fairfax Post 177 in Fairfax, Virginia, please welcome Jim Weiskopf.

Address: James D. Weiskopf
Vice President for Communications
Fisher House Foundation, Inc.

I'd like to set the stage, if I can. Commander has been to Landstuhl, and I have also. Can we roll the videotape, please.

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

That tape was done in September of last year. They used a figure of 6,000 patients. When I was in Landstuhl in May, that figure had gone up to 14,000. But we'll show you in a minute a lot of those servicemembers are returned back to their units.

Let me do the first slide.

A series of slides is now shown to the audience as Mr. Weiskopf speaks..

I'm going to speak about these topics with an emphasis on number 2, our support to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Zachary Fisher, who passed away in 1999, and his wife had constructed 25 Fisher Houses by the time he had passed away. He had been honored, he and his wife, a great number of times by both the Legion and the Auxiliary. Zachary and his wife, Elizabeth, who passed away earlier this year, did not have any children together. So this program probably could have just gone by the way side. But Zachary, his nephews and grand-nephews have continued the program and the family is totally committed to doing whatever is possible to assist the members of the Armed Forces present and past and their families. The big difference now is when Zachary was alive, he paid for every Fisher house personally. We now need partners to continue building. But we have built seven houses since his passing.

The Commander mentioned our support to Operation Iraqi Freedom. It probably has amounted to a little bit more than half a million dollars since we started. He touched on the lodging support and we do that. We don't think any family should be penalized because there was no room in the Fisher House. So we put them up in the on-base guest house or if that is full, we pay for them to stay in an off-base motel.

We get a tremendous number of phone cards donated by American Legion Posts, units and other organizations, and we get them out to the families. It's just so important that they be able to have that to maintain contact with their families. And we have computers in all the houses for internet as well.

The American public likewise has been buying exchange and commissary certificate checks, and donating to us. We get them out to the families and to the servicemen and women. As you can well imagine, when you arrive on a medi-vac flight the only clothing you have is what you were wearing when you were picked up on the battlefield. Their needs are simple in the way of sweats and sneakers, but we make sure that they get them.

I'm going to touch on airline partners in a minute, but to compliment that, when any family arrives in the Washington, D.C. area on our airline program we have a car service to pick them up and take them to Walter Reed or Bethesda.

I'd just like to put some figures in perspective here. Through July, the military has done air evacuations on about 14,000 servicemen and women coming back to Andrews and then on to other medical centers. But as you can see, to put it in perspective, about 11 percent are wounded and the larger percent, as in any war, are non–battle casualties and disease. By our estimate about 1,000 of these families have stayed at one of our 32 Fisher Houses.

The top three reasons that they are wounded or injured, and you've seen this on TV, but the IED, the improvised explosive device, is the one that's taking its toll

predominantly and has caused all the brain trauma, the amputations. There *[on the slide]* you can see the breakouts.

I have seen so many figures in the news on the number of people who have lost arms or legs. I have seen figures of 2,000. I saw a figure that said at this Post alone we have 250. The reality is that we have had about 130 amputees. Obviously, every one is absolutely tragic, but that especially when there are multiple limbs that are lost. But that will put that in perspective and that statistic is about one month old. So it probably has increased slightly.

All the amputees go through Walter Reed. Some then go on to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

This morning, you met the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and he made a passing reference to his wife, Mary Jo, who was sitting behind him. In November Mary Jo Myers came to Dave Kocher and myself and asked of there was a way we could find some partnership with airlines. I'm concerned about the patients who are spending a lot of time at Walter Reed and other medical centers. We've got to find a way so they can get home for a short period of time and, more importantly, to get their family and friends with them.

So, with her help we did put together an airline partnership for those two purposes. We allow the servicemember, if their doctor approves it, to be able to leave the medical center and go home for a short period of time and return. And we bring family and friends in to see them. Notice I used the word "friend." Not just strictly blood relatives, a mother, father, brother, sister. But if you're a young serviceman or woman your parents are nice, but what you really want is your boyfriend or your girlfriend. If you are terribly religious, perhaps, it might be your pastor. If you are athletic, it might be your football coach. Whoever can help inspire you while you're recovering.

Here are our partners. We were given 680 round trip tickets on American Airlines, courtesy of the Anheiser Busch Corporation. We have probably given out about 300 of them already. We have a program with Northwest Airlines, and I'll go into some more specifics in a minute for their World Perks customers. Southwest Rapids Reward. Independence Air is a brand new budget carrier in Washington, D.C. We are their first charity and they are helping us on the east coast. And Delta Airlines, since this slide was made, their program is going to kick in on the 14th of September.

Northwest—if anybody are Northwest passengers here, just think of this as a lot of you donate blood. Think of it the same way. You donate blood to help others. If you can donate frequent flyer miles, we can get them out and see that they're used. Since this slide was made we have had six million miles donated.

Southwest Airlines—what's interesting is the bulk of the donations to Southwest Airlines, those tickets came from their own pilots and their own flight stewards. Apparently, when they go so many days without an absence, as a reward they get a free ticket and since they can fly free anyway, they donated those to us. Delta Airlines program will begin, as I said, on the 14th of September. You'll be able to donate to that.

Now we go into new construction. We built the second house in Landstuhl specifically as a response to the events of 9/11. We luckily had that house up and operating in December, 2002. So we were ready to go fortuitously when troops began to invade into Iraq. The two houses in Landstuhl stay very full.

We had approved a second house in Hawaii a number of years ago. We had to hold off construction because we had to get the two houses built in Landstuhl first. We now have the second house in Hawaii. Although that sounds like a luxury spot, anybody who is here from the Far East knows that the only medical center, definitive major medical

center for the entire Pacific rim, which includes Guam and Okinawa, Korea, and Japan, they're all on medi-vac flights going to Honolulu. So those two houses stay full.

We built the third house at Walter Reed specifically as a response to the rising number of casualties. That is up and operating. We are building one more house for the VA under construction in Houston. And we are committed to start construction soon on a second Fisher House in Fort Lewis. Where we go from there we will see.

Your interests are with the VA Fisher Houses. There are currently six. And they are listed here: Albany, Bay Pines, Cincinnati, Denver, Minneapolis and West Palm Beach.

Often I'm asked the question why can't we have a Fisher House at our VA Medical Center. Well here's the criteria. The Fisher House is not to be at a small facility where most of the people live in the immediate area. It's to be at a tertiary care facility where the patients are referred from large distances and have highly specialized care. And that's the criteria that we have been using. Based upon that criteria, Secretary Principi sent us a list about a year ago and validated that Houston, Dallas, Palo Alto, Puget Sound and the three VA Medical Centers in New York, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan were his highest priorities.

We have gone back to the Secretary and said we want to scrub that list again. Our commitment is to the servicemen and women injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, and so we're going to get a new list and some of those same houses will continue on it, but there will be some new houses added to the list because we want to be in the forefront of taking care of the families of any of the servicemen or women wounded in Iraq or Afghanistan.

So right now, and the reason the Commander introduced Dave Kocher, the reason he's not here is he flew to Brooke Army Medical Center last evening to have a meeting today to discuss building a third house at Brooke where we have all of the burn victims. We have a commitment to build or we have some funding offered to us to build a second house in San Diego. And the Haley VA Medical Center in Tampa, traumatic brain injury, a lot of support coming from that local area. They're probably going to raise half the money for that house locally, and if that happens we will probably shift our priorities to build there.

How can you help? You need to know that the programs are funded by the respective services or the VA as far as the refurbishment of the houses and the day-to-day operations, but we depend upon individual donations and volunteers. Volunteers can help meet and greet and help with peer support. The cash donations that we get from the organizations besides helping to build new houses can be used for nice quality of life touches like groceries and toiletry items, and also to help us with the huge cost of the alternate lodging because the Fisher Houses are full.

We do build new houses with partnership and that is if we can be met halfway. If a local organization can come up with half the money for a house, that gives us more money that we can then invest in the house down the line. We are committed to trying to build at least one house a year for the VA, but I'm here to tell you that the need in the VA is probably for about 50 of these houses.

And certainly you can help us by donating airline tickets. An update since this slide was made, it's now about 480 tickets that we have given out to servicemembers and their families. If all else fails and you can't remember anything on the slides, just go to our website, call us on our toll free number, and we will be more than happy to respond to your requests.

We have a new partner now in Gary Trudeau who does the Doonesbury comic strip. He took one of his fictional characters, B. D., several months ago, put him on the

battlefield in Iraq. He was injured. He had an amputation. He worked his way through Landstuhl to Walter Reed. And I'm here to tell you those of you who have seen the comic strip, he is 100 percent accurate. It's been a morale booster for all of the amputees. Last Friday Gary came back down to Walter Reed, spent time with us in the Fisher House, went into the wards and went out to dinner with 65 amputees that evening.

Our commitment is that Gary is going to give us the rights to all of his art work when the series is finished. We're going to find an underwriter and we're going to publish it and if we can figure out how to do it, we're going to give it to every wounded and injured servicemember in Iraq and Afghanistan as our gratitude of thanks to them.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: About six weeks to eight weeks ago, in fact it may have been longer ago, time seems to be traveling fast these days, Dave Kocher contacted me and said, "I wanted you to know, Commander, we received a $10,000 donation from an American Legion Post in Maryland." And he said, "When we received it, we realized this was the largest single cash donation we had received from a Post from a veterans' organization. So we contacted them and asked how did they find out about this and what caused them to do it?"

They made a comment and said that when The American Legion National Commander had been there, he talked about things and talked about a visit to Fisher House. We decided if he liked it, we'd contribute. I can tell you that we're happy that they have. I can tell you that we'll continue to support Fisher House and we appreciate the work that you do.

Our next guest is a newly elected Dominion Vice President of the Royal Canadian Legion. He has been a strong advocate for our comrades from Canada for many years. He retired five years ago from a major food corporation and is even more active today in his community work as a Legionnaire. Welcome John Alger to our Convention.

Greetings: John Alger, Dominion Vice President
The Royal Canadian Legion

I was told before my departure about the level of hospitality my wife, Joan, and I could expect. And I must say you have lived up to and even surpassed your billing. I can only describe our reception and the arrangements made for us as magnificent. Your patriotic Memorial Service on Sunday was as moving as your parade was exciting. And the dinner and entertainment last night, words just can't describe that wonderful evening that we had. We are indeed most grateful to you for having us in your midst as you go about the business of looking after your veterans.

My task today is to bring you greetings from the more than 400,000 Canadians that are part of the Royal Canadian Legion. Our newly elected Dominion President is Mary Ann Burnett. Yes, we do have a woman in charge. She's a former Air Force Police woman and, I might add, she keeps us in line very easily. When Mary Ann asked if I could stand in for her and bring these greetings, I jumped at the chance. After all, this is The American Legion. Who in their right mind would pass up a chance to speak to the keepers of the veterans rights in America when that is what I have decided to dedicate the rest of my life to do in my country, Canada, your neighbor to the North.

It is not only a privilege to serve your nation when it calls, it's an honor, but the honor felt by those who served cannot be abused by those who simply do the calling. Honor and patriotism cannot be called upon one day and trashed the next because of the

fallout that it's too expensive. Those who do the calling must also bear the responsibility ensuring those who served are also well served by them.

I'm talking about those who govern, many of whom have never had the honor of serving their country except from the air conditioned offices of power. And the retention of power may well be the catalyst that makes many of them forget what it is they owe to those who picked up arms in the times of crisis. Thus, it is up to organizations like The American Legion and our own Legion in Canada, to absolutely ensure that no one veteran is forgotten or disadvantaged because he or she answered the call.

Your foundations are much the same as ours, although you built them a little before us. Nevertheless, your belief in service and the maintenance of those who served is exactly what we stand for. We also share a common line mass, and bonds forged under fire that transcend to the political recognitions of governments on both sides of the border.

It is no secret that our governments have differences, and why wouldn't they? As neighbors, we do have differences of opinion but that does not mean that they should set up barriers that prevent the congeniality between the two countries. No, it does not. And while we may have differences of opinion on all kinds of issues, we know what a threat is. And we, as Legionnaires, must continually coach our political leaders on how to meet those threats.

Fellow veterans, we have our job to do as volunteers on both sides of the world's longest, undefended border. We, as Legionnaires, also have a relationship that has developed over the years that knows no borders. Let no one put that asunder. We know what we have to do and we will continue to do it for the good of those who gave up their lives to save our freedom. Our veterans are the people who stood when called, and fell in support of the nation, two nations that share a border, and we must never forget those veterans.

If you would bear with me, comrades, in closing I'd like to highlight one difference that I have noticed between our two wonderful peoples. Sometime ago there was an accident in which involved an American, a Canadian and a Scotsman. Unfortunately, they were all killed. And they went up to the Pearly Gates and met St. Peter. St. Peter was somewhat taken aback upon their arrival because he had just checked the list and none of them were on that list. He advised the trio that there must have been a mistake made, and that they could be reversed if very quick action was taken. But he told them there would be a slight fee.

The American immediately said, "How much is the fee?" And he was told $20. Immediately, he reached in his pocket, pulled out his wallet and handed him $20, and zap, he was back in the hospital. He woke up; he had doctors, nurses, medical equipment all around him; he was back amongst the living. Later that day the Padre was in to see him and he asked him about his experience of near death. And after telling the pastor about the experiences, the pastor, of course, said, "Well, what happened to the other two; do you know?" And the American said, "Well, I'm not too sure." He said, "When I left," he says, "the Scotsman was haggling over the price, and the Canadian was scratching his head trying to figure out how he could get his government to pay the $20. [Laughter.]

Fellow veterans of The American Legion, let us all pray that who is paying for the chips when the chips are down is the only thing we have to worry about. As we make sure that those who call know the responsibility they take regarding our veterans response.

I'd like to thank you on behalf of my wife and myself for your wonderful hospitality and the opportunity to spend a few days with you, and as that great lady of country and

western music would say, Cousin Minnie Pearl, "I'm just so proud to be here."

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I now call on Ken Sercerchi from Maine who is Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Economics for the purpose of making a report.

And I also call on National Vice Commander Dick Denbow to assume the Chair.

Report: Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and Other Economic Matters
Kenneth Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m. on August 29, 2004, a total of 83 delegates assigned to the Convention Committees on Employment and Veterans Preference and on Other Economic Matters convened in Room Canal E. Delta Mezzanine, in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, to consider 162 resolutions assigned to the committees for action. Kenneth Sercerchi of Maine was elected general chairman and Casey Martin of Nevada was appointed general secretary. Al Robotti of New Jersey was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Employment and Veterans Preference, and David Desmond of North Carolina was appointed secretary. Richard T. Lee of California was elected chairman of the Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters, and Kenneth Connors of New Jersey was appointed secretary.

In response to a call by the National Adjutant, a screening committee consisting of Ken Sercerchi (ME), Bill Christoffersen (UT), Al Robotti (NJ), Richard T. Lee (CA), Tom Norris (NH), and Casey Martin (NV) met at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, August 27, 2004, in the Belmont B Room of the Gaylord Opryland Hotel to make recommendations to the Convention Committees on Economics. The report of the screening committee was presented to the convention committees and was adopted.

A motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize the chairman and secretary to sign the committee report on behalf of the committee. A motion was made, seconded and approved to allow the chairman and secretary to make technical corrections to the report without changing the meaning. The meeting was recessed at 11:00 a.m. subject to recall by the chair.

Approved

Resolution No. 35: Support Legislation For Activated Reservists
Origin: Utah
Submitted by Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 291 (AL) and Resolution No. 377 (IL))

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

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

WHEREAS, Many of these Guard and Reserve service members who have been

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

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

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge local, state and federal bodies to enact legislation to provide income insurance to citizen soldiers and sailors during deployments; tax credits to employers who hire and support their deployed Guard and Reserve employees with continuation of their medical benefits and pay while deployed, and couple these initiatives with support and commitment for all affected parties.

Resolution No. 40: Add Active Reservists To Those Eligible For Certain Job Training Service
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 263 (AL) and Resolution No. 337 (IL))

WHEREAS, The demands of National Security in the 21st Century are placing greater emphasis on the Reserve members of our Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, The activation of Reserve Units can be expected to increase, thereby creating employment hardships for reservists; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge Congress to amend Title 38, US Code, Chapter 41, Section 4101(5) to add Subsection (D) to the list of "Eligible Persons" for Job Counseling, Training, and Placement Service for Veterans, to include members in good standing of an Active Reserve Unit of the Armed Forces of the United States who have completed basic and advanced Duty for Training (ACDUTRA) and have been awarded a Military Occupation Specialty.

Resolution No. 42: Reaffirm Support For The Transitional Assistance Program
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 281 (AL) and Resolution No. 339 (IL))

WHEREAS, At the end of the Cold War the Department of Defense (DoD) dramatically downsized its personnel strength; and

WHEREAS, In an attempt to assist separating service members in making a successful transition back into the civilian workforce, Congress enacted Public Law

(P.L.) 101-510; and

WHEREAS, P.L. 101-510 authorized the creation of the TAP; and

WHEREAS, TAP provides separating service members with three days of comprehensive training with emphasis on such topics as networking, how to conduct a job search; resume writing, career decision-making, interview techniques, as well as current occupational and labor market conditions; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's (DOL's) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) provides professional veterans' employment personnel, Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), to participate in the TAP program; and

WHEREAS, Placing veterans in suitable employment sooner, the country benefits from increased income tax revenue and reduced unemployment compensation payments thus greatly offsetting the cost of TAP training; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms its strong support of the Transition Assistance Program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense require all separating, active-duty service members, including those from Reserve and national Guard units, be given an opportunity to participate in Transition Assistance Program training not more than 180 days prior to their separation or retirement from the armed forces.

Resolution No. 43: Support Full Funding For Veterans' Employment And Training Service (VETS)

Origin: Utah

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 37 (UT); Resolution No. 127 (AL); Resolution No. 132 (MA); Resolution No. 287 (AL); Resolution No. 334 (IL); and Resolution No. 340 (IL))

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in

Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continues to advocate full funding and staffing for the Veterans' Employment and Training Service and its effective programs.

Resolution No. 44: Support Improvement Of Veterans' Employment And Training Service (VETS)
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 288 (AL) and Resolution No. 341 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is an agency within the Department of Labor (DOL) dedicated to providing America's veterans with quality employment and training services; and

WHEREAS, The Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) is responsible for ensuring that the agency continues to meet its mission; and

WHEREAS, The ASVET is committed to taking aggressive actions to improve the quality, timeliness, and accessibility to veterans' employment and training services within every State; and

WHEREAS, VETS' programs must meet the needs of veterans facing employment barriers; and

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion continue to work closely with LVERs and DVOPs in local communities across the country; and

WHEREAS, Although Title 38, USC, identifies duties and responsibilities of LVERs and DVOPs, the ASVET cannot accurately capture necessary data to adequately assess performance outcomes; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly support improvements in the programs available to and administered by Veterans' Employment and Training Service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training establish clear performance standards and a means of collecting data to properly measure performance at the local, state, and national level.

Resolution No. 49: Oppose The Transfer Of Veterans' Employment And Training Service To The Department Of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 277 (AL); Resolution No. 346 (IL); and Resolution No. 380 (IL))

WHEREAS, Veterans' employment programs began after World War I when the U.S. Employment Service helped place returning veterans in civilian jobs; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's (DOL) Veterans' Employment and Training Service is headed by the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training; and

WHEREAS, VETS administers veterans' employment program grants that funds nearly 3,000 state employment service agencies' Disabled Veterans Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives; and

WHEREAS, VETS coordinates veterans' workforce investment programs with

related Department of Veterans Affairs programs and activities; and

WHEREAS, VETS administers homeless veterans' reintegration project grants; and

WHEREAS, VETS facilitates Transitional Assistance Program (TAP) workshops for separating service members; and

WHEREAS, VETS monitors veterans' preference for federal employment, in cooperation with the Office of Personnel Management; and

WHEREAS, VETS supervises the listing of jobs by federal contractors and the subsequent referrals of qualified veterans; and

WHEREAS, VETS administers a $2 million contract to operate the National Veterans' Training Institute, which provides training for federal and state employees involved in the direct delivery of employment and training related services to veterans; and

WHEREAS, VETS is organized with a national, seven regional, and 52 state-level offices by statute; and

WHEREAS, VETS works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation Program to assist enrolled veterans in job search efforts throughout their rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, President Bush has recommended transferring VETS from DOL to VA; and

WHEREAS, DOL has expertise in job placement, job development, vocational counseling, vocational testing, job search training, and many other area of employment services; and

WHEREAS, VA has very little experience in job placement, job development, vocational counseling, vocational testing, job search training, an any other area of employment services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes all legislative or administrative efforts to transfer Veterans' Employment and Training Service from Department of Labor to Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 50: Oppose Eliminating Or Outsourcing Of Veterans' Employment And Training Services (Vets) Programs

Origin: Utah

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 213 (TX) and Resolution No. 347 (IL))

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

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

WHEREAS, In Section 4301, Title 38, United States Code (USC), Congress expressed its purpose in enacting the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), "to encourage non-career service in the uniformed services by eliminating or minimizing the disadvantage to civilian careers and employment which can result from such service"; and

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a

variety of reasons, the vast majority of disabled veterans of the armed forces are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers; and

WHEREAS, In Section 4101, Title 38, USC, "The Congress declares as its intent and purpose that there shall be an effective (1) job and job training counseling service program, (2) employment placement service program, and (3) job training placement service program for eligible veterans/disabled veterans and eligible persons...."; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, Congress to ensure that all veterans/disabled veterans are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several states; and

WHEREAS, Legislation is under consideration that will seek to minimize Federal oversight of the programs operated under Title 38, by outsourcing the programs and give the individual Workforce Development Boards the option of operating veterans' programs; and

WHEREAS, This legislation would seek to remove the job descriptions of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) from Title 38, USC, and allow each State to establish the duties and responsibilities, thus creating 50 different VETS programs across the country; and

WHEREAS, This legislation would seek to remove the Federally mandated manning formulas for DVOPs and LVERs and allow each State to determine the number of veterans' employment personnel in each State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee. August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes outsourcing of veterans' employment services to any entity other than the State Employment Services Agencies; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes removing the duties and responsibilities of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative from Title 38; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes removing the manning formulas for Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist and Local Veterans Employment Representative from Title 38; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports Department of Labor's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training retaining jurisdiction over all veterans' employment and training services.

Resolution No. 51: Amend Veterans Employment Opportunities Act, 1998
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 348 (IL))

WHEREAS, The 105th Congress passed the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 and limited employment opportunities to only those veterans with three or more years of honorable service to the United States; and

WHEREAS, There are many various situations where a service member may be discharged with an honorable discharge in less than the three years, as defined by the new law; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes this to be an oversight by the 105th Congress, and recommends that an amendment to Public Law (P.L.) 105-339 be made to

include all those who honorably served at least 179 days or more in the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, It would not be discriminatory to those who served honorably, but for some reason beyond their control were discharged in a period less than three years; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That an amendment to Section 3304, Title 5, United States Code be made to include all those who honorably served the United States at least 179 days or more.

Resolution No. 52: Hire A Veteran Week
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 349 (IL))

WHEREAS, The United States of America recognizes the importance of "Hire a Veteran Week" to promote the employment of veterans; and

WHEREAS, It is known that of the unemployed, the percentage of unemployed veterans is greater than their non-veteran contemporaries; and

WHEREAS, There is presently no national "Hire a Veteran Week" program; and

WHEREAS, By having a Federally recognized national "Hire a Veteran Week," the President or Congress would publicly encourage the hiring of veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports Congress establishing "Hire a Veteran Week" during the week of Veterans' Day in the month of November each year; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the President of the United States issue an executive order declaring "Hire a Veteran Week" during the week of Veterans' Day in the month of November each year.

Resolution No. 53: Support Staffing Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERS), As Required By Law
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 133 (MA) and Resolution No. 350 (IL))

WHEREAS, Section 4104a(2)(A), Title 38, United States Code (USC), states that at least one LVER shall be assigned to each local employment office having at least 1,100 veterans registered and an additional LVERs be assigned for each additional 1,600 veterans registered above the 1,100 base; and

WHEREAS, Under the current LVER allocation formula, as utilized by the Department of Labor (DOL), there are inadequate annual appropriations to several states because of policies and practices which cause these states to receive fewer positions and less funding; and

WHEREAS, This procedure caused a deterioration of the available services provided to veterans in those states; and

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law 100-323, the level of funding for these Federally-mandated positions has been below the level required for the program to

be effective; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion petitions Congress, the President of the United States, and the Secretary of Labor to adhere to the allocation formula in Chapter 41, Title 38, United States Code, and assign all Federally-mandated Local Veterans Employment Representative positions in each State.

Resolution No. 54: Reaffirm Support For Service Members Occupational Conversion And Training Act (SMOCTA)
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 137 (MA); Resolution No. 240 (WI); and Resolution No. 351 (IL))

WHEREAS, In 1992, Congress enacted the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA), which became Public Law (P.L.) 102-484; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was a transitional tool designed to provide job training and employment to certain veterans discharged from the military after August 1, 1990; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA helped eligible veterans enter the civilian workforce through training in a stable and permanent position that involved significant training; and

WHEREAS, VA made monthly payments to employers who employed and trained eligible veterans in these jobs, and made a final lump sum payment when the trainee had completed the training program and was employed for four months; and

WHEREAS, These payments aided employers in defraying the necessary costs of training; and

WHEREAS, To be eligible for participation in the SMOCTA program, the veteran must meet at least one of the following criteria: (a) have a primary or secondary military occupational specialty that the Department of Defense (DoD) has determined is not readily transferable to the civilian work force; or (b) be entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retired pay) for a VA service-connected disability rate of 30 percent or more; or ©) be unemployed and have been unemployed for at least eight of the last 15 work weeks before filing an application; and

WHEREAS, Veterans eligible for job training under SMOCTA were precisely those individuals who need the most assistance in making a successful transition to the civilian workforce; and

WHEREAS, DoD, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in March 1993, which defined their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of SMOCTA; and

WHEREAS, DoD provided funding for SMOCTA, while VA and DOL are responsible for administering the program; and

WHEREAS, Under the terms of the MOU, the SMOCTA program would terminate when all funds provided by DoD are expended or at such time as agreed upon by all parties; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was the only Federal job training program available to strictly for veterans; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was the only Federal job training program specifically

designed and available for use by State veterans' employment personnel to assist veterans with barriers to employment; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA offered financial incentives for employers to hire SMOCTA-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, SMOCTA was officially terminated on July 26, 2001; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports legislation to reauthorize the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek adequate funding for Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act.

Resolution No. 55: Support Tax Credits For Certain Employers
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 144 (WA) and Resolution No. 352 (IL))

WHEREAS, More than 265,300 members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard served on active duty during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991); and

WHEREAS, According to Defense Manpower Data Systems, since 1991, an additional 63,938 members of the reserve components served on active duty during the military operations known as Southern Watch, Joint Forge and Uphold Democracy; and

WHEREAS, Currently another 80,000 reserve components are supporting Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of those men and women left jobs and careers in the civilian community to answer the call of their country; and

WHEREAS, Many of those veterans and their families suffered economic hardship as the result of that service because the military salaries they received while on active duty were often much lower than the salaries paid by their civilian employers; and

WHEREAS, While some employers were able to make up the difference between their employee's military pay and their regular civilian salary, most employers could not, or would not, make up the difference between the two; and

WHEREAS, There is no incentive for employers to make up the difference between an employee's military pay and their regular salary; and

WHEREAS, The financial disadvantages suffered by many members of the armed forces reserves and National Guard who are called to active duty could very possibly serve as a major impediment to the recruitment and retention of a competent reserve component of the military total force; and

WHEREAS, The recent downsizing of armed forces resulted in increased reliance on reserves and National Guard units for military operation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation providing tax credits to any employer who either pays an employee who is called to active duty their regular salary or who makes up the difference between that person's military pay and their regular civilian salary.

Resolution No. 56: Support Recognition Of Military Service And Pay When

Calculating Starting Federal Civilian Salaries

Origin: Utah

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 353 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Office of Personnel Management's interpretation of Section 531.203 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations is as follows: "These regulations provide that a hiring agency may consider a rate of basic pay previously received by the individual in a position in any branch of the Federal Government as his or her 'highest previous rate.' The highest previous rate is used at the agency's discretion and no employee is guaranteed the use of his or her highest previous rate in setting his or her pay. Although this law does not allow the use of military pay rates to determine the rate of basic pay that may be paid to an individual upon appointment to a civil service position, agencies do have the ability to pay above the minimum rate of the grade when the new employee has superior qualifications or the agency has special needs for a candidate's service."; and

WHEREAS, That interpretation has the potential for placing a former member of the Armed Forces at a financial disadvantage because it does not require the hiring agency to consider the applicant's military experience and highest military pay as the basis for calculating that person's starting salary when entering into federal employment as a civilian; and

WHEREAS, This quirk in the law clearly discriminates against the former Armed Forces member because the hiring agency is not required to take that person's military experience and military pay history into consideration when calculating his/her starting salary; and

WHEREAS, While in the military, the veteran was in the service of the Federal government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that requires Federal agencies to take an employee's military experience and military pay history into consideration when computing that employee's starting civilian salary.

Resolution No. 58: Support Disabled Veterans As Priority Under Americans With Disabilities Act

Origin: Utah

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 286 (AL) and Resolution No. 355 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 gave new and deserved emphasis to the employment problems of people with disabilities and recognized them as a specific group who need special consideration; and

WHEREAS, The attempt is made in other laws also to address these problems, specifically the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for the handicapped; Title 38 USC, Chapter 42 for disabled veterans who have barriers to employment; and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which mandates the non-discrimination in employment requirements covering race, religion, age, sex and national origin; and many employers are required to have a written Affirmative Action Plan in order to avoid discrimination against any of these groups; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, USC, Chapter 42 also contains specific requirements for federal contractors and federal agencies to take affirmative action to hire and promote minorities and disabled veterans; although in actual practice there is no breakdown by priority of affirmative action for minorities, disabled veterans or the handicapped as specific groups; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the high incidence of employment problems among disabled veterans is not enough; and in order to implement the plans and ensure actual practice of affirmative action, the disabled should be considered separately from minorities for preferential treatment by all entities who have affirmative action requirements under law; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges Congress to enact legislation that gives disabled veterans priority in affirmative action as a group within the other designated groups for which affirmative action is required.

Resolution No. 59: Support Job Protection For Service-Connected Veterans Requiring Visits At VA Facilities

Origin: Utah

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 64 (UT); Resolution No. 275 (AL); Resolution No. 290 (AL); Resolution No. 356 (IL); and Resolution No. 361 (IL))

WHEREAS, It is the intent of Congress to ensure that no veteran shall be denied employment, reemployment, advancement or discrimination in employment for serving the country's call to colors, whether such service was voluntary or involuntary, as provided for in the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, formerly the Veterans' Reemployment Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, Veterans or disabled veterans who are required to report for mandatory compensation or pension physical examinations are considered as a "standard" or "regular" absence from work; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of employers throughout the country have very stringent attendance policies, that DO result in termination for continued attendance violations; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who are required to report to the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation and pension examinations, as well as treatment for a service connected or service aggravated condition, are exposed to termination, lack of promotional opportunities and other forms of unjustifiable retaliations from employers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge Congress to adopt and enforce provisions of protection from any employer, against any veteran who is required to report to the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation or pension evaluations, vocational rehabilitation, counseling, or treatment for any service-connected condition that is being treated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 214: Oppose Any Weakening Of The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program And Local Veterans Employment Representative Programs

Origin: Texas
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 39 (UT); Resolution No. 215 (TX); Resolution No. 276 (AL); and Resolution No. 336 (IL))

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

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

WHEREAS, It has been the finding of numerous surveys and studies that, for a variety of reasons, the vast majority of veterans of the armed forces of the United States are disadvantaged in pursuing civilian employment and careers, and that veterans helping veterans has proven to be extremely effective; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that such programs of employment assistance for veterans be provided by direction of, and subject to oversight by, the Congress of the United States to ensure that all veterans who served the United States in uniform in time of war and peace are afforded such services in a uniform manner following completion of their service and return to the several States; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 has revised Title 38 to eliminate the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be veterans and serve only veterans and to reduce the direction and control of such employment assistance programs while relinquishing the direction of veterans services to the discretion of the governors of the several States and/or contracting of such services to for-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, PL 107-288 also eliminates the requirement that DVOP/LVER staff be assigned based on veteran intake and veteran population, and creates half time DVOP positions, thereby eliminating positions available to serve veterans or allowing positions to be assigned at the discretion of the individual state workforce agency, which may or may not adequately assign positions; and

WHEREAS, Such devolution of program responsibility will then be based on each state's elected officials' whim and may result in either limited services or such variations in employment assistance provided disabled veterans as to make a mockery of the expressions of the Congress found in Title 38 USC; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek national legislation that will require LVER and DVOP staff be veterans and serve only veterans, and that the assignment of these positions be based on veteran populations.

Resolution No. 244: Employment Of Veterans In Government Workforce
Origin: South Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 34 (UT); Resolution No. 38 (UT); Resolution No. 57 (UT); Resolution No. 138 (MA); Resolution No. 335 (IL); Resolution No. 354 (IL); and Resolution No. 376 (IL))

WHEREAS, A grateful nation, following each war, has indicated its thanks to those

who bore the brunt of the battle by providing certain rights and benefits, one of which has been a small advantage when seeking federal, state and local government employment; and

WHEREAS, Absence from a highly competitive job market creates an unfair and unequal burden on veterans upon completion of their military services, in competing with their non-veteran peers, which this preference in federal, state and local government employment is intended to overcome in part; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly support veterans preference in federal, state, and local government, as provided by a grateful nation, and oppose any and all efforts to reduce this preference; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to speak out both on the state and national level forcefully and publicly on the issue of veterans' preference.

Resolution No. 265: Allow Military Retirees To Apply For Positions In Federal Law Enforcement After Age 37

Origin: Alabama

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 79 (UT) and Resolution No. 386 (IL))

WHEREAS, Public Law 101-509 makes it mandatory for all federal law enforcement position personnel to retire by age 57; and

WHEREAS, This provision requires that an applicant be no older than 37 when applying, thus allowing them to complete 20 years of service before age 57; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense spends over $15 billion annually to train men and women of the armed services, with thousands of career personnel completing their initial 20 years for retirement at the age of 38-40 at time of separation; and

WHEREAS, Under existing law it is impossible for a 20 year military retiree to obtain a career in federal law enforcement because of age restrictions even though they are more than qualified for federal employment with their job expertise, security clearance credentials, allegiance to their country, and other qualities; and

WHEREAS, Providing opportunities for transitional career military personnel is a reinvestment in defense training that would help preserve scarce recruiting and training funds while providing a stable source of manpower to help fulfill the federal government's 188,000-person law enforcement personnel requirements; and

WHEREAS, Removing the age restriction or at least providing a waiver based on military service would compliment the American taxpayer who has fully funded the training and experience of our career military by utilizing their expertise for federal law enforcement positions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion petition the Congress to amend Public Law 101-509 to include age waivers or other means to allow those who have served honorably in the military to continue to serve in professional federal law enforcement positions after retirement.

Resolution No. 268: Credit Service Of Military Retirees Towards Federal Employment Benefits

Origin: Alabama

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 61 (UT) and Resolution No. 358 (IL))

WHEREAS, Title 5 of the United States Code (USC) allows military veterans entering federal employment to apply all military service to the accrual of annual leave; and

WHEREAS, Title 5 of the USC allows retired veterans entering federal employment to apply only certain "qualifying periods" of military service to the accrual of annual leave; and

WHEREAS, Retired military veterans are no less veterans than non-retired veterans, and indeed have contributed greater service; and

WHEREAS, Retired military veterans, by virtue of their greater service, deserve treatment at least equal to that of non-retired veterans; and

WHEREAS, While retired/retainer pay is awarded for several reasons, it is not awarded as compensation for accepting less than those who gave lesser service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek and support legislation to amend Title 5, United States Code, to allow military retirees entering federal service to credit all military service to accrual of annual leave.

Resolution No. 284: Require Vets To Hire Veterans

Origin: Alabama

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 30 (UT) and Resolution No. 385 (IL))

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) administrators employment assistance and employment protection programs serving veterans, members of Armed Forces Reserve Components and eligible persons as defined in and, pursuant to Chapters 41, 42 and 43 of Title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 107-288 amended 38 USC, Chapter 41 to allow for the appointment of non-veterans to positions of Regional Administrators, Directors in the States, Assistant Directors in the States and "other professional staff" assigned to the States; and

WHEREAS, These VETS staff located in Regional offices and those serving in the state routinely and extensively interact with State Workforce Agencies' staffs, members of Active and Reserve military components and Veterans Service Organizations, all of whom are veteran or military affiliated; and

WHEREAS, These VETS staff would be unable to fully participate in, nor have the full confidence and credibility with the Veterans Service Organizations; and

WHEREAS, These VETS staff would not have the credibility of the shared active military service or transition experience for active duty, for which VETS has the responsibility for program delivery leadership; and

WHEREAS, For more than 25 years, the VETS staff have, by Title 38, USC, Chapter 41, been required to be veterans; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion finds it inconceivable that Congress would not find "Veterans serving Veterans" to be the most appropriate manner of delivering these

critical services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek and support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, to require Veterans Employment and Training Service Regional Administrators, State Directors and Assistant State Directors and "other professional staff" under VETS to be veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Resolution No. 289: Support Improvements Of Veterans' Employment And Training Service (VETS) Performance Standards
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 46 (UT) and Resolution No. 343 (IL))

WHEREAS, Federal law required the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to establish performance standards for evaluating state employment services for veterans; and

WHEREAS, The General Accounting Office (GAO) publicly criticized VETS because its current performance standards focus more on process than on results; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Labor's 1997 Annual Report showed that while nine states met that agency's performance standards, they placed fewer than 10 percent of veteran registrants; and

WHEREAS, A 1997 report by GAO indicated that 18 states placed fewer than one-in-five veterans who came to the State Employment Service Agencies for assistance; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion finds these statistics unacceptable; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek and support a revision of existing Veterans' Employment and Training Service reporting requirements for measuring performance standards and for determining compliance with requirements for providing employment services to veterans.

Resolution No. 292: Support Licensure And Certification Of Active-Duty Service Personnel
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 45 (UT) and Resolution No. 342 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel; and

WHEREAS, DoD establishes, measures and evaluates performance standards for every occupation with the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupational career fields in the armed forces can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; and

WHEREAS, There are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, In the armed forces, these unique occupations are performed to approved military standards that may meet or exceed the civilian license or certification

criteria; and

WHEREAS, Upon separation, many former military personnel, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement; and

WHEREAS, This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service; and

WHEREAS, A study by the Presidential Commission on Servicemembers' and Veterans' Transition Assistance identified a total of 105 military professions where civilian credentialing is required; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill was authorized to pay up to $2,000 for the cost of each credentialing examination for eligible service members; and

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill is not authorized to pay for civilian licenses or to pay for necessary preparatory course work for the credentialing examinations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense take appropriate steps to ensure that service members be trained, tested, evaluated and issued any licensure or certification that may be required in the civilian workforce; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support making the Montgomery GI Bill eligibility available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Resolution No. 295: Support Priority Of Service For Veterans In All State Employment Services Agencies' (SESA) One-Stop Centers

Origin: Alabama

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 41 (UT) and Resolution No. 338 (IL))

WHEREAS, Priority of service is a practice prescribed by the Department of Labor (DOL) as a means of fulfilling the mandate of Title 38, United States Code (USC) to provide veterans with the maximum of employment and training opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Priority of service is defined and practiced as "the provision of services to veterans before the provision of such services to non-veterans"; and

WHEREAS, DOL is moving toward a One-Stop Center operation in each state; and

WHEREAS, Priority of service to veterans, as outlined by law (Title 38, USC, and 20 CFR), will be satisfied with the Federally funded service provider, so that each eligible veteran is afforded the full array of services in order to obtain meaningful employment; and

WHEREAS, The full array of services include, but are not limited to: job search workshops; labor market information; resume development; interviewing techniques; classroom training; support services; job restructuring; job referrals; vocational training;

career counseling; job placement; employer information; case management; skills enhancement; selective placement; job development; child care information; temporary housing assistance; transportation assistance and discharge upgrade assistance; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the majority of these services are provided by the SESA's staff, to include the Veterans' Employment and Training Services' (VETS') employment professionals-Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms support for priority of service for veterans, as outlined in Title 38, United States Code; and be it further

RESOLVED, That any agency provided Federal funding to provide veterans' employment and training services must adhere to priority of service, as outlined in Title 38, USC; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representatives continue to provide veterans' employment and training services within every State; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That all Department of Labor One-Stop Centers work with the Veterans' Employment and Training Service to ensure the operations of the One-Stop Centers meet or exceed the federally mandated priority of service for eligible veterans.

Resolution No. 296: Support The Development Of Veterans On-The-Job Training Opportunities

Origin: Alabama

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 65 (UT) and Resolution No. 362 (IL))

WHEREAS, In years past there have been special employment initiatives for employment of veterans; and

WHEREAS, One was the Servicemembers Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA), and the other was the Veteran's Job Training Act (VJTA); and

WHEREAS, These programs were designed to provide financial incentives for employers to hire certain categories of veterans and have expired; and

WHEREAS, These were highly successful programs because employers were able to defray some costs associated with training these veterans; and

WHEREAS, There have been numerous changes to the Montgomery G.I. Bill (MGIB) making it easier for veterans to obtain higher education and even a license or certification; and

WHEREAS, The MGIB can be a useful tool to help employers defray the costs of training of veterans by developing an on-the-job training (OJT) program thereby benefitting both the veteran and employer; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support the development of an outreach program to veterans and employers to develop on-the-job training (OJT) programs for eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the development of joint projects to enhance OJT opportunities for eligible veterans through the Montgomery GI Bill.

Resolution No. 297: Support The National Veterans' Training Institute
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 47 (UT) and Resolution No. 344 (IL))

WHEREAS, Public Law 100-323 established the National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) as the primary training center for veterans' employment program staff and state employment security agency staff nationwide; and

WHEREAS, NVTI has provided several thousand training sessions for State Employment Security Agency staff, Veterans' Employment and Training Service staff and Department of Defense staff; and

WHEREAS, NVTI provides standardized training for veterans' advocates providing employment and training services; and

WHEREAS, NVTI's positive impact on the quality of services, provides veterans with well-trained vocational specialists across the country; and

WHEREAS, NVTI's annual budget continues to be flat-lined; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms continued support of full funding of the National Veterans' Training Institute.

Resolution No. 298: Urge State Employment Security Agencies To Report Veterans' Wages At Placement
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 60 (UT) and Resolution No. 357 (IL))

WHEREAS, Employment services for veterans vary greatly from one area of the country to the next; and

WHEREAS, This uneven quality of employment services to unemployed veterans ranges from a veterans placement rate (veterans placed in jobs divided by veteran applicants) of an estimated low of six percent (6%) to a high of over twenty-five percent (25%), even among economically comparable areas; and

WHEREAS, Provisions of the "GI Bill" (codified at Chapter 41, Title 38, U.S. Code) clearly require the highest quality of employment assistance for all veterans who use the public employment service; and

WHEREAS, Possibly the single best key to the quality of job placement is wage received at placement, but the U.S. Department of Labor deleted this reporting requirement, relative to veterans only, a number of years ago; and

WHEREAS, The job-related characteristics of veteran state employment service applicants, such as attained education, are ordinarily superior to other applicants, but the fact that veterans' wages at placement are an unknown quantity, prevents comparison with other applicants, as well as comparison with the veteran's prior wage which could be recorded in the "Work History" section or other portion of the Job Service application; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) claims that there is a prohibitively high cost of future reporting on this single data item, wages of placed veterans, in spite of numerous data items already reported on veterans, as recorded in DOL report 9002; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the State Employment Security Agencies to voluntarily report separately on veterans' wages at placement; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Congress and the Department of Labor to arrange for such reporting by state and nationwide, through federal law or executive action.

Resolution No. 360: Veterans Hiring Preference From Employers With Federal Contracts Or Grants
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic (Employment and Veterans Preference)
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 33 (UT); Resolution No. 48 (UT); Resolution No. 62 (UT); Resolution No. 63 (UT); Resolution No. 264 (AL); Resolution No. 270 (AL); Resolution No. 299 (AL); Resolution No. 300 (AL); Resolution No. 301 (AL); Resolution No. 345 (IL); Resolution No. 359 (IL); Resolution No. 375 (IL); Resolution No. 379 (IL); and Resolution No. 381 (IL))

WHEREAS, The employment of veterans should be one of the highest priorities of the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Veterans do not receive preference from employers that receive grants from the federal government; and

WHEREAS, Veterans do not receive preference from employers that receive contracts on federally assisted projects and other target groups do receive special hiring consideration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seeks to ensure that veterans receive preference from employers with grants and contracts from the federal government and preference from employers that receive funding on all federally assisted projects.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 267 (AL): Applaud the Local Veterans Employment Representative Program On Its 60th Anniversary

Resolution No. 387 (IL): Applaud The Local Veterans Employment Representative Program On Its 60th Anniversary

Committee on Other Economic Matters
Approved

Resolution No. 31: Provide Payment Of Death Benefit If Montgomery GI Bill Is Not Used
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 278 (AL) and Resolution No. 382 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program, under Title 38, United States Code, Chapter 30, was established in 1984; and

WHEREAS, In addition to completing the minimum active duty service

requirement, eligibility for MGIB education assistance benefits requires the withholding of $1200 from an individual's base pay; and

WHEREAS, Following discharge or retirement, the veteran has ten years within which to use their education benefits; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported the enactment of PL 100-689, which authorizes VA to pay a Chapter 30 death benefit in the amount of $1200, if an individual who is entitled to MGIB benefits is unable to use his or her benefits due to death while on active duty or within one year of leaving active duty; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, Section 3017, to provide for payment of the $1200 death benefit during the 10 year eligibility period in the event of a catastrophic disability or death, not the result of the veteran's willful misconduct.

COMM CHRM SERCERCHI: Mr. Commander at this time I'd like to bring Al Robotti to the front for reading of resolutions.

...At this time Committeeman Robotti read the following:

Resolution No. 36: Qualified Veterans' Mortgage Bonds
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 71 (UT); Resolution No. 266 (AL); Resolution No. 279 (AL); and Resolution No. 378 (IL))

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion does hereby urge Congress to approve legislation to remove the discriminatory portion of the Internal Revenue Code in order that veterans serving after 1976 and their families might enjoy the same benefits as those who served earlier.

Resolution No. 66: Reaffirm Support Of The Small Business Administration's Office Of Veterans' Business Development
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 129 (MA); Resolution No. 282 (AL); Resolution No. 364 (IL); and Resolution No. 384 (IL))

WHEREAS, Assistance to veterans who have honorably served this country is a traditional veterans' benefit that dates back to the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Among veterans' benefits is assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small business; and

WHEREAS, Veteran-owned small businesses are good for the economy in the local community, state, and nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support the efforts of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach to veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans' Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its outreach goals.

Resolution No. 69: Delimiting Date For Using The GI Bill
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 269 (AL) and Resolution No. 367 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The intent of the Veterans G.I. Bill for education is primarily to assist veterans in retraining so that they may find productive jobs; and

WHEREAS, The delimiting date for using these benefits is ten years from separation from active-duty, which encourages recently separated veterans to complete formal education in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, The current job market requires highly trained individuals from accredited institutions; and

WHEREAS, There continues to be instability within the workforce due to technological advances that could make a vocation obsolete thus requiring retraining, well after the 10-year delimiting date; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support retaining the ten-year delimiting period for veterans to use Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs provide a waiver to any eligible veteran beyond the ten-year limit on a case-by-case basis.

Resolution No. 73: Funding For Homeless Programs
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 272 (AL) and Resolution No. 371 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has passed legislation to fund the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, the Homeless Domiciliary Care Program and the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) rehabilitation program; and

WHEREAS, Some of these programs have been in partnership with veterans service organizations and other non-profit organizations; and

WHEREAS, There are estimates ranging from 250,000 to one million veterans who are homeless; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been an active partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs with the Health Care for Homeless Veterans and CWT programs; and

WHEREAS, These programs have proved to be successful in rehabilitation of the veteran in helping him/her to become a productive citizen again; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion renew its commitment to assisting homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to support the efforts of public and private sector agencies and organizations with the resources necessary to aid homeless veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall call on the Congress of the United States to keep the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program, the Homeless Domiciliary program and the Compensated Work Therapy Rehabilitation program funded separately from general United States Department of Veterans Affairs funding.

Resolution No. 75: Reimbursement For Correspondence And Distance Learning Courses
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 283 (AL) and Resolution No. 373 (IL))

WHEREAS, Approximately 1.5 million veterans have chosen to study via correspondence training since 1970; and

WHEREAS, The current GI Bill does not meet the needs of many eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, During the early 1970s veterans were reimbursed for 90% of the cost of their tuition; and

WHEREAS, Today veterans enrolled in correspondence courses are reimbursed only 55% of their total course tuition; and

WHEREAS, The average total cost of an accredited correspondence course is just over $1,000, making it the most cost effective method of education today; and

WHEREAS, Correspondence training is often the only educational opportunity available to veterans who are homebound, hospitalized, incarcerated or living in a rural area where no colleges or schools are within reach; and

WHEREAS, Accredited correspondence institutions offer valuable, salable vocational and professional skills in such in-demand fields as computer programming,

health care topics, management, electronics technology, and hundreds of other jobs that will help our nation's deserving veterans get better jobs faster and with up-to-date training delivered with convenience and flexible learning techniques such as Internet-based education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly supports an effort to amend Title 38 to restore the reimbursement rate for correspondence and distance learning training to 90% of tuition.

Resolution No. 76: Homestead Privilege To Veterans
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 274 (AL) Resolution No. 374 (IL))

WHEREAS, Since the Revolutionary War America has honored her veterans by granting them homestead acreage because of their service to our country; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering granting Alaskan Native Vietnam veterans limited rights to obtain public land allotment; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are the most homeless group of the population that ever existed in our country; and

WHEREAS, Our federal government has ample public lands available to grant veterans homestead lots; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That Congress be petitioned to open up homestead privileges to United States military veterans on a priority basis.

Resolution No. 82: Assistance To American Legion Posts Helping Homeless Veterans
Origin: New Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters

WHEREAS, The plight of the homeless veteran still exists in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, There is inadequate or misguided assistance available to veterans' organizations; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Posts are closer to the problem than any State or Federal agency; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That monies be made available to American Legion Posts to help the homeless veteran; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That monies be available by Congress through the State Veterans agencies and made to individual Posts.

Resolution No. 131: Support Preference For Veteran Owned Businesses
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 67 (UT); Resolution No. 294 (AL); and Resolution No. 365 (IL))

WHEREAS, Assistance to veterans who have honorably served our country is a veteran's benefit that dates back to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944; and

WHEREAS, Benefits to veterans have always included assistance in creating and operating veteran-owned small business; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourage the Congress of the United States to require a reasonable set-aside of federal procurements and contracts for businesses owned and operated by veterans and for those veterans' businesses affected by base closing and reduction in our military forces.

Resolution No. 140: Support The Small Business Loan Program In VA
Origin: Massachusetts
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 74 (UT); Resolution No. 271 (AL); and Resolution No. 372 (IL))

WHEREAS, Small business is the backbone of the American economy; and

WHEREAS, More than nine out of every ten businesses are small firms which produce almost one-half of the Gross National Product; and

WHEREAS, Over one-half of the nation's work force is employed by small business, with the average company employing approximately 11 persons; and

WHEREAS, America has benefitted immeasurably from the service of its 27 million living veterans who made great sacrifices in the defense of freedom, the preservation of democracy, and the protection of the free enterprise system; and

WHEREAS, Reliable sources have estimated that 20 percent of all small businesses are owned and operated by veterans; and

WHEREAS, Because of the status of the economy over the past few years, many thousands of workers have lost their jobs through no fault of their own and have been unsuccessful in finding new employment; and

WHEREAS, This country's unemployment problem is being exacerbated by the downsizing of the military because many of those leaving the service are from the combat arms and may not have job skills that are readily transferable to the civilian labor market; and

WHEREAS, One way of combating unemployment is through the creation of new jobs; and

WHEREAS, Government can help to create new jobs by encouraging qualified entrepreneurs to start new small businesses; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who want to become entrepreneurs either do not qualify for the direct or guaranteed loan through the Small Business Administration (SBA), or do not apply for such a loan because of the red tape involved in obtaining an SBA loan; and

WHEREAS, Congress passed legislation in the early 1980s that amended Chapter 37 of Title 38, United States Code, to establish a pilot Veterans' Small Business Loan Program that was to be administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, The VA's Small Business Loan Program was never funded and was allowed to sunset on September 30, 1986; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who want to become entrepreneurs could realize their dreams of going into business if the VA's Small Business Loan Program is authorized it will help to cushion the impact of the downsizing of the military by creating a million new jobs over the next five years; and

WHEREAS, The VA estimates that if its Small Business Loan Program is reauthorized, it should be opened to post-Vietnam-era veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek and support legislation that would reauthorize and fund a VA Small Business Loan Program for disabled, Vietnam-era and post Vietnam-era Veterans.

Resolution No. 273: Home Loan Guaranty Program
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Other Economic Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 363 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (P. L.346, 78th Congress) established, among other things, a home loan guaranty program that was to be administered by the Veterans Administration, which later became the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA); and

WHEREAS, The two purposes of the original program were to help returning World War II veterans in their readjustment to civilian life and to stimulate the economy by assisting those veterans in obtaining mortgage financing from the private sector; and

WHEREAS, Because of the popularity and success of the DVA Loan Guaranty Program, and because it benefitted the American economy as well as eligible veterans, Congress decided to make that five-year pilot program permanent; and

WHEREAS, To date the DVA has guaranteed 17 million loans to eligible veterans and has, for the most part, maintained a default rate that compares very favorably with the default rate on private sector mortgages; and

WHEREAS, While many of the veterans who have participated in this program could have obtained private sector financing, many others could not have qualified for conventional mortgages; and

WHEREAS, Congress has made numerous changes over the years in attempts to improve this VA program, including authorizing certain pilot programs; and

WHEREAS, In 1992 Congress authorized DVA to conduct a three-year pilot program which allowed VA to guarantee Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMs); and

WHEREAS, During that three-year period the DVA's ARM program became very popular and accounted for approximately 22 percent of all loans guaranteed by the DVA; and

WHEREAS, One of the attractive features of an ARM is that it allows the borrower to obtain a home loan with an interest rate below that of a normal fixed rate loan, thus allowing that person to select the financing option that best suits their needs; and

WHEREAS, Because the DVA's ARM program was underwritten much more conservatively than ARMs available in the conventional market, very few loans went into default; and

WHEREAS, Although the DVA and Congress were in favor of making the program permanent, the Congressional Budget Office blocked a permanent extension because it believed that the cost would be $36 million per year, even though the DVA had proven that it could run that program at a lower cost; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirm its strong support for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Loan Guaranty Service and its Programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to reinstate the Department of Veterans Affairs' Adjustable Rate Mortgage program; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support any administrative and/or legislative efforts that will improve and strengthen the Loan Guaranty Service's ability to serve America's veterans.

COMMan ROBOTTI: And now I would like to turn this other part of the program to Mr. Christoffersen.

...At this time Committeeman Christoffersen read the following:

Resolution No. 280: Raise Ceiling On VA Home Loans For Two Legally Married Eligible Veterans
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 32 (UT); Resolution No. 311 (IL); and Resolution No. 383 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans dedicated to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion advocates a comprehensive Home Loan Guaranty Program; and

WHEREAS, Real estate prices in certain parts of the country far exceed the maximum VA home loan amount of $240,000; and

WHEREAS, Two veterans married to each other each having entitlement in their own right to a VA home loan are limited to the single person entitlement ceiling if they purchase a home together; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall support legislation to recognize the entitlement of each eligible veteran in a marriage and that the ceiling on VA home loans match the maximum existing rate for a Fannie Mae home loan for two eligible veterans who are legally married.

Resolution No. 285: Home Loan Guaranty Program
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 68 (UT) and Resolution No. 366 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration Home Loan Guaranty program has been in effect since 1944; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration Home Loan Guaranty program has afforded approximately 17 million veterans the opportunity to purchase homes; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Administration Home Loan Guaranty program offers veterans a centralized, affordable and accessible method of purchasing homes in return for their service to this nation; and

WHEREAS, Currently the loan guaranty limit is $252,500; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan Guaranty limit be raised to at least $300,000, and also be geographically adjusted as local market conditions require.

Resolution No. 293: Support Major Enhancements For The Montgomery GI Bill
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters

(As consolidated with Resolution No. 70 (UT); Resolution No. 145 (WA); and Resolution No. 368 (IL))

WHEREAS, The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill, served as the primary means for reintegrating millions of returning World War II veterans into American society; and

WHEREAS, The GI Bill was responsible for allowing returning World War II veterans and their families to achieve the American dream-an education, a home, a stable and profitable career, and ownership in their own businesses; and

WHEREAS, The original GI Bill benefits package returned to the United States Treasury many times the initial investment through increased tax collections and is considered by many experts as the greatest piece of social legislation ever enacted; and

WHEREAS, The current veterans' educational benefit, the Montgomery GI Bill, has failed to keep pace with escalating educational costs and is significantly diminished in relation to the unique educational benefits offered in the original GI Bill; and

WHEREAS, Today's military educational benefits package directly competes with other federally funded educational programs, such as AmeriCorps, Pell Grants and others that offer equal or greater monetary benefits with less personal sacrifice and hardship; and

WHEREAS, The veterans' educational benefits package for the 21st Century must be designed to recruit outstanding individuals to meet the needs of the United States Armed Forces and to serve as a successful transition instrument from military service back into the civilian workforce; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support passage of major enhancements to the current All-Volunteer Force Education Assistance Program, better known as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB); and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the dollar amount of the entitlement should be indexed to the average cost of college education including tuition, fees, textbooks and other supplies for a commuter student at an accredited university, college or trade school for which they qualify; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the educational cost index should be reviewed and adjusted annually; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a monthly tax-free subsistence allowance indexed for inflation must be part of the educational assistance package; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That enrollment in the MGIB shall be automatic upon enlistment, however, benefits will not be awarded unless eligibility criteria have been met; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the current military payroll deduction ($1200) required for enrollment in MGIB must be terminated; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That if a veteran enrolled in the MGIB acquired educational loans prior to enlisting in the Armed Forces, MGIB benefits may be used to repay existing educational loans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That if a veteran enrolled in the MGIB becomes eligible for training and rehabilitation under Chapter 31 of Title 38, United States Code, the veteran shall not receive less educational benefits than otherwise eligible to receive under MGIB; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a veteran may request an accelerated payment of all monthly educational benefits upon meeting the criteria for eligibility for MGIB

financial payments, with the payment provided directly to the educational institution; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That separating service members and veterans seeking a license or credential must be able to use MGIB educational benefits to pay for the cost of taking any written or practical test or other measuring device; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That eligible veterans shall have 10 years after discharge to utilize MGIB educational benefits.

Resolution No. 302: Veterans Preference For Housing In The Department Of Housing And Urban Development
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 72 (UT) and Resolution No. 370 (IL))

WHEREAS, There are nearly 12,000,000 living American veterans over the age of 60; and

WHEREAS, Because many of those veterans are living on fixed incomes, it is often difficult if not impossible for them to provide adequate housing for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) operates affordable housing programs for senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, Many needy and deserving veterans are unable to participate in those housing programs because of long waiting lists; and

WHEREAS, A large percentage of those occupying HUD housing are legal and illegal aliens who have never served this country's armed forces; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports any legislative or administrative initiative that will give preference to American veterans and their families in obtaining housing through the programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Resolution No. 303: Veterans Small Business Opportunities
Origin: Alabama
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Economic and Other Matters
(As consolidated with Resolution No. 29 (UT) and Resolution No. 384 (IL))

WHEREAS, Small business ownership and entrepreneurship are the backbone of the American economy and foundation for democracy; and

WHEREAS, Veterans, through their service, have cultivated experiences, skills, and self-discipline that make them well suited for self-employment; and

WHEREAS, Congress enacted the Veterans Small Business and Entrepreneurship Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-50) to assist veteran and service-disabled veteran owned businesses by creating the National Veterans Business Development Corporation; and

WHEREAS, The National Veterans Business Development Corporation has created a veterans Entrepreneurial Training (VET) Program to promote and foster successful veteran entrepreneurship within the veteran business community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support the statutory requirements of the Veterans Small Business and Entrepreneurship Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-50) and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation in their endeavors to provide small business

opportunities to veterans.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Economics
Resolution No. 369 (IL): Home Loan Program Extended To Lebanon, Grenada, Panama And Persian Gulf Veterans
Resolution No. 388 (IL): Homeless Veterans Outreach Awards

COMMan CHRISTOFFERSEN: Mr. Commander I will now turn it back over to the Chairman of the Committee.

COMM CHRM SERCERCHI: Members of the National Executive Committee, Delegates of the 86th Convention, this concludes the Report of Economic Matters. As a duly registered Delegate from the Department of Maine, I move for the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL VICE COMDR DENBOW: Hearing a second, all in favor indicate by the usual sign. 'Aye.' All opposed. The Report of Economics is adopted.

Presentation: Employer of the Year Awards for Hiring Veterans
Richard G. Denbow, IA, National Vice Commander

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

We recognize three such organizations as 2003 Employers of the Year. One award is for companies employing 50 or less people. Another for companies employing 51 to 200 people. And the third for the company which employees more than 200 workers. Each is nominated by a Post and advances through Department and National competition levels.

The Employer of the Year Award in the 200 plus category goes to the Wheatland Tube Company of Wheatland, Pennsylvania. Here to accept the award is William Kerns, President of the Operation.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans, 2003. Presented to the Wheatland Tube Company for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 86th Annual National Convention, Nashville, Tennessee, August 27, 2004.

MR. WILLIAM KERINS: On behalf of Wheatland Tube Company, a 127-year old family owned American business, I'm both proud and humbled to receive this award. Proud to receive it and be recognized by your distinguished organization, and humbled because we feel in receiving the award we're doing simply what every good corporate citizen should do, and that is provide job opportunities and job preferences for our veterans.

...Natl Comdr Brieden resumes the Chair.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The award in the 51 to 200 category goes to Wackenhut Service, Incorporated of Spring Lake, North Carolina. Accepting the award is James Waddell, Assistant Project Manager.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2003. Presented to Wackenhut Service, Incorporated, for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 86th Annual National Convention, Nashville, Tennessee, August 27, 2004.

MR. JAMES WADDELL: I accept this plaque on behalf of all the veterans that work for our organization, and all other organizations. We employ 98 percent veterans at our location. I really appreciate the dedication they do for our duty and other organizations. I really appreciate The American Legion for giving me this honor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: And the award in the 50 employees or less category goes to Anderson Iron Works, Incorporated of Post Falls, Idaho. Accepting the award is Norm Anderson, Owner.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Employer of Veterans 2003. Presented to Anderson Iron Works for an exceptional record in the employment of veterans. Presented at the 86th Annual National Convention, Nashville, Tennessee, August 27, 2004.

MR. NORM ANDERSON: This is quite an honor. I just really appreciate it.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: On behalf of every veteran in America, I extend to you our congratulations and say the words that all workers love to hear: Thanks for a job well done.

We're certain you will keep hiring veterans and please tell other businesses about the reliability and the work ethics of veterans. Thank you all and congratulations again.

Presentation: American Legion Local Veteran's Employment Representative of the Year Award
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

Another employment award that I'm honored to present goes to the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER). The award honors an individual who has done such a remarkable job of placing veterans in jobs that even their peers take notice.

The Employment Service Award to the Local Veterans Employment Representative for 2003 goes to Claud Miller, Anniston, Alabama.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year 2003. Presented to Claud Miller for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Alabama.

MR. CLAUD MILLER: The man in charge of the music, don't you know Sweet Home Alabama? (Laughter.)

I tell you what, folks, there's a theme running through this meeting. I've heard it since I've checked in here; I've thought it; I know you have thought it. You're all thinking: Where am I at? Where's my room? Ask somebody where we're at. I'm afraid to leave my room at night to get ice because I know it will be water when I get back. (Laughter and applause.)I went out last night and found my picture on a milk carton. (Laughter.)

I work only with military veterans, that's all I work for. By the way, if you see anybody from the Alabama Delegation trying to sneak out, jump on them. They've heard

me before.

There are two things you must do to help the veteran. One, is send them down to the local employment service because there will be a vet there to help them. Two, is send them to The American Legion; sign them up. When people leave the military today a lot of them have no idea what their benefits are. That's my job to tell them what the benefits are. Do you know there's one benefit that is not written down anywhere. You serve in the military, you can join The American Legion. Whether they want to or not, you put them in, right?

Remember, who can help a vet but another vet. So, help those folks any way you can. Make their path a little bit easier than the path you traveled.

Presentation: Disabled Veterans Outreach Program of the Year Award
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

The American Legion is also proud of the men and women who work on behalf of disabled veterans seeking employment. This year, I'm happy to present the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Employee of the Year Award to Jim Balog of Helena, Montana.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award for Outstanding DVOP of the Year 2003. Presented to Jim Balog, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist, Helena, Montana for your outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Montana.

MR. JIM BALOG: I thank the Legion and the Delegation of Montana for supporting me up here. One thing I heard in the resolutions being passed earlier was the magnificent support you have for our jobs. I know The American Legion was responsible for us being here; being out in the field, so to speak, at the job services. And I appreciate your efforts to keep us out there on the street where we need to be and not back at VA where they would like to have us nowadays.

So, again, for all the veterans that we serve, and all other DVOPs, other LVERs out there who work with veterans everyday, I thank you for this award.

Presentation: Employment Service Office of The Year
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

Continuing with our recognition of those who assist our fellow veterans in finding meaningful work, it's time to honor the top Employment Service Office of the Year. The award goes to the Pocatello Job Service Office of Pocatello, Idaho. Accepting the award is Sarah Jackson, Office Manager.

ANNOUNCER: The award reads: The American Legion National Award to the Outstanding Employment Service Office of the Year for 2003, is presented to the Pocatello Job Service Office for outstanding service to the veterans of the State of Idaho. Accepting the award is Sarah Jackson, Office Manager for the Pocatello Job Service Office.

MS. SARAH JACKSON: I'd like to thank you on behalf of all the dedicated staff in our office, our local veterans employment representative, and our Disabled Veterans

Outreach Person. We are there to serve veterans because you have served us.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you to all of our winners of employment awards. We thank you and keep up the good work.

The Chair now recognizes Joe Caouette of New Hampshire, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Americanism for the purpose of a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Americanism
Joseph Caouette, New Hampshire, Chairman

Forty-nine members of your Convention Committee on Americanism met at 8:30 am on Sunday, August 29, 2004, in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss matters of Americanism-related resolutions assigned to the committee.

The committee organized by electing Joseph E. Caouette, Jr. (NH), Chairman; Ted Howarth, Jr. (NJ), Vice Chairman; and Ralph A. Bozella (CO) as the Secretary.

The committee discussed 47 resolutions that were assigned to the group. The resolutions that were considered continue to reflect the desire by the Departments of The American Legion to address matters of patriotism and government, and to maintain strong general Americanism programs that compliment the organization and benefit the Nation.

A motion was made by Rick Holloway (TX) and seconded by Ted Howarth, Jr. (NJ) that the Convention Committee on Americanism authorize the chairman and secretary to sign and deliver the report, on behalf of the committee, to the National Convention. The motion was approved.

Forty seven resolutions were considered with 23 being approved, 5 being approved as consolidated, 5 received and recorded, 12 referred to the standing commissions, and 2 rejected.

Approved

Resolution No. 406: Internal Security Of The United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always recognized the importance of investigations that expose the truth about subversive activities that may harm or seek to destroy our constitutional government; and

WHEREAS, The Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, both security agencies of this Nation, perform functions essential to the maintenance of our national security; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supports the thorough background investigation of all applicants for federal employment to expose possible links to subversive activities or membership in subversive organizations that contribute to the weakening of the internal security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress of the United States to immediately take such action as may be appropriate and necessary to effectively fund and staff federal intelligence and security agencies at a level that will help protect us from foreign espionage, organized crime, terrorism and subversive activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President and the Congress

of the United States to approve legislation and take executive action as necessary to deny subversive individuals or groups the ability to infiltrate and subsequently destroy our government agencies and institutions through federal employment.

Resolution No. 407: The English Language Be Declared As The Official United States Language
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The United States has over the many years been a haven and in most cases a new home for people of many ethnic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, These people, although keeping their ethnic background alive, were urged to take advantage of the educational system that taught them the English language and American history; and

WHEREAS, Many permanent residents and new citizens, although clinging to their ethnic backgrounds did with pride take advantage of learning the language of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Bilingual programs funded by the Department of Education are designed to teach with the primary instruction in the student's home language, while English is subjected to a secondary status; and

WHEREAS, These programs tend to encourage separatism, rather than a unification of purpose; and

WHEREAS, There exists alternative bilingual education programs which provide a more efficient transition to proficiency in the English language; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages legislation which would establish English as the official national language; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to designate English as the official language of government in the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve proficiency in the English language.

Resolution No. 408: Return Patriotic Holidays To Traditional Dates
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The dates of certain patriotic holidays have been changed from their original dates to create "three-day weekends"; and

WHEREAS, The time-honored traditional observances of these holidays has been eroded; and

WHEREAS, The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation; and

WHEREAS, By urging the ringing of bells in our communities for one minute on traditional Memorial Day, May 30, it will help Americans to realize that the true purpose

of this day is to pay tribute to those who have given so much for their country; and

WHEREAS, Our hope for the future has been made possible because our servicemen and women have made sacrifices in order to secure freedom for America and the ringing of community bells is a fitting way to observe traditional Memorial Day in the years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion calls upon the Congress of the United States to restore the official observance of Lincoln's Birthday to February 12, Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on the traditional Memorial Day, May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.

Resolution No. 409: English Language Be Used In Naturalization Ceremonies
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Resolution No. 567, entitled, "Naturalization Ceremony," was passed by delegates to the 56th annual National Convention of The American Legion in 1974 and opposed any change in the Judicial Naturalization Ceremony for new United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, naturalization ceremonies have been conducted in foreign languages; and

WHEREAS, Several resolutions have been passed by The American Legion which urged Congress and the various state legislatures to declare the English language as the official language of government in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amendments to the Immigration and Naturalization Act makes the traditional naturalization ceremony conducted in a U.S. District Court optional and allows naturalization by mail, thereby removing an integral and indelible step in the naturalization process; and

WHEREAS, Legionnaires and Posts of The American Legion have traditionally participated in naturalization ceremonies as part of the Legion's Americanism program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to repeal that portion of Title 8, USC, Sec. 1448, that makes the court ceremony optional for naturalization and reinstate language that makes a naturalization ceremony in a U.S. District Court a mandatory step in the process of acquiring U.S. citizenship; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges Congress, the U.S. Justice Department and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services of the Department of Homeland Security to require that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies be conducted in the English language.

Resolution No. 411: Immigration Reform
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The inability and/or unwillingness of certain government agencies to enforce immigration quotas, laws and policies has resulted in an influx of illegal immigrants into this country; and

WHEREAS, The former Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) Statistics Division reported that approximately one fourth of the federal prison population is foreign-born and about 1.5 million apprehensions of illegal aliens occur each year along the southern border of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Many illegal aliens resort to document fraud to establish their employability, their residency and eligibility for this country's social services, often displacing U.S. workers; and

WHEREAS, The United States has no centralized database for determining eligibility for employment and social services by immigrants; and

WHEREAS, According to the National Academy of Sciences, each native household in the United States has to pay $166 to $266 a year to support those immigrant households; and

WHEREAS, The federal government has failed to mandate the enforcement of existing immigration laws; and

WHEREAS, On March 1, 2003, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ceased to exist and its responsibilities were incorporated into the new Department of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States, state governments, the U.S. Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take necessary action to stop the massive flow of illegal immigration into this country by means that include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Hire and train additional U.S. Border Patrol agents with employment preference afforded former members of the United States Armed Forces; and**
2. **Encourage the United States Congress to require the Department of Homeland Security to work with state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce immigration laws in this country; and**
3. **Require that all legal aliens carry U.S. Government issued identification documents that are made as secure as technology allows and that are verifiable by any employer or benefit agency through an easy-to-access central database; and**
4. **Petition the President of the United States and the Congress to enact measures to effectively halt the smuggling of illegal immigrants into this country; and**
5. **Grant law enforcement agencies at the local, state and federal levels the authority to work together to apprehend and incarcerate, where appropriate, illegal immigrants, especially those determined to have ties to terrorist groups and organizations; and**
6. **That, as appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into this country, and all of the resources of the United States of America be utilized to enforce the security of our country's**

borders; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion initiate an information campaign to alert its members, federal and state elected officials, and the general public of the massive influx into the country of illegal immigrants, the consequences of mass immigration and how it will affect the standards of living in these United States.

Resolution No. 412: Injured Or Disabled Non-Citizen Veterans Applying For Naturalization
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, During our Nation's call to arms in the preservation of our liberty, our Nation has been blessed with the services of individuals from many nations who cherish liberty; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has recognized that through service in our Armed Forces these servicemen have forged a bond with our Country; and

WHEREAS, Under the present Immigration and Nationality Act the non-citizen soldier is allowed to apply for naturalization only upon completion of three (3) years of active duty; and

WHEREAS, Some non-citizen servicemen were injured or became disabled while on active duty and were medically discharged from the Armed Forces for said injuries or medical conditions prior to the completion of three years of active duty service; and

WHEREAS, Admitting men and women with service-connected disabilities into the U.S. does not increase the taxpayer's obligation, since all U. S. veterans, without regard to their citizenship or residence, are currently entitled to both disability compensation and medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support legislation that will amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow non-citizen veterans with less than three years of active duty and who were legally in the United States at the time of enlistment, to seek naturalization if they are injured or their injuries aggravated while on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces, resulting in a discharge under honorable conditions.

Resolution No. 413: School Prayer
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Americans have historically believed in seeking God's protection and guidance through prayer; and

WHEREAS, The value of expressing spiritual convictions through public prayer has been recognized as a firm basis on which to conduct public proceedings; and

WHEREAS, Supreme Court decisions during the early 1960s have had the effect of severely restricting the practice of any manner of public prayer even though these decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer; and

WHEREAS, This restriction is most evident in our nation's public schools where a concurrent moral and spiritual decline is clearly manifested; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms its support for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States that would permit voluntary prayer in public buildings, including public schools and at

other public gatherings; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress pass legislation to promote the concept of school prayer in order to ensure that our Nation's public school children have a daily opportunity to pray.

Resolution No. 430: Award Medal Of Honor To The Four Chaplains
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, On the frigid night of February 3, 1943, at approximately 12:55 a.m., the United States troop transport ship *Dorchester*, was torpedoed 150 miles off the coast of Greenland throwing the total ship into complete darkness amid shrieks of escaping steam and the frantic cries for help; and

WHEREAS, The Four Chaplains—Lieutenants John P. Washington, Clark V. Poling, George L. Fox and Alexander Goode—moved quickly among the bewildered troops, calming them and directing them to lifeboats and urging and assisting them to escape the quickly sinking vessel; and

WHEREAS, When there were no more life jackets available, the four chaplains aforesaid took off their own life jackets and made others accept them and use them in escaping the sinking vessel and, further, the four chaplains remained on the ship's slanted aft deck with arms linked together, heads bowed in prayer as the *Dorchester* slipped beneath the waves; and

WHEREAS, By their heroic actions, these four chaplains have become a legend with memorials to "their three faiths and one God" arising around this nation to promote brotherhood, to fight bigotry, and to encourage interfaith and interracial unity; and

WHEREAS, By these actions and in the sacrifice of their own lives they have become a beacon of faith for the people of this country to emulate with their traits of compassion and understanding based upon interracial and interfaith lessons as illustrated by the personal action of the four chaplains and is the basis for building bridges of understanding among all people of different faiths, religious and racial backgrounds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the awarding of the Medal of Honor to U. S. Army Chaplains, Lt. John P. Washington, Lt. Clark V. Poling, Lt. George L. Fox and Lt. Alexander D. Goode, for their heroism which cost them their lives on the night of February 3, 1943.

Resolution No. 414: Constitutional Amendment To Protect The Flag Of The United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion has campaigned diligently for the passage of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect the symbol of our Nation, the Flag of the United States, from physical desecration; and

WHEREAS, Part of that campaign has included the founding of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc., a coalition of 145 civic, veteran, business and fraternal organizations which have come together to persuade Congress to propose a flag protection constitutional amendment; and

WHEREAS, The legislatures of all 50 states have indicated by memorial resolutions to the U.S. Congress that such an amendment to the U.S. Constitution is needed in view

of the 1989 decision of the United States Supreme Court (Texas v. Johnson) that invalidated all flag protection laws; and

WHEREAS, Surveys have shown that over 80% of the American people support the passage of a constitutional amendment to protect the flag from desecration; and

WHEREAS, Since the time of the American Revolution millions of men and women have proudly defended our country under the "Stars & Stripes" and, as a last gesture of gratitude this emblem of our country is placed upon the coffin of veterans as a token of respect for services rendered to a grateful nation; and

WHEREAS, In the 108th Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a proposed flag protection amendment, 300-125, while the measure is pending action in the U.S. Senate where it has yet to reach the necessary two-thirds required to approve such an amendment to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continues to urge the Congress of the United States to propose and approve an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would allow the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the Flag of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue its efforts through affiliation with The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to bring to a successful conclusion the grassroots campaign to amend the Constitution of the United States of America in order to return to the people their right to protect the Flag from acts of physical desecration.

Resolution No. 416: Conscientious Objectors Tax Diversion
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States of America provides for the common defense of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms we enjoy and the security of our Nation that we desire rests on the individual determination of each of us to help preserve it; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in Congress that would allow conscientious objectors to elect to have their taxes spent for non-military purposes; and

WHEREAS, Implementation of such a practice could affect military strength and national security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges Congress to oppose legislation that would give conscientious objectors a voice in diverting monies from military spending.

Resolution No. 417: Oppose Changes To "Title V Of The Immigration And Nationality Act"
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, that includes Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act, has proven to be a valuable tool in keeping terrorists from our shores; and

WHEREAS, A most vital section of this law allows for the gathering of secret evidence that identifies the person as a terrorist or links the person to a known terrorist

organization or group; and

WHEREAS, Information obtained by the United States intelligence community on individuals identified as terrorists or having links to terrorist organizations were reportedly used in some INS administrative deportation hearings; and

WHEREAS, Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act authorized the use of evidence, the source of which must remain secret and allowed for the use of this secret evidence in INS administrative deportation hearings; and

WHEREAS, Revealing the sources of the secret evidence would compromise intelligence gathering methods, operations, personnel and jeopardize national security; and

WHEREAS, Denial of this vital evidence in administrative deportation hearings could result in known terrorists remaining in the United States, posing a threat to our national security; and

WHEREAS, There is proposed legislation before Congress that would deny the opportunity to have this secret evidence presented at administrative deportation hearings; and

WHEREAS, On March 1, 2003, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ceased to exist and its responsibilities were incorporated into the new Department of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes any change to "Title V of the Immigration and Nationality Act" (8 U.S.C. 1531-1537) that would require revealing the source(s) of secret evidence used in the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, administrative deportation hearings; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Members of Congress be encouraged to resist all efforts to repeal or delete portions of this Act.

Resolution No. 418: Illegal Immigration Compromises National Security
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion and other veterans have risked their lives, all over the world, to help protect the freedom and security of the United States of America and its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The freedom, security and prosperity that Americans enjoy today was paid for by the heroism of millions of Americans who served in this nation's armed forces, many of whom sacrificed their lives so that others could live freely and without threats of aggression; and

WHEREAS, Terrorism is, and is likely to remain, one of the most serious threats to our national security and the safety of our citizens and threatens our freedom to move freely and safely within and across our international boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Our nation's intelligence agencies confirm the presence of large numbers of international terrorists and criminal organizations operating within our borders; and

WHEREAS, The Urban Institute estimates that there are at least 8 million people living illegally in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The identities and intentions of these illegal aliens are unknown to us; and

WHEREAS, Our country's enemies recognize and understand that our nation's

failure to control its borders or regulate the right to live in the United States is a weakness and have already, as in the case of the acts of terrorism committed on September 11, 2001, exploited that weakness with deadly consequences; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That this country's law enforcement agencies at the local, state and federal levels be empowered with the authority to apprehend and incarcerate individuals who are in this country illegally.

Resolution No. 419: Oppose Amnesty For Illegal Immigrants
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Consideration is being given to granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants currently in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, Any policy that leads to millions of illegal immigrants receiving legal permission to remain in the United States, whether such a policy is disguised in euphemistic language such as "legalization," "regularization," "a guest worker program," "earned status adjustment," or "earned access," is in fact an amnesty for having broken the laws of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Amnesty for illegal aliens will encourage still more people to immigrate illegally to this country and will further erode respect for the law; and

WHEREAS, The 1986 amnesty involving 2.7 million immigrants is estimated to have cost the American taxpayers $78 billion; and

WHEREAS, The amnesty proposals being contemplated today are much larger-encompassing some or all of the estimated nine to eleven million illegal immigrants living in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Because of existing "family reunification" policies that allow immigrants to bring extended family members to this country, an amnesty program could make millions more people eligible to immigrate in the coming decade and at much greater cost than that of the amnesty granted in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Neither the Administration or Congress have explained how a massive amnesty program for illegal immigrants will benefit the American public; and

WHEREAS, Numerous authoritative studies have shown that mass immigration has harmed the interests of millions of Americans, including veterans, by undercutting wages and working conditions, overburdening local schools, public health care facilities and other vital social institutions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes all legislation that would result in the granting of amnesty and legal residency, in any form or by any name, to millions of illegal immigrants currently in the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the federal government to provide the needed resources to enforcement agencies tasked with curtailing illegal immigration in this country.

Resolution No. 420: Oppose Financial Aid For Illegal Alien Students
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, "The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986" (IRCA) has not

achieved the results desired by The American Legion for addressing the many and varied problems created by the large number of illegal aliens in this country; and

WHEREAS, A 1996 analysis by the Center for Immigration Studies estimated the cost of the IRCA, after 10 years, at $76.7 billion for the 2.7 million illegal aliens granted amnesty representing a government (taxpayer) subsidy of $28,727 for each illegal alien; and

WHEREAS, Delegates to the Eighty-Fourth National Convention of The American Legion held in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27, 28 and 29, 2002, adopted Resolution No. 297, that stated, in part, that aliens illegally in the United States should be denied Social Security, unemployment, and other types of public assistance programs; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation would cancel deportation orders against and grant permanent residency (amnesty) to illegal aliens under the age of 21, who have been in the United States for five consecutive years and who have been enrolled in a middle or secondary school in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Certain members of Congress have attempted to amend the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), to allow illegal aliens to attend state universities at in-state tuition rates; and

WHEREAS, Such legislation would place American citizens at a comparative disadvantage by allowing illegal aliens to receive in-state tuition rates, federal education grants and financial assistance while American citizens have to pay higher out of state tuition rates if they are not residents of the state in which they attend a state institution of higher education; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that "rewarding" illegal aliens with amnesty and financial aid will increase the flow of illegal aliens into the United States increasing the financial burden on law-abiding taxpayers who would ultimately pay for these services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes any legislation or executive order that would allow illegal aliens and others who are in this country illegally to receive in-state tuition rates, federal or other government education grants and or financial assistance to attend a college or university in the United States.

Resolution No. 421: Reform Of The Student Visa System
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Participants in both the 1993 and 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center were reportedly in the United States on student visas; and

WHEREAS, There are more than 589,841 foreign students in the United States, according to the Institute of International Education; and

WHEREAS, There is no active tracking system for determining whether those admitted as foreign students actually arrive at their chosen schools, whether they change their courses to study military technology, or whether they drop out but fail to leave the country; and

WHEREAS, After the 1993 attack, Congress required the former Immigration and Naturalization Service to develop a means to keep records of foreign students, and, specifically, their whereabouts; and

WHEREAS, The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was

developed to provide tracking, monitoring, and access to accurate and current information on non-immigrant students and exchange visitors; and

WHEREAS, SEVIS was designed to enable schools and program sponsors to transmit electronic information and event notifications via the Internet to the monitoring agencies of the federal government throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Many educators formerly opposed a similar program, but now support full implementation of the SEVIS program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to mandate that the former INS Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) or a similar program to track foreign students continue and be aggressively administered by the responsible agency of the federal government; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That institutions of higher education failing to cooperate with the federal government in monitoring and tracking foreign students be ineligible to receive federal student loan monies benefitting foreign students.

Resolution No. 422: Immigration Policy For The 21st Century
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, In 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act giving amnesty to all illegal aliens who had successfully evaded justice for four years or more or were illegally working in agriculture; and

WHEREAS, As a result of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, 2.7 million illegal aliens were admitted as legal immigrants to the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Census Bureau has reported that there are at least 8.7 million illegal aliens residing in the United States; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that, of those 8.7 million illegal aliens, 60 percent entered the country illegally while 40 percent entered legally and stayed (illegally) past the expiration date of their temporary visa; and

WHEREAS, There have been improvements in border security to impede the 60 percent who enter illegally but there has been little improvement in identifying the 40 percent who overstay their visa; and

WHEREAS, In theory, illegal aliens cannot get jobs or welfare in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Because of document fraud illegal aliens are able to work and receive government benefits unquestioned; and

WHEREAS, Document fraud is possible because the United States has no centralized database for determining an eligibility for work or welfare; and

WHEREAS, The cost of displacing American workers, the cost of giving welfare to illegal aliens, and the cost of providing them general services is an estimated $15 billion annually; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Congress of the United States be encouraged to adopt an immigration policy for the 21st century that will eliminate social, economic and population problems caused by rampant illegal immigration; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion reiterates its support for measures

that will:

1. **Limit legal immigration and eliminate illegal immigration;**
2. **Eliminate visa categories for adult offspring, siblings and the diversity visa program;**
3. **Restrict the eligibility of illegal aliens for publicly-funded assistance;**
4. **Implement a nationwide system for easily verifying authorization to work; and**
5. **Provide necessary resources for effective border management and interior enforcement.**

Resolution No. 423: Amend The "Temporary Protected Status" Portion Of The Immigration Act Of 1990
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is a classification granted to eligible nationals of designated countries who are temporarily present in the United States when natural disaster or political turmoil in their country interferes with their plans to return; and

WHEREAS, A person from a designated country who is in the United States is eligible to be granted TPS only by establishing that the designated country was the applicant's last place of habitual residence; and

WHEREAS, TPS beneficiaries are granted work authorization during the TPS period and for any extensions of the designation; and

WHEREAS, TPS was created by the Immigration Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, Anyone in the United States from the designated country is eligible for TPS, whether they entered the country in violation of our immigration law in order to find work or for other reasons, or violated the law by staying in the country and taking a job illegally, or were a bona fide visitor; and

WHEREAS, Sixteen countries were designated as TPS countries and TPS has expired for six of these countries and has not been extended; and

WHEREAS, Prior to being incorporated into the Department of Homeland Security, the Immigration and Naturalization Service reported that it had no record of the departure of any of the TPS recipients from those six countries and had not made any effort to inform those persons of their obligation to leave the country; and

WHEREAS, Conferring TPS status on persons illegally in the United States rewards them with a work permit that legitimizes their illegal activity; and

WHEREAS, Any person who can establish that they fear persecution if forced to return to their country of origin is eligible for asylum in the United States; and

WHEREAS, TPS allows aliens to live in the United States without our being able to learn their true identities or background information; and

WHEREAS, The events of September 11, 2001 have proven that we can no longer afford to accept people into our country without thorough background checks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Temporary Protected Status section of the Immigration Act of 1990 to limit its coverage to foreign visitors legally in the United States.

Resolution No. 424: Tracking Arrival And Departure Of Foreign Visitors To The United States
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Each day, foreign visitors flood our nation's ports of entry; and

WHEREAS, In the aftermath of terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, it was revealed that our government did not have the ability to determine when a foreign visitor leaves the United States or overstays their visa; and

WHEREAS, President Bush, during his 2002 State of the Union address, said that (we will) "use technology to track the arrivals and departures of visitors to the United States"; and

WHEREAS, The technology exists to place biometric information on visas to identify visitors, keep track of their entry and exit, and confirm compliance with the terms of their entry; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to provide agencies of the federal government with the necessary resources to track the arrival and departure of foreign visitors to the United States.

Resolution No. 425: Support Fairness For Immigrant Spouses
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The American Legion was founded by veterans who were concerned about the welfare of dependents of servicemen and women killed as a result of their service in World War I; and

WHEREAS, Current immigration law requires an immigrant spouse to be married to a citizen of the United States for two years before proceeding with a petition for legal permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The immigrant spouse's petition for permanent legal residence is canceled when the citizen spouse dies before the two-year threshold is reached; and

WHEREAS, Current law does not allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die while serving in hostile conflict to continue their original petition for permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is committed to caring for the families of the service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives in the furtherance of the interests of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow immigrant spouses of U.S. military personnel who die whether in training on military installations or overseas in hostile conflict to continue their petition for permanent resident status without the current two-year eligibility restriction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Immigration and Nationality Act be amended to waive the fees for posthumous citizenship assessed to surviving family members who lose a relative in hostile combat while a member of the U.S. Armed Forces and who has a pending application for United States citizenship.

Resolution No. 426: Reform Of The Non-Immigrant Visa Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The Non-Immigrant Visa Program has been used by terrorists and others with unlawful intentions to gain entry into the United States; and

WHEREAS, The fading distinction between the U.S. Non-Immigrant Visa (NIV) and Immigrant Visa (IV) programs has the potential to substantially undermine this country's legal immigration system; and

WHEREAS, The number of people from foreign lands admitted temporarily to this country under the NIV program over the past 20 years has increased from seven million in 1980 to almost 33 million in 2001; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, the United States issued 1.2 million long-term NIVs, an even higher number than were granted permanent resident status; and

WHEREAS, Our national security has been breached by issuing visas for travel to this country without thorough background checks, resulting in the death of thousands of U.S. citizens and others on September 11, 2001; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to establish numerical limits for all immigration categories of temporary workers to help prevent labor market distortions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the U.S. Department of State be required to enforce the completion of a thorough background check and also interview each candidate for a U.S. visa prior to issuing said visa; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the U.S. Department of State be responsible for tracking and arresting those visa recipients who perpetrate fraud and/or are visa overstays and that they be turned over to the Department of Homeland Security for removal/deportation processing.

Resolution No. 427: Protect College Students Activated For Guard/Reserve Duty
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces rely on National Guard and Reserve Units to fulfill national security missions; and

WHEREAS, More than 630,000 National Guard and Reservists were called to active duty during this country's war on terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 provides reemployment rights and benefits for workers activated for military duty; and

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard and Reservists who are attending an institution of higher education at the time of their activation do not have protection insuring their enrollment status or reimbursement of tuition, housing, books and supplies, and fees paid; and

WHEREAS, Students attending an institution of higher education who are activated for duty in the Guard and Reserves deserve to have their re-enrollment guaranteed and their educational expenses refunded in an equitable manner; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to adopt legislation to amend the

Higher Education Act of 1965 to grant a military leave of absence to students called to active duty while serving in the National Guard or Reserve Units of the U.S. Armed Forces; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That a student on a military leave of absence from an institution of higher education shall be entitled, upon release from active duty service, to re-enroll in that institution without loss of academic credits earned, scholarships or grants awarded, or tuition (less pro-rate) or other fees paid prior to the commencement of the individual's period of active duty service in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Resolution No. 428: Oath Of Renunciation And Allegiance
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, Since the earliest days of our republic, Congress has exercised its constitutional power to establish a uniform Rule of Naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Rules of Naturalization, as established by Congress, requires an oath of allegiance and renunciation of all prior allegiances as a condition of naturalization; and

WHEREAS, The Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance serves as a contract between the applicant for citizenship and the United States government in which the applicant, in return for the benefits and privileges received, agrees to

1. Renounce all allegiance to any foreign state or sovereign;
2. Support and defend the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, both foreign and domestic;
3. Bear "true faith and allegiance" to the United States of America; and
4. Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and
5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that naturalization is a privilege, not a right, to be granted only in accordance with the conditions established by the Congress; and

WHEREAS, A "Citizenship Roundtable" was created by NEC Resolution 28 (Oct. 1999) titled "Citizenship Naturalization Process" that established a working relationship between The American Legion and the Hudson Institute, an internationally recognized public policy research not-for-profit 501c(3) organization; and

WHEREAS, The Citizenship Roundtable opposes any revisions to the oath of allegiance that would dilute or eliminate the applicant's commitment, under oath, to the United States of America; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes any and all changes to the Oath of Renunciation and Allegiance, as used in naturalization ceremonies, that would dilute or eliminate any of the following important and necessary elements of the oath:

1. **Renunciation of all allegiances to foreign states or sovereignties;**
2. **Support for and defense of the U.S. Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;**
3. **Bear 'true faith and allegiance' to the United States of America; and**
4. **Bear arms, perform noncombatant service, or perform work of national importance on behalf of the United States of America; and**

5. Take this oath without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the Congress of the United States to prescribe the language that is used in the oath of renunciation and allegiance for purposes as outlined in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Resolution No. 429: Armed Forces Day
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism

WHEREAS, On August 31, 1949, Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced the creation of an Armed Forces Day to replace separate Army, Navy and Air Force Days and to acknowledge the unification of the Armed Forces under one department-the Department of Defense; and

WHEREAS, Armed Forces Day is celebrated annually on the third Saturday of May and is the day on which special tribute is directed towards the men and women of the Armed Forces who are in the service of their country; and

WHEREAS, Because of their unique training schedules, National Guard and Reserve units are permitted to celebrate Armed Forces Day/Week over any period in May; and

WHEREAS, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said in 1953 that "It is fitting and proper that we devote one day each year to paying special tribute to those whose constancy and courage constitute one of the bulwarks guarding the freedom of this nation and the peace of the free world"; and

WHEREAS, General Earle G. Wheeler, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in 1967 "Armed Forces Day, above all, honors the dedicated individuals who wear the uniforms of their country. Each serviceman, wherever he may be, whatever his task, contributes directly and importantly to the defense of the nation. The task of each one is the task of all the Armed Forces; to protect the freedoms which underlie the greatness of America"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, wishes to acknowledge the sacrifices and the dedication of today's service men and women and to increase public awareness of the honorable nature of military service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reiterates its continuing support of those who serve in the Armed Forces of the United States and the families that are left behind; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages its Posts and others to conduct and sponsor appropriate observances of "Armed Forces Day" in their respective communities to inform all citizens of the important role of this country's armed forces and to acknowledge the service of those who serve in them.

The following resolutions were approved as consolidated:

Resolution No. 410: Illegal Aliens
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 96 (OH) and Resolution No. 314 (IL))

WHEREAS, Current law, as established within "The Immigration Reform and

Control Act of 1986" (IRCA) has not achieved the results desired by The American Legion for addressing the many and varied problems created by illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, A 1996 study by the Center for Immigration Studies estimated the cost of the IRCA amnesty after 10 years at $76.7 billion for the 2.7 million illegal aliens who received amnesty, which represents a government subsidy of $28,727 for each illegal alien; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) reported that more than 1 million illegal aliens were apprehended at our borders during 2003; and

WHEREAS, Illegal aliens in the United States create serious economic problems which include increased welfare costs, adverse effects on the American labor market, and the expense of detecting, detaining, processing and deporting of apprehended illegals; and WHEREAS, Veterans are displaced from employment by the employment of illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, There must be a broad exchange of information and related action among those Executive Departments responsible for dealing with various aspects of immigration law and illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion wishes to reiterate its opposition to any type of amnesty ("legalization") program, that excuses and rewards the law-breaking illegal aliens; and

WHEREAS, On March 1, 2003, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service ceased to exist and its responsibilities were incorporated into the new Department of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports strict enforcement of employer sanctions as called for in current employment laws that assess heavy penalties on employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Homeland Security be provided the monies necessary to ensure both the thorough performance of its responsibilities and to ensure the security of the borders of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That aliens illegally in the U.S. should be denied Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and other types of public assistance; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages the United States government to hold essential agency heads accountable in guaranteeing the desired communications and exchanges of technical information concerning the various aspects of the illegal alien issue.

Resolution No. 415: Oppose Foreign Manufacture Of American Flags
Origin: Convention Committee on Americanism
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Americanism
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 130 (MA))

WHEREAS, The Flag of the United States is a uniquely American symbol; and

WHEREAS, The Flag Code of the United States as listed in Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1, subsection 8(j) states that: "The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing"; and

WHEREAS, It has come to our attention that foreign manufacturers are making and importing United States Flags and/or merchandise which violate certain provisions of the United States Flag Code; and

WHEREAS, Resolution 191, 1982 National Convention, Chicago, Illinois resolves that The American Legion promote through its Posts and Departments the purchase of American manufactured goods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourages its membership, the general public, and all local, state and federal government agencies to purchase and display only American manufactured Flags of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation through the United States Congress to prohibit the importation of foreign made Flags of the United States.

Received And Recorded

Resolution No. 94 (OH): The Code For The National Anthem Of The United States Of America
Resolution No. 107 (CA): Support Of Boy Scouts Of America
Resolution No. 146 (WA): Historical Significance Of The Holocaust
Resolution No. 241 (WI): Multi-Media Resource Materials On Flag Education
Resolution No. 304 (MO): Oppose Removal Of Words "Under God" From Pledge Of Allegiance To The Flag

Referred to the Standing Commission on Americanism

Resolution No. 88 (PI): Grant Special Immigration Status to Children of WWII Filipino Veterans
Resolution No. 109 (CO): National Junior American Legion Baseball Program
Resolution No. 117 (VA): Eligibility Requirements For the American Legion Scout of the Year
Resolution No. 120 (VA): National Junior American Legion Baseball Program
Resolution No. 148 (WA): National Junior American Legion Baseball Program
Resolution No. 205 (GA): National Junior American Legion Baseball Program
Resolution No. 233 (WV): Outstanding Educators Award Program
Resolution No. 251 (MX): Amend United States Constitution With A Constitutional Authority Clause
Resolution No. 324 (FL): Use of Wooden Bats Only For American Legion Baseball
Resolution No. 332 (WI): American Legion Baseball Eligibility

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs

Resolution No. 99: Toby Keith And Alan Jackson Recognition

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 142 (ME): United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps Program

Rejected

Resolution No. 249 (MX): Proposed Change To The National High School Oratorical Contest
Resolution No. 250 (MX): Proposed Change To The National High School Oratorical Contest

COMM CHRM CAOUETTE: Mr. Commander, as a duly authorized Delegate to the

Convention, I move the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion by the Chairman and I hear a second. Any discussion? All in favor say, 'aye'. Opposed 'no'. The Report of Americanism is adopted. Mr. Chairman, don't run off too far. I have been told that we have the Department of Connecticut here with a check for The American Legacy Scholarship.

MR. WILKIN, (CT): Commander, to you and to Chairman Joe, on behalf of The American Legionnaires in the Department of Connecticut through their fund-raising efforts at our Department Convention, and also in a golf tournament that we held for the purpose of raising funds for The Legacy Foundation, it is with a great pride that I represent our entire Department in this presentation of $3,525.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: And I also have been told that we have representatives from the Department of New York with a contribution for The American Legacy Scholarship. By the way, if there are any other Departments you can make your way up here because we'll smile and take your money.

DEPT COMDR CORTRIGHT (NY): Commander John, from the Department of New York we'd like to have and present to you this check for $65,000 for the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund. This is from the Legion family from Department of New York.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Oh, I see the smiling faces from the Department of Pennsylvania.

DEPT COMDR GASPER (PA): National Commander, I have our Department Adjutant Kit Watson and our Alternate National Executive Committeeman here. We're pleased to present to you for this fund $1,500 for the Legacy Fund.

I tell you what. Give him a $65,000 check and he doesn't know what to do. (Laughter.)

Presentation: The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

With the adoption of the Americanism Report it is appropriate to announce the winners of two Americanism awards.

The Frank Belgrano, Jr., Trophy is given annually to the Department rendering the most outstanding service during the 12-month period beginning August 1st to the Boy Scouts of America Program. This year the winner is the Department of Florida.

Presentation: Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

And also we announce the Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy is given to the Department within the United States documenting the greatest activity using The American Legion School Medal Program. The winning Department shows what can be accomplished by an active and involved organization. The winner is the Department of Florida.

And I think the key word was "documented," for those who don't like to do reports. But Florida, congratulations. Great Job. I think Florida started the applause back there.

The William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy is one of the most impressive awards that The American Legion presents during each National Convention. It's named in honor of one of American journalism's prominent and influential figures and given to

the Department achieving the most outstanding results in conducting Americanism programs.

The winning department is selected by the National Americanism Commission on the basis of total resources, manpower as well as financial, devoted to Americanism activities during the Legion program year.

With us today to announce the winner of the 2003 William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy is the Vice President Publisher of *The Beaumont Enterprise*, Beaumont, Texas, Aubrey L. Webb. (Applause.)

Presentation: William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy
Aubrey L. Webb, Vice President/Publisher
***The Beaumont Enterprise*, Beaumont, Texas**

Thank you for allowing me the honor of presenting the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy. Before I begin just a brief remark. I've got to say what a wonderful group of people to be with. I have just thoroughly enjoyed my time with you. It's a great city of Nashville, it's a great hotel. I've gotten to know a few of you and you've made me feel very much at home and I appreciate that.

For all of the 85 years that the members of The American Legion have been serving this country, Hearst Newspapers have been enjoying the freedom of the press that you have helped to preserve through your wartime service. Freedom of the press is a right that is essential to our democratic traditions. We at Hearst realize that the success of our company probably could not have happened in any other nation.

The Hearst Corporation has grown to include 19 newspapers, 26 broadcast stations in 20 states. Sixteen consumer magazines with 95 international titles distributed in more than a hundred countries. We have partnerships in cable TV that include *A&E*, *ESPN*, *Lifetime*, the *History Channel* and many other venues that help our citizens with the information they need daily in their lives. It's a record we're proud of, but we know our freedom to publish and to prosper did not come without cost. That freedom has been guaranteed over tyrants by millions of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen who would not let a foreign enemy take it away, who were prepared to pay whatever price was necessary, even the ultimate sacrifice.

You helped extend those same freedoms to others across the globe who had nowhere else to turn when chaos threatened them. Because of that tremendous defense of liberty and countless other reasons, America is recognized throughout the world as a truly special place. A standard for those abroad and a friend who can be counted on no matter how desperate the situation. Let no one ever come to regard the United States as just another country. It is the world's lighthouse of liberty and the only superpower, and it will remain so as long as our future generations carry on the traditions so many of you have helped to establish.

That is why it's so important that our children learn to not take freedoms we enjoy for granted. Future generations must continue to give our military the tools to do the job and the civilian backing at home to feel right about that job. They should understand that we must always be ready to defend our interests anywhere on the globe. And above all, we must remember that we have responsibilities, as well as rights; that we must contribute more to our families, our communities and to our nation than what we take away. And that is what you do so very well.

Communities all across our great nation are better communities today because of your tireless, tireless volunteer efforts. It's another debt of gratitude that America owes

you.

Our country is special for many reasons and one of the most important is our sense of nationhood. Whether we were born here or became a naturalized citizen, most Americans share a common love of our country and a deep reverence for its traditions and culture. Years ago your kind of patriotism was a given. It was one of our innate strengths. Without question or complaint our country, through you, answered the bell when the need arose. We trusted our government.

In recent decades that sense of national unity has ebbed and flowed, as political crises and unpopular wars have divided us. Now, knowing that we cannot take even something that fundamental for granted, national unity, we must work even harder to ensure that pride and patriotism remains strong throughout the nation. The American Legion has been on the front line of that fight for 85 years, and you have the deepest appreciation of citizens who know that you will continue to stand up for what's right.

It is in that same spirit of sacrifice and service that the William Randolph Hearst Americanism Trophy was created. And I, as an employee of the Hearst Corporation, as a former Marine—and that's former, not ex. Once a Marine always a Marine. Semper Fi. And above all as an American, I am pleased and honored to present this year's Americanism Trophy to a Department that has exemplified our country's ideas. And that winning Department is Virginia.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Congratulations.

Presentation: 2004 National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

As an organization anchored in the belief that we must maintain "law and order," The American Legion annually selects and individual as its Police Officer of the Year.

Two women owe their lives to the heroic acts of the man we honor and his K-9 partner. The very same officer and his K-9 partner, last year accounted for 140 apprehensions of suspects, 229 building searches and nearly 200 drug scans resulting in numerous arrests and seizures of marijuana, cocaine, heroin and ecstasy.

His dedication extends to his off-duty time as well. He has donated countless hours to Maryland Special Olympics, the Cub Scouts, children with disabilities at Cedar Lane School, and a Christmas in April Project by which volunteers renovate a home for a low-income family.

It's an honor to present The American Legion Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award to Police Officer First Class Patrick Eckley of Ellicott City, Maryland.

ANNOUNCER: "America's Finest." The American Legion National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. Presented to Patrick W. Eckley. For Distinguished Service above and beyond your assigned duties, rendered through selfless dedication to community service and professional achievement By your demonstrated performance, you have personified the versatile police officer who represents "America's Finest." The American Legion congratulates you and wishes you continued success in your career. Awarded September 1, 2004 at the 86th Annual National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee.

OFFICER ECKLEY: I'd first like to thank Chief of the Howard County Police Department, my wife Julie who traveled down here, the staff who picked me for The

American Legion and most importantly the brave men and women of The American Legion.

I'm honored to be here. I am greatly honored to be chosen as the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. This is particularly meaningful because if represents the service and sacrifice each of you have given for the country. This is just a small part that I've contributed as a veteran also.

Thank you also for everybody that I've met in the hallways throughout the week that I've been here who have treated me with—I can't even explain how well I've been treated. You've taken me in, made me a part of the family. And for the men and women back in Ellicott City through some strong-arm tactics, to let you know, I'm now a card-carrying member of The American Legion.

I'd just like to close by thanking you once again for the great honor you've bestowed upon me. And I would just like to thank my wife for traveling down here and all of our deployed soldiers return home safely.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The chair now recognizes the Reverend Fred Johnson representing the Chapel of Four Chaplains for the purpose of an award.

Presentation: Chapel of Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion
The Chapel of Four Chaplains, Reverend Fred Johnson

It's a great privilege to be here today to present the Legion of Honor Award to your National Commander John A. Brieden for his distinguished service and sacrifice to our country. The award reads as follows:

"To all who read this proclamation, membership in the Chapel of Four Chaplains, the Legion of Honor is awarded to individuals whose lives reflect selfless service to the community, to the nation or humanity without regard to race, creed or color, dramatically exemplified by the Four Army Chaplains. The Jewish Chaplain, Lt. Alexander D. Goode; Dutch Reform Chaplain, Lt. Clark V. Poling; Roman Catholic Chaplain, Lt. John P. Washington; Methodist Chaplain, Lt. John L. Fox."

Approximately 900 men were aboard the Army troop ship the Dorchester, when it was torpedoed by a German submarine off the coast of Greenland February 3, 1943. Survivors report the chaplains moved among the frightened men calming and comforting them and praying with them. Many struggled to the deck with no life jackets. When none could be found, the chaplains took off their own life jackets and gave them to the nearby soldiers who had none, never asking whether they were Protestant, Jewish or Catholic.

And be it noted in 1951 President Truman dedicated the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in honor of their heroic sacrifice and with the motto "unity without uniformity." Since then the chapel awards have been presented to several Presidents, cabinet members, members of Congress, foreign heads of states and luminaries such as Bob Hope. Today, we award the Legion of Honor Medallion and Medal to your National Commander, John Brieden, recognizing the fact that he has given many years to this country in service and for the armed services, and we would be proud if you would wear this.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Fred. I appreciate very much, and to be perfectly honest I feel undeserving. I accept this on behalf of all the Legionnaires who work hard to keep alive the memory of the Four Chaplains and we commit ourselves to continue to do so.

The Chair recognizes Elmer Fuhrhop from Ohio, Chairman of the National

Convention Committee on Children and Youth for the purpose of report.

National Vice Commander Clint Thompson, North Carolina, please assume the Chair.

...At this time National Vice Commander Thompson assumed the Chair.

Report: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman

The Convention Committee on Children and Youth met at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 29, 2004 in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel & Convention Center, Bayou A, Delta Mezzanine, Nashville, Tennessee. The meeting was organized by electing delegate Elmer Fuhrhop of Ohio as Chairman and Robert D. Scott of Oregon as Secretary. There were 47 members of the committee present.

The committee considered thirteen (13) resolutions.

Approved

Resolution No. 389: Admission Of Children Of United States Citizens
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel; and

WHEREAS, Many children in foreign countries are progenies of United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 97-359 addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982; and

WHEREAS, No child created by a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Resolution No. 390: Catastrophic Illness Among Children
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, There is an ever-widening crisis in many states relating to the delivery and accessibility of health care and medical treatment to the children of this country; and

WHEREAS, Historically, it has always been The American Legion's position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well-being; and

WHEREAS, Several applications have been received by the National Americanism and Children & Youth Division from Departments requesting Temporary Financial Assistance for needy medical cases; and

WHEREAS, Many children are not receiving needed medical treatment because their families have been unable to afford the cost of the catastrophic illness to one of

their children; and

WHEREAS, Many of these families have hospitalization insurance and even major medical insurance and yet they cannot meet the cost of a major illness; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms its position in urging the federal and state governments to enact the necessary legislation to assist financially those individual families faced by the catastrophic illness of one of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That in lieu of a better approach, the present federal Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant program be expanded to include catastrophic illness.

Resolution No. 391: Children In Pornographic Literature
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The very future of our country is being threatened by individuals who would use children in pornographic magazines and films; and

WHEREAS, National crime reports reveal that there is a strong correlation between those who read pornographic magazines and those who commit related crimes such as rape, incest, molestation, child abuse and even murder; and

WHEREAS, The use of children as subjects in the production of pornographic materials has a devastating effect upon these innocent children, which is a disgrace to our society; and

WHEREAS, Existing laws dealing with those who produce, sell and distribute pornographic materials are often weak and/or inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That state legislatures be encouraged to evaluate and make appropriate improvements in existing laws aimed at those individuals involved in the child pornography business; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge the strengthening of existing federal legislation by the United States Congress to make penalties severe enough to eliminate the production, distribution and sale of materials that use children in sexually explicit scenes, and we urge the Congress to provide adequate funding, when necessary, to accomplish these goals.

Resolution No. 392: Comprehensive Health Care For Children And Youth
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion stands for "A Square Deal for Every Child"; and

WHEREAS, Many children face a lifetime as a health or dental cripple because of the high cost of our health delivery system; and

WHEREAS, There is a system of delivery of children and youth comprehensive health care presently being successfully operated across our nation in low income areas; and

WHEREAS, These programs are dependent upon yearly reconsideration and the appropriation of funds by the Congress of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in

Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That it continues to support and endorse the program as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant contained under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth Programs.

Resolution No. 393: Drug Trafficking
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The illegal trafficking of drugs into the United States is one of the greatest threats to the welfare and safety of our citizens, particularly our youth; and

WHEREAS, The enemies of our Nation and way of life hope to destroy us from within by debilitating our most precious resource for the future, our youth; and

WHEREAS, The economic and social costs of drug abuse annually exceeds the $100 billion mark; and

WHEREAS, The efforts to halt the entry of such illegal drugs may be seen as a war of will and resources-a war that at the present we are not winning; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress of the United States to fully support with adequate funding all border state, federal and military drug trafficking prevention programs through which our children and youth might secure a more stable and healthy future.

Resolution No. 394: National Family Week
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, One of the principles guiding The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to maintain the integrity of the family home; and

WHEREAS, The family is the center of our affections and the foundation of our American society; and

WHEREAS, No institution can take the family's place in giving meaning to human life and stability in our society; and

WHEREAS, It is fitting that official recognition be given to the importance of strengthening family life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to establish "National Family Week" during Thanksgiving Holiday Week as an annual observance.

Resolution No. 395: Production, Sale And Distribution Of Obscene Literature
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, Since 1960, The American Legion has maintained a position of complete opposition to the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials to children 17 years and under; and

WHEREAS, Present laws forbid the importation of such materials from foreign

countries, interstate trafficking, the use of the United States Mail, and the use over public radio and television; and

WHEREAS, Any attempt to eliminate such protective laws from state and/or federal criminal codes would have a negative impact on our youth and society in general; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly opposes any attempt to weaken our present laws governing the penalties for the production, sale and distribution of pornographic or obscene materials; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the United States Congress be made aware of our concern through proper legislative channels.

Resolution No. 396: Protect Children From The Unrestricted Media
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, In the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion we pledge "To uphold the Constitution of the United States;" and "To maintain law and order;" and

WHEREAS, The producers of our nation's movies, TV shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence; and

WHEREAS, Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have taken it upon themselves to defend such actions as the constitutional right of freedom of speech of the author, regardless of the potential consequences to minor children; and

WHEREAS, God has been rejected as a violation of civil rights; and

WHEREAS, The void has been filled with violence, vulgarity, racism, and every other form of moral depravation that can be imagined; and

WHEREAS, The Internet has become a place for promoting violence and illegal activities; and

WHEREAS, The lack of laws governing such productions allows for a vast expansion of audiences at all media levels promoting a violent country without restraint; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Departments and Posts of The American Legion provide leadership and be encouraged to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public, about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commission on Children & Youth disseminate educational materials to inform Department and Post leadership to the end that all children and parents will be better informed about the dangers inherent in the media, in an effort to return the country to the God-given principles of life, liberty, and the true pursuit of happiness, under God's moral laws.

Resolution No. 397: Reaffirming Immunization Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long recognized that there is no place in civilized society for communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, There are today vaccines and other specific medical treatment to protect children against communicable diseases; and

WHEREAS, There exists today in our country areas with extremely low levels of immunization against certain childhood diseases that may break out in epidemic proportions; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms its position of supporting the fullest use of any licensed vaccine to combat communicable diseases; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That local Posts of The American Legion provide leadership and support to stimulate local treatment and immunization programs so that children in every community may achieve the fullest protection against communicable diseases; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That sufficient federal and state funds be provided so that medically indigent children may be afforded an opportunity to receive the necessary treatment and immunization against all communicable diseases.

Resolution No. 398: School Nutrition Program
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, There has been an expression of concern by health authorities and various national organizations with an interest in the status of proper nutrition among young people; and

WHEREAS, The Federal School Lunch Program and other federally-supported nutrition programs for children have demonstrated their effectiveness as evidenced by the reduction of health problems and improved performance among children; and

WHEREAS, There are many school systems throughout the United States which do not participate in the federal/state-supported school lunch program; and

WHEREAS, There are many schools and school systems throughout the United States that have never had a school lunch program or have dropped existing lunch programs because of the lack of funding, adequate facilities, excessive paperwork requirements, and the training of personnel; and

WHEREAS, Since 1941, The American Legion has supported the Federal School Lunch Program and other related programs of nutrition for children; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Congress of the United States be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

Resolution No. 399: Support For The Office Of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, The National Commission on Children & Youth is vitally concerned about the high levels of violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation each year: and

WHEREAS, The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is organized: to develop and encourage the implementation of national standards for the administration of juvenile justice; to assist State and local governments in removing juveniles from jails and lockups for adults; to develop and implement effective methods of preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, including methods with a specific focus on maintaining and strengthening the family unit so that juveniles may be retained in their homes; to develop effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization; and to coordinate all Federal juvenile delinquency programs and all Federal programs related to missing and exploited children; and

WHEREAS, The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention program now promoted by the Office of Juvenile Justice has proven effective in many states; and

WHEREAS, The proposed block grants for states will not specifically earmark funds for delinquency prevention programs and, therefore, such programs may be significantly limited or even eliminated; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion opposes any and all efforts to eliminate the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs because of a lack of funding; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the need to bring the national economy under control cannot over shadow or ignore the need to further the Office of Juvenile Justice and its programs which may be our national defense against an impending escalation of juvenile crime in America.

Resolution No. 400: Violence And Vandalism In The Schools
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, Juveniles account for approximately 35 percent of our population and account for better than 50 percent of serious crimes as reported by the FBI Uniform Crime Reports; and

WHEREAS, Numerous government-supported institutions nationwide, specifically schools and housing, are experiencing serious, violent acts of crime and criminal damage and spend in excess of $500 million for acts of vandalism; and

WHEREAS, The impact of violence and vandalism affects the morale of students, teachers, administrators, and parents; impedes educational advancement; and fosters and perpetuates patterns of deviancy; and

WHEREAS, Violence and vandalism in the nation's institutions result in enormous loss of educational and domestic resources and human potential, and contribute to the high rates of juvenile delinquency within the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion recommends school boards and state education agencies develop a balanced and effective program, and provide community support to reduce and prevent violence and vandalism in educational institutions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion urges local law enforcement to implement

effective programs for the amelioration of juvenile delinquency in coordination with the Department of Education, community citizenry and other agencies within the criminal justice system; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That local Posts urge and assist those in the educational community and criminal justice system to join together in efforts to reduce the development and prevailing patterns of juvenile delinquency in schools and our communities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States enact legislation through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to establish a grant program to assist those public institutions and criminal justice agencies in bearing the financial burden of implementing pro-active delinquency prevention programs.

Resolution No. 401: Policy Statement On Family
Origin: Convention Committee on Children and Youth
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Children and Youth

WHEREAS, A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to strengthen and maintain the integrity of the family unit; and

WHEREAS, The World Congress of Families II defines the "natural family" as the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered around the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage; and

WHEREAS, A 1999 Wirthlin Worldwide survey conducted for the World Congress of Families II found that 84 percent of people around the world agree that the definition of marriage is the union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, A child's biological connection to a married father and mother increases the likelihood that they will identify with the child, be willing to sacrifice for the child, and thereby reduces the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child; and

WHEREAS, Children are dependent on a mother and father for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and that the existence of a marital bond between a mother and father is vital for the child's overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, Children raised by their married mother and father experience low rates of social problems, to include premarital childbearing; illicit drug use; arrest; health, emotional or behavioral problems; poverty; and school failure or expulsion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion recognizes that the natural family is the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and a woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage for the purposes of:

- **Satisfying the longings of the human heart to give and receive love;**
- **Welcoming and ensuring the full physical and emotional development of children;**
- **Sharing a home that serves as the center for the social, educational, economic and spiritual life of a child; and**
- **Building strong bonds between succeeding generations to pass on a way of life that assures the perpetuation of the natural family; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recognizes that marriage is a fundamental institution that predates the law and the Constitution of the United States; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes all efforts to undermine,

alter or otherwise corrupt the institution of marriage, which is the cornerstone of a healthy family; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to ensure that the institution of marriage is preserved and protected, either through appropriate federal legislation or through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

A motion was made and seconded to allow the Committee Chairman and Secretary to sign the report on behalf of the committee. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

COMM CHRM FUHRHOP: Mr. Commander, as a duly elected and registered Delegate for the Department of Ohio, I move for the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL VICE COMDR THOMPSON: You've heard the motion and the second. Those of you use a voting sign of approved. 'Aye.' Opposed? Ayes have it. Motion's carried. The Report is adopted.

Presentation: Garland Murphy Award and Legacy Award
Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina, National Vice Commander

I now have the pleasure of presenting the Garland Murphy Award to the Department that had the most participation in raising funds for the Child Welfare Foundation during the past program year. The winner of the award is the Department of Minnesota.

ANNOUNCER: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Department of Minnesota for the program year 2003-2004. In recognition of their designation as the number one Department in total contributions received from their volunteers, in support of our annual program designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of our nation's children through productive and meaningful grants.

It is signed by Jim Holley, the vice president of the Child Welfare Foundation, and William Pease, the foundation's executive secretary.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you Clint. Next we want to award the Legacy for 2003-2004 presented to the Legion family of the Department of Ohio in recognition of outstanding support for The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. It says, "We thank you."

COMM CHRM FUHRHOP: The following trophy or plaque is presented to all of us I think realize that were friends or sometimes crossed the paths of U.S. Udie Grant. Being a member of the board of directors, we decided to send to the family a memory plaque from all of us for his efforts. He was a staunch supporter of the foundation. We had a lot of work all the time together and I think he was my mentor and my idle. With that in mind and knowing he was a good hard worker on the Child Welfare Program. I'd like to read the inscription.

"The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation gratefully acknowledges the many memorial contributions in memory of our comrade, U.S. Udie Grant, Board President. Valued friend, gifted mentor and an accomplished Legionnaire.

"To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection

of children, to earn the appreciation of honest criticism and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty and find the beauty in others, to leave this world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, a redeemed social condition, to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded." Ralph Waldo Emerson.

We're presenting this to the Commander of the Kansas Delegation. They will take it home and present it to Udie's family.

COMM CHRM FUHRHOP: Don't mean to hog the mic but I got a chance to do it I'm going to take it.

Mr. Commander, the board of directors of each of the units of the Department that stands out in their donation to the Child Welfare Foundation, we present this pen with a diamond in it from the Child Welfare Foundation for you.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am honored and once again I feel very undeserving when I look at a lot of the work that's been done. And I accept on behalf of all those Legionnaires who worked hard for the Child Welfare Foundation and done all the work.

Mr. Chairman, before you leave, we have some gifts to the Child Welfare Foundation. And I know that we have the Department of Michigan here and we're going to call them up to make a presentation. If any other Departments have presentations for the Child Welfare Foundation, make your way forward.

DELEGATE: As the Post and Squadron of a little town of Milford in the Department of Michigan had a fundraiser for the Child Welfare Foundation, we'd like to turn over a check for $3,100.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: All right. Connecticut's back.

DELEGATE: At the Department of Connecticut convention and also from the little bit from the golf tournament that we have, we spread the money out between to the Child Welfare Foundation. I have a check here for $1,500.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Yes, I recognize the Department of New Hampshire. Please step forward. Who wants to be the spokesman and tell me what you've got?

DELEGATE: Commander Brieden, from the Department of New Hampshire, in addition to what you've already received from the Department of New Hampshire, we have another check for $342.79 for the Child Welfare Foundation.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We've got Iowa.

DELEGATE: Commander, from the proud Legionnaires of the State of Iowa, we want to present a check for the Child Welfare Foundation in the amount of $1,000.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: You know it's fun to watch these former Marines take so long to aim and fire. (Laughter.)

DELEGATE: I'd like to comment just a few little minutes here and thank Commander John and President Morris. They've been a terrific team to pick the Child Welfare Foundation as their project. We've had a tremendous year with a total I think this is a little over $676,000 for the Child Welfare Fund. And we're going to use that plus whatever they sent to the CMN. That's been a terrific program and things are going abound with what we need to do. Keep up the good work and we'll spend it wisely.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Chair recognizes Marilyn Britten of Michigan, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Membership and Post Activities for the purpose of a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters

(Section III of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters)
Marilyn Britten, Michigan, Chairman

Forty-six members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee Section III (Membership), considered two resolutions, both of which originated with Departments of The American Legion. Both were rejected.

John Pellegrini (MT) nominated Marilyn Britten (MI), seconded by James Vialard (NJ) as Chairman. Motion carried. Steven Bartos (NE) nominated Gerald Goetzinger (SD), seconded by John Pellegrini (MT) as Secretary. Motion carried.

Pete Holowecki (NY) made a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report of the Committee. The motion was seconded by Lloyd Woods (ME).

The following resolutions were rejected:

Rejected

Resolution No. 209: Seating at National Convention Based on Membership and DMS

Resolution No. 229: Membership Billing Dates Clarification

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m. As a duly elected Delegate of this National Convention, I move for the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Chairman made a motion. I've heard a second. Any discussion? All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' The report of Credentials and Internal Affairs Membership is adopted.

We now have representatives of departments and individuals who took membership to another level in 2004. Their hard work paid off. They have shown during the year that without an active growing American Legion membership will lose strength and our voice will be weakened. Membership is our strength, and that strength has been made even stronger by their efforts.

Okay. As we were saying, membership is our strength. Partners with the United States Army Recruiting Command and Active and Reserve Military Components through the "Reconnect" program have expanded the opportunity for The American Legion to reach out to younger veterans and their families. Couple that with our continued commitment of service to veterans, their families and our communities, and we can clearly see why The American Legion growth potential is unlimited.

I know all of you and the 2.7 million American Legion members you represent feel as I do. America needs the values represented by The American Legion more today than ever. We must be willing to get involved in local activities and be willing to ask eligibles to join. The year did not turn out as I had initially planned in membership, but these Departments and their members proved that it can be done.

It's my pleasure to make membership award presentations, and at this time I ask that National Vice Commander Fang Wong please assume the Chair.

...At this time National Vice Commander Wong assumed the Chair.

Presentation: Department Membership Awards
Fang A. Wong, New York, National Vice Commander

The first Department is Nevada. The presentation is to Commander Timothy M.

Tetz, Membership Chairman Jack Ford and Department Adjutant Lionel Motta. This is the Department's sixth consecutive All–Time High.

From the Department of Delaware, Commander Robert E. Voll, Membership Chairman Corbit Goff and Department Adjutant Ed Phillips. This is the Department's fifth consecutive All–Time High.

From the Department of Florida, Commander Richard C. Beverly, Membership Chairman Horace W. Post and Department Adjutant John Newstreet. This is the Department's fourth consecutive All–Time High.

A total of 16 Departments topped the 100 percent mark in membership this year with DMS. Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Virginia, Nevada, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Vermont, Montana, Wisconsin, West Virginia and Puerto Rico.

Three of the 16 departments accomplished this task through traditional efforts. Simply put, this means they were able to replace expected losses through increasing the number of new members signed up, excluding DMS members and the number of renewed members.

At this time would the Department Commanders for Delaware, Vermont and Puerto Rico please join National Commander John Brieden. Please accept this plaque as a token of appreciation for your Department membership efforts.

Let's give these Department Commanders a round of applause.

Before we proceed, I'd like to point out that Commander Brieden hosted a reception on Monday for Departments who obtained 96 percent or better of their membership through traditional efforts. They were given a shirt and watch recognizing their membership year.

The next award is to a man who set the standard for recruiting during this membership year. The National Recruiter of the Year gathered 319 new members to The American Legion fold. Please give a warm welcome to a dedicated Legionnaire Nathaniel King of Post 267 in Columbus, Georgia. Nathaniel is a retired Army Artillery First Sergeant.

If Post 267 sounds familiar, it should. Last year's Recruiter of the Year also came from this Post. He came in second this year. This is the first time that the number one and number two National Recruiters in consecutive years have come from the same Post.

Nathaniel, this is but a small token of appreciation for the job you have done. Without a doubt you are one of our outstanding recruiters. Commander Brieden is presenting you with a plaque and a Legion cap signifying your accomplishment for earning the title of Recruiter of the Year for 2003-2004. Membership is critical to The American Legion. Remember, without an active, growing membership, and the efforts from individuals like Nathaniel and other distinguished awardees on stage with us, our programs would loose strength and our voice would be weakened.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The National Recruiter of the Year wants to say something.

NATL VICE COMDR WONG: I yield.

MR. KING (GA): It is an honor being National Recruiter of the Year for this great organization, and being from the greatest Department in our National Organization, the Department of Georgia.

Billy Johnson of National Membership said I would only have eight minutes, but I can talk membership all day. I have shouldered the responsibility of being a recruiter for our National Organization. But remember, it takes a Department. Our Department starts with our Alternate NECman, our NECman and definitely our Department Adjutant,

shouldering that same responsibility. They will not let you fail. They give you the resources to be a great recruiter, to be a great Department, and understanding recruitment is the survivability of our great organization. You have to really believe in our great organization to recruit three straight years National Recruiter Runner-up, Third Runner-up, and National Recruiter of the Year. I do not cherish the accolades of being National Recruiter of the Year, Runner-up, but what I do cherish is those 300 people, maybe one, two or three of those will be a leader of our great organization.

American Legion Post 267 sets the standard on an aggressive recruitment. Aggressive recruitment starts with our Adjutant, our Post Senior Vice Commanders and all members. Our Post for the last five years membership has grown from 470 members to 2,500 members. And as I travel throughout the Department of Georgia, one of the important things that we must understand is that we must recruit younger veterans as myself from the Lebanon, Gulf War, Panama, Afghanistan, Iraqi Freedom. We owe it to ourselves so that these veterans can replace us. We are the future. These are all the aspects that it will take to be a Recruiter of the Year for National.

I close you with these few words: Ask not what The American Legion can do for you, ask what you can do for The American Legion.

...National Commander Brieden resumes the Chair.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: During the Commanders' and Adjutants' Conference last fall I issued a fund-raising challenge to the Department Commanders. Those who met the challenge would get a dinner here in Nashville. To enjoy such a treat they had to be a top District Commander in their category determined by the size, and in raising cash for the National Emergency Fund. We had five Department Commanders that met the challenge and exceeded their goal to rise to the top.

The Department Commanders and their wives or guests who enjoyed dinner with my wife, Terry and I this past Friday night were Charlie Barrett of Georgia, Dave Winpigler of Maryland, Virgil Brown of New Mexico, Carlos Orria of Puerto Rico, and Wayne "Red" Vetter of South Dakota. Once again, congratulations to these five commanders and their Departments who took on the National Emergency Fund as a special interest and ended up on top in their category.

I am pleased to announce that a total of 15 Departments exceeded their assigned NEF goal, and it's our pleasure to make these awards now. And if I can ask National Vice Commander Helm to assume the duties while we do this.

...At this time National Vice Commander Helm assumed the Chair.

Presentation: National Emergency Fund Awards
Michael D. Helm, Nebraska, National Vice Commander

Each of the departments achieving the goal are receiving plaques from the National Commander showing his appreciation for their fund-raising efforts this past year. It is with heartfelt gratitude that we present these plaques for the hard work and diligence of your members in raising money for the National Emergency Fund.

James Van Horn, Alaska. Charles Barrett, Georgia. David Winpigler, Maryland. James Army, Massachusetts. John Wilkerson, Mississippi. Richard Heigert, Missouri. Bob Beals, Montana. Douglas Boldt, Nebraska. Timothy Tetz, Nevada. Virgil Brown, New Mexico. Carlos Orria-Medina, Puerto Rico. Eric Sinclair, North Carolina. Wayne "Red" Vetter, South Dakota. Elwin Holland, Vermont. Wilbert "Webb Holley, West Virginia.

Please don't stop the fund-raising effort because Hurricane Charley reminded us

that we never know where Mother Nature will strike next. This fund needs to continue to receive funds if we are to help our Legion family members in need. Remember that each and every dollar donated to the National Emergency Fund stays in the National Emergency Fund. We take care of our own.

...National Commander Brieden resumes the Chair.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Before we move on, I want to see if maybe someone hadn't shaken a few more trees and found some of that green stuff lying underneath it for the Emergency Fund. Are there any other funds to be donated to the National Emergency Fund by Departments? New Mexico wants to go first.

MR. LINKOUS (NM): Commander Brieden, New Mexico and the Posts in New Mexico have collected another $1,173 for the National Emergency Fund, and $800 more for the Child Welfare Foundation.

UNIDENTIFIED: We're very pleased about from the Department of Pennsylvania to give you for the National Emergency Relief Fund, Commander, $8,400.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: And for $8,400 you can announce the rest of these guys.

Now how do we get Montana, Idaho and Nevada together?

MR. SALMEN (NV): I'll explain. In 1987 we started an event with Nevada, Idaho and Montana. We call it Fun Day. Since then we have raised over $10,000 for this organization. This year we raised $1,025.50 for the National Emergency Fund.

MR. WILKIN (CA): When the devastating wild fires hit the Department of California, we had a number of Legionnaires who needed assistance. We're here to thank you for your very prompt response to our every claim. I'd like to introduce the Commander from the Department of California for a small token in return, Commander Fred Walton.

DEPT COMDR WALTON (CA): Mr. Commander, the Golden State of California wishes to make an additional donation today of $11,800 to the National Emergency Fund, making a total of $28,694 from California so far. That's 114 percent of our $25,000 goal.

UNIDENTIFIED: In addition, from the Department of New Hampshire, in addition to what's previously been sent in, we have another check here for $1,300.

MR. CORTRIGHT (NY): Commander Brieden, the great state of New York would like to present a check to the National Emergency Fund for $5,000.

UNIDENTIFIED: On behalf of the Department of Minnesota, we would like to present this check to the National Emergency Fund for $10,000.

MR. TORKELSON (IA): Commander, once again, the proud Legionnaires of the state of Iowa, have a check for $1,000 to the National Emergency Fund.

UNIDENTIFIED: Commander Brieden, on behalf of myself and the great state of Louisiana, which I believe is the home of the 2003 National Football Champions LSU Tigers, we would like to make a little presentation of $10,000 for you emergency fund.

MR. HEDRICK (NC): Mr. Commander, as you know, the Southern Block always has a breakfast on Wednesday morning, and we have a lot of fun and fines, and through our fines this morning and some contributions from several other Departments we'd like to present this check in the honor of Dyke Shannon who is retiring as our secretary of the Southern Block after 26 years, in the amount of $15,000.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: There was a total today of $59,300 for National Emergency Fund. And a total of $70,025 for the American Legacy Scholarship Fund. And a total of $5,942.79 for Child Welfare Foundation.

The Chair recognizes Paul Morin of Massachusetts, Chairman of the National

Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, for the purpose of a report.

Do I have a second? No.

...Laughter.

Report: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Chairman

Ninety-five members of your Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation met at 9:00 a.m. on August 29, 2004, in the Bayou E, Delta Mezzanine, Gaylord Opryland Hotel, and agreed on the following report, which is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

The Committee was called to order by Peter Gaytan (DE), Liaison Representative appointed by the National Adjutant to act as temporary chairman. Mark Regan (MD), Assistant Director for Program Management, VA&R Commission, acted as temporary secretary and called the roll. A quorum being present, nominations were received for permanent chairman. Paul A. Morin (MA), Chairman of the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, was unanimously elected Chairman of the Convention Committee.

With unanimous consent, the Chairman appointed Pat Phillips (GA), as Committee Secretary; Tracy Davis (MO), Chairman of the Claims and Rating Subcommittee and Rick Simmons (SC), Secretary; K. Robert Lewis (CT), Chairman of the Hospital and Medical Services Subcommittee and R. Michael Suter (NY), Secretary.

Subcommittee liaison assignments were as follows: Steve Smithson (MI), Assistant Director, to Claims and Rating. Cathleen Wiblemo (SD), Deputy Director and Mark Regan (MD), Assistant Director, to Medical and Hospital Services.

As has been the custom for the 60 previous National Conventions, a Special Department Service Officers Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Resolutions, in a preconvention meeting, screened and grouped the resolutions. A report of their action, with recommendations, was presented to the Convention Committee for consideration.

The Screening Committee conserved the time of the Convention Committee substantially. It was chaired by Paul A. Morin, Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and was composed of the following Department Service Officers:

REGION 1—Arthur Smith (MA)
REGION 2—Anthony Druzbik, Jr. (NY)
REGION 3—Thomas Cook (GA), Secretary
REGION 4—Edward Reyes (TX)
REGION 5—John J. Nelson (MI)

The Convention Committee recommended that such a Committee be appointed for this purpose to serve the Eighty-seventh National Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation.

The 91 Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation resolutions presented for the consideration of this Convention were referred by the Resolutions Assignment Committee. The following action on the resolutions was taken by the Convention Committee:

Approved or Approved w/Amendment	52
Consolidated with Resolutions Approved	15

Referred to the Standing Commission	11
Received and Recorded	0
Rejected	13

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

A report of action taken on the 12 resolutions referred to the Standing National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission will be made to the National Executive Committee and to the Adjutant of the Department concerned.

Approved

Resolution No. 8: Support The Automatic Waiver Of VBA Debts Of $250 Or Less
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Overpayment of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits is often the result of a lack of understanding of VA regulations and not due to any fraud or misrepresentation; and

WHEREAS, VA processing of collection or waiver of small overpayment amounts requires significant resources and time; and

WHEREAS, Under current regulations, most overpayment waiver requests are granted; and

WHEREAS, Elimination of processing of small overpayment amounts would allow VA personnel to concentrate on other duties, such as claims processing, thus improving the timeliness of VA in delivering benefits; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Congress of the United States be requested to amend title 38, United States Code, to state that any alleged overpayment in the amount of $250 or less be granted an automatic waiver.

Resolution No. 9: The American Legion Policy On The Correction Of Military Records
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 provided for the recognition of representatives of The American Legion, and other organizations, to serve as counsel before the discharge and retirement boards of the Armed Forces, and this recognition was extended to cover the Boards for Correction of Military Records (BCMRs) when they were created under the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion was actively involved in the legislative process that established the Correction Boards under section 1552 of Title 10, United States Code (USC); and

WHEREAS, Although under provision of Title 10, USC, 1552, a three year statute of limitations was created which begins as of the date of discovery of an error or injustice on the military records of a former servicemember, the Boards are also authorized, under statute, to excuse filings beyond the three year period if it is in the interest of justice to do so; and

WHEREAS, For many years, the Boards routinely waived the three year statute of

limitation so as to provide veterans the opportunity to correct any error or injustice in their records; and

WHEREAS, In the past, the BCMRs have considered that the effective date of commencement of the three year limit was effective the date of the final separation from service; and

WHEREAS, The Congress is investigating the fairness and independence of the BCMRs and the effective date for the commencement of the correction of records by active servicemembers; and

WHEREAS, Section 205 of The Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides for the waiver of periods of limitation for persons in military service with respect to civil proceedings; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruling in the case of Detweiler v. Pena, held that the three year rule does not apply to active duty personnel; and

WHEREAS, The Discharge Review Board, considered to be a lower review agency, has a 15 year statute of limitation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That appropriate action be taken in support of legislation to amend Title 10, United States Code, section 1552, so as to eliminate all time limitations restricting when a claimant may petition the Boards for Correction of Military Records for relief of an error or injustice.

Resolution No. 19: The Establishment Of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) As A Gulf War Presumptive Disease

Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a fatal neurological disease that controls muscle movement and neither a cause or effective treatment for ALS is known; and

WHEREAS, Preliminary findings of a joint Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) study, released in December 2001, of nearly 2.5 million veterans indicated that deployed Gulf War veterans are twice as likely as their non-deployed counterparts to develop ALS; and

WHEREAS, The VA study initially identified 40 Gulf War veterans with ALS and there may be other Gulf War veterans currently suffering from ALS yet to be identified; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs ("Secretary") announced that he would explore VA's options for compensating Gulf War veterans who subsequently develop ALS; and

WHEREAS, VA subsequently directed all VA regional offices to submit all Gulf War ALS cases to VA Central Office for expeditious adjudication; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Secretary's announcement and subsequent action, VA did not have plans to draft a regulation establishing an ALS presumption under current law guaranteeing compensation for Gulf War veterans who develop ALS in the future; and

WHEREAS, The joint VA and DoD study was published in the scientific journal "Neurology" in September 2003, resulting in the Secretary to publicly announce that this "final study" supports his 2001 decision to compensate Gulf War veterans stricken with ALS; and

WHEREAS, Despite this public announcement and the Secretary's initial decision

to expeditiously service-connect, on a direct basis, Gulf War veterans diagnosed with ALS, VA recently informed The American Legion that it would be "premature" at this time to create a regulatory presumption of service connection for Gulf War veterans with ALS; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion pursue specific legislation to establish ALS as a condition presumed to be service-connected when incurred by veterans of the Gulf War.

Resolution No. 20: The American Legion Policy On The Department Of Veterans Affairs Medical School Affiliations
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and its medical school affiliates have enjoyed a long-standing and exemplary relationship for over 50 years that has continued to thrive and evolve to the present day; and

WHEREAS, VHA has four core missions that include patient care, education, research and contingency support for the Department of Defense (DoD) medical services and the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS); and

WHEREAS, VHA conducts the largest coordinated education and training program for health care professions in the nation and medical school affiliations allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to train new health professionals to meet the health care needs of veterans and the nation; and

WHEREAS, Medical school affiliations have been a major factor in VA's ability to recruit and retain high quality physicians and to provide veterans access to the most advanced medical technology and cutting edge research; and

WHEREAS, VHA research has made countless contributions to improve the quality of life for veterans and the general population, and the medical school affiliations are an integral component of VA's ability to expand medical knowledge through research; and

WHEREAS, The partnership with this country's medical schools has allowed VHA to enhance its ability to provide quality medical care to America's veterans, to promote excellence in education and research, and to provide back-up medical care to the Department of Defense in the event of war or national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The academic medical model of integrated clinical care, education and research is universally accepted as the best means of providing high quality and state-of-the-art medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion affirm its strong commitment and support for the mutually beneficial affiliations between the Veterans Health Administration and the medical schools of this nation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA medical school affiliates should be appropriately represented as a stakeholder on any national Task Force, Commission, or Committee established to deliberate on veterans health care.

Resolution No. 21: Protect Disability Rating After Ten Years
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Section 110 of title 38, United States Code, now provides for the

protection of all disability compensation evaluations that have been continuously in effect for 20 or more years; and

WHEREAS, Permanence should be conceded for disability compensation ratings which have been in effect for 10 years without change in evaluation with no further examination scheduled; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion recommend that section 110 of title 38, United States Code, be amended to provide that disability evaluations continuously in effect at that same evaluation rate be protected after a period of ten years.

Resolution No. 22: Request Congress Provide VA Adequate Funding For Medical And Prosthetic Research Activities

Origin: Michigan

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical and Prosthetic Research Service is very productive in advancing medical knowledge and improving health care for veterans and all other citizens; and

WHEREAS, VA has developed the cardiac pacemaker, nicotine patch, the concepts that led to the Computerized Axial Tomography (CAT) scan, and other medical breakthroughs; and

WHEREAS, VA physicians and scientists conduct more than 9,000 research projects each year; and

WHEREAS, Basic biomedical research provides the most rational and cost-effective means of preventive health care and provides treatments and cures for many diseases; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research lead to the creation of new knowledge in biotechnology and serve as a successful model in lowering long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, In 1998, VA realigned its research priorities in response to recommendations of the Department's Research Realignment and Advisory Committee to better serve the needs of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is a venture undertaken by the VA Medical and Prosthetic Research Service to establish a national system to translate research discoveries, innovation, effective and efficient diagnostic and treatment strategies into patient care; and

WHEREAS, QUERI is a comprehensive, data driven, outcome-based quality improvement program that will ensure excellence in all areas of Veterans Health Administration medical care: in-patient, out-patient and long-term care; and

WHEREAS, Continued research is urgently needed for many diseases if medical science is to overcome cancer, heart disease, AIDS, new strains of tuberculosis, mental illness, hepatitis and others, to help spare veterans and citizens from prolonged illness and permanent disabilities; and

WHEREAS, The need to reduce the nation's budget deficit must not compromise the efforts to maintain and improve health productivity and develop new preventive and therapeutic procedures through the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government agencies; and

WHEREAS, The VA Medical and Prosthetic Research budget has not kept pace with inflation during the past 15 years, unlike other federal agencies that have received

significant funding increases; and

WHEREAS, It is essential that Congress and the Administration support strong medical and prosthetic research programs within VA so that veterans and all citizens continue to benefit from the exceptional research capability of the Department; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support adequate funding for VA biomedical research activities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress and the Administration encourage acceleration in the development and initiation of needed research on conditions that significantly affect veterans-such as prostate cancer, addictive disorders, trauma and wound healing, post-traumatic stress disorder, rehabilitation, and others-jointly with the Department of Defense, the National Institutes of Health, other federal agencies, academic institutions and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 23: Support Presumption Of Service Connection For Hepatitis C
Origin: Michigan
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is an easily transmittable blood-borne virus, which can result in long-term, potentially fatal health problems; and

WHEREAS, Because of the exposure risk factors directly related to military service, veterans have a much higher incidence of hepatitis C than the general population; and

WHEREAS, VA estimates 10 to 20 percent of veterans currently have hepatitis C, compared to under 2 percent for the general population; and

WHEREAS, Vietnam veterans are the group most directly affected by the hepatitis C virus; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans who contracted hepatitis C 25 or 30 years ago or more in service are now showing signs of severe liver disease and 52 percent of the liver transplants done by VA are for veterans with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, In 85 percent of cases, no acute symptoms would have shown up at the time of infection with hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Military training and combat situations offer many opportunities for transmitting the blood-borne hepatitis virus through blood to blood contact; and

WHEREAS, No effective blood test for hepatitis C was available until 1992; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with hepatitis C who were treated for acute hepatitis during military service and who now claim service connection are generally denied by VA, because they cannot prove the current hepatitis C is related to the hepatitis noted in service; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Veterans' Appeals often rejects claims for service connection for hepatitis C, because the veteran's medical records do not show the presence of hepatitis C at time of discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Because of the nature of this disease and the long latency period, veterans who experience certain exposure risk factors in service, such as: blood transfusion prior to 1992; exposure to blood on or through the skin or mucous membrane; hemodyalisis; experience of a needle-stick accident or medical event involving a needle, not due to the veteran's willful misconduct; a diagnosis of unexplained liver disease in service; experience of an unexplained liver dysfunction or abnormal liver test; or duty as a health-care position or specialty as prescribed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; should be accorded a statutory presumption for the purpose of establishing entitlement to

service connection for hepatitis C; and

WHEREAS, Service connection for hepatitis C is important to veterans and their families, since it entitles the veteran to compensation for any disability related to the disease as well as necessary medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to expeditiously promulgate regulations providing for presumptive service connection for hepatitis C; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to provide for a statutory presumption of service connection for hepatitis C under certain conditions in service; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs provide regular notification to Congress, the veterans service organizations, and veterans on new treatment modalities for hepatitis C.

Resolution No. 90: Support Legislation To Remove The Bar On The Payment Of Dependency And Indemnity Compensation Benefits To Surviving Spouses Who Remarry After Age 55
Origin: North Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program provides tax-free monthly benefits to the surviving spouses of veterans who die in or as a result of military experience; and

WHEREAS, DIC was created for two purposes: (1) to replace family income lost due to the servicemember's or veteran's death; and (2) to serve as reparation for the death; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 108-83 removed the remarriage penalty for those surviving spouses aged 57 or older who would otherwise have been entitled to DIC; and

WHEREAS, This legislation brought DIC program benefits more in line with benefits provided to surviving spouses of military retirees under the Department of Defense's Survivor Benefit Plan and to surviving spouses under the Social Security program; and

WHEREAS, The age 57 remarriage provision was utilized by Congress as a "budget savings," rather than opting for age 55, which is what The American Legion has long advocated; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the American Legion shall support legislation to remove the bar on the payment of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits to surviving spouses who remarry after age 55.

Resolution No. 92: Special Pension For World War I Veterans
Origin: North Dakota
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The median age of the surviving veterans of World War I is more than 100 years of age; and

WHEREAS, Their numbers have declined rapidly over the past years from 63,000

in 1990 to probably less than several hundred today; and

WHEREAS, Over this same period, the number of living female veterans of World War I has also declined sharply from 2,800 in 1990 to only a few today; and

WHEREAS, When these veterans returned home more than eighty years ago, there were no government programs to assist in their readjustment to civilian life; and

WHEREAS, Through the years, veterans of World War I worked tirelessly to develop and support the comprehensive programs of veterans benefits and services for subsequent generations of American war veterans; and

WHEREAS, Now, they are ill or infirm and no longer able to work; and

WHEREAS, In many instances, they are subsisting in financial hardship; and

WHEREAS, The government of the United States and the American people have a moral obligation to insure that all veterans of World War I are not forgotten in their last years; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, since its founding in 1919 by veterans of World War I, has maintained its special concern for the needs and welfare of these veterans; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of World War I are deserving of a special measure of recognition and attention, because of their efforts and sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, The most direct and tangible way for the nation to fulfill its obligation to those remaining veterans of World War I is to provide them a modest measure of monthly financial support; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, so as to provide that:

1. **The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay to each veteran of World War I, who meets the service requirements set forth in title 38, United States Code, section 1521(j), a special pension in the amount of $150 per month;**
2. **Such special pension shall be paid without regard to (1) any income of any kind payable to the veteran's spouse, and (2) the corpus of the veteran's estate; and**
3. **Any eligible veteran in receipt of pension under title 38, United States Code, section 1512, may also receive such special pension.**

Resolution No. 103: Improve The Disability And Death Pension Program
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-588, the Veterans and Survivors Pension Improvement Act of 1978, provided major changes in the disability and death pension program for the veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars and their surviving spouses and children; and

WHEREAS, This pension program established different guaranteed annual income levels for necessary economic support; and

WHEREAS, After extensive study, The American Legion concludes that certain inequities exist in the Improved Pension program that need to be addressed by Congress; and

WHEREAS, Under the current death pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving spouse with no income and no dependents is $6,497 or about only two thirds of the amount received by a veteran with no income and no dependents; and

WHEREAS, In addition, current regulations provide that surviving spouses are not entitled to pension benefits for the month in which the veteran dies, if they are not found

eligible for death pension; and

WHEREAS, The majority of these surviving spouses are elderly and disabled and are living below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, Under the current death pension program, the annual benefit rate for a surviving child with no income where there is no surviving spouse is $1,653 or seventeen percent of the amount received by a veteran with no income or dependents; and

WHEREAS, This limited amount may impose a severe financial hardship on the surviving child; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, section 1543 where the surviving child is residing with a person who is legally responsible for such child's support, the income and corpus of estate of that person is countable for the purposes of determining entitlement or continued entitlement to pension benefits; and

WHEREAS, Currently, when two veterans are married to one another where both meet the disability, service and income requirements, basic pension benefits are payable only at the rate of a "veteran with one dependent," which is currently $12,692 annually; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that since each veteran in their own right meets the eligibility criteria for pension with the exception of being married to another veteran, this discriminatory provision of the law should be eliminated and each veteran should be paid at the basic pension rate of a single veteran without dependents which is $9,690, reduced by the amount of countable family income; and

WHEREAS, In the determination of annual income, payments under all Government Life Insurance programs are countable, but proceeds from fire and casualty insurance policies may be excluded; and

WHEREAS, Previous pension programs have excluded the proceeds of Government Life Insurance Policies in the determination of annual income; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the effective date of reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income shall be the last day of the month in which the change occurred; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes it would lessen the financial hardship of such adjustments to pension if any such change would be made as of the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support amendments to title 38, United States Code, to accomplish the following: Establish the pension rates of surviving spouses at ninety percent of the rate for a veteran without dependents;

1. **Establish the pension rate for a surviving child where there is no surviving spouse entitled at ninety percent of the rate of a veteran without dependents;**
2. **Delete the requirement that the income and corpus of estate of a person legally responsible for the support of a surviving child be counted in the determination of annual income of such child;**
3. **Provide that when two veterans, who meet the service, disability and income requirements for pension eligibility, are married to one another, each shall be paid at the rate of a single veteran without dependents reduced by the amount of countable family income;**
4. **Exclude in the determination of annual income payments all proceeds from Government Life Insurance policies;**

5. **Change the effective date for reduction or discontinuance of pension based on a change of income from the last day of the month in which the change occurred to the last day of the calendar year in which the change occurred.**

Resolution No. 105: All Veterans Receive "Wartime" Benefits For Active Military Service Between February 28, 1961, And August 5, 1964
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Certain VA benefits require wartime service by veterans; and

WHEREAS, The present dates for wartime service during the Vietnam War are August 5, 1964, through May 7 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served from February 28 1961, through August 5, 1964, shall be considered as serving during the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, On November 10, 1997, Public Law 105-110 was signed by President Clinton; and

WHEREAS, This legislation amended the public law which established The American
Legion (41 Stat. 285; 36 United States Code (USC) 45), approved September 16, 1919, by striking December 22, 1961, and inserting February 28, 1961; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always advocated the principle of equal benefits for equal service and believes that wartime service is not limited to only those who served in combat; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the provision in section 101(29(A), title 38, USC, which limits entitlement to wartime benefits to those who served "in-country in the Republic of Vietnam" in the period February 28, 1961, to August 5, 1964, discriminates against those other veterans who served on active duty during this period, but who did not happen to have been stationed in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, During these early years of the war in Vietnam, those serving on active duty in other parts of the world were a part of the build-up of military forces in Vietnam and were subject to transfer to Vietnam at any time; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall seek legislation to establish February 28, 1961, as the beginning date of the Vietnam War for VA benefit purposes.

Resolution No. 111: Extend Presumptive Period For Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) To Seven Years
Origin: Oregon
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) begins insidiously, involving degeneration of the nerve cells either in the brain, the brain stem, or spinal cord and is characterized by atrophy and almost always fibrillation of the muscular system of the body; and

WHEREAS, ALS in its primary stage is difficult, if not impossible, to diagnose since in this stage the condition may appear to be dormant with little or no progression of symptoms for many years, thus leading the individual and his doctor to believe that the condition has become arrested and nothing more is done to establish its diagnostic entity; and

WHEREAS, Some Gulf War veterans have been diagnosed with ALS several years

following discharge from service and some veterans have been denied service connection because the condition was not diagnosed while on active duty or within the presumptive time frame; and

WHEREAS, Gulf War veterans diagnosed with ALS so far appear to be generally younger than the average ALS sufferers; and

WHEREAS, In addition to two studies, published in the scientific journal "Neurology" in September 2003, that concluded that deployed Gulf War veterans are twice as likely as their non-deployed counterparts to develop ALS, new research conducted by Harvard University suggests an elevated risk of ALS for anyone who served in the military; and

WHEREAS, A presumptive period of one year from the date of termination of active duty as currently provided for ALS under title 38, United States Code, section 1112(a) is inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge that legislation be enacted to extend the current presumptive period for service connection of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis from one year to seven years from the date of separation from active duty.

Resolution No. 112: Restore And Increase Burial And Plot Allowance
Origin: Oregon
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 115 (VA); Resolution No. 135 (MA); and Resolution No. 309 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Benefits for deceased veterans include a burial and a plot allowance to assist families in providing a proper burial of their loved one; and

WHEREAS, The National Cemeteries Act (Public Law 95-73) enacted in 1973 established a burial allowance of $250 for eligible wartime veterans, and a $1500 burial allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1990 limited the payment of the burial plot allowance of $150, which was previously paid to all honorably discharged wartime veterans, to only those veterans who are indigent or who are in receipt of VA disability compensation or pension; and

WHEREAS, Although there have been subsequent increases in the allowances, the infrequent incremental increases have meant that the current $300 burial plot allowance and respective $300 and $2000 burial allowances have not kept pace with inflation and increases in the cost of living throughout the years; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 95-73 originally covered 13% of a private burial plot, and now only covers 3%; and

WHEREAS, The $250 burial allowance under Public Law 95-73 represented 22% of the cost of an average funeral of a wartime veteran, at the time; and the current burial allowance reflects only 6% of the cost; and

WHEREAS, The corresponding allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected condition covered 73% of the same average burial; now it only covers 39% of the current average funeral cost; and

WHEREAS, Increases, based on VA's Price-Waterhouse-Cooper Study, "Assessment of Burial Benefits Administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs"

(December 2000), would help to restore the amount and percentages of the allowance payments relative to current burial and plot costs; and

WHEREAS, Tying these allowances to the Consumer Price Index, thus requiring VA to adjust the allowance for inflation annually, would eliminate the need for periodic legislative action to bring the allowance in line current with burial and plot costs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to return the burial allowances and burial plot allowance to all veterans who served during a time of war or conflict; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans now eligible under 38 United States Code (USC) §§ 2302 and 2303 be increased from $300 to $1135; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial allowance for veterans who died as a result of a service-connected condition as set forth in 38 USC § 2307 be increased from $2000 to $3712; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the burial plot allowance be increased from $300 to $670; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA be required to annually adjust burial allowances and burial plot allowance for inflation by tying the increased allowances to the Consumer Price Index.

COMM CHRM MORIN: I now call upon K. Robert Lewis of Connecticut to continue reading of the resolutions.

...At this time Vice Chairman Lewis read the following:

Resolution No. 113: The Department Of Veterans Affairs Involvement In The Department Of Homeland Security
Origin: Oregon
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Homeland Security provides a single source of authority, at the highest level, for all homeland defense programs and policies; and

WHEREAS, The role of the Department of Homeland Security is to coordinate national strategy to strengthen protection against terrorist threats or attacks; and

WHEREAS, One of the critical missions of the Department of Homeland Security is emergency preparedness and response "to minimize the damage and recover from future terrorist attacks"; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system serves as a primary back-up to the Department of Defense (DoD) in the event of military casualties; and

WHEREAS, VA and DoD have a Contingency Hospital System Plan as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

WHEREAS, VA is prepared to augment the DoD's network of hospital and health care facilities in the event of a crisis, with 163 medical centers and a significant medical staff, many of whom are veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA also acts as a federal support organization during major disasters, as one of four partners in the National Disaster Medical System; and

WHEREAS, VA provided medical and psychological support to those in need

during the months following the September 11, 2001, attack; and

WHEREAS, VA also maintains radiological response teams and decontamination systems should radioactive materials ever be used; and

WHEREAS, VA manages the largest health care program and is the largest medical education and health professional training program in the United States; and

WHEREAS, VA is a federal presence in virtually every local community in the country; and

WHEREAS, VA has the ability to move health care professionals to the site of a disaster and provide medical care quickly and efficiently; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the contingency plan for disasters developed by VA and DoD should be integrated as a part of the primary health care procedures of Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge Congress and the Administration to include VA in all strategic planning of the Department of Homeland Security; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress take into account any additional requirements of VA as a result of involvement in Homeland Security obligations when developing VA's annual budget.

Resolution No. 114: The American Legion Policy On The National Cemetery Administration

Origin: Oregon

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA) comprises 120 cemeteries in 39 states (and Puerto Rico) as well as 33 soldiers lots and monuments. NCA was established by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 to provide for the proper burial and registration of graves of Civil War dead; and

WHEREAS, Since 1973, annual interments in NCA have increased from 36,400 to over 89,750 in FY 2003. Annual burials will increase to more than 115,000 in the year 2008 as the aging veteran population peaks; and

WHEREAS, 60 national cemeteries are closed for casket burials. Most of these can accept cremation burials, however, and all of them can inter the spouse or eligible children of a family member already buried. Another 22 national cemeteries are expected to close by the year 2005, but efforts are underway to forestall some of these closures by acquiring adjacent properties; and

WHEREAS, NCA administers a program of grants to states to assist them in establishing or improving state-operated veterans cemeteries. The matched-funds program helps to provide additional burial space for veterans in locations where there are no nearby national cemeteries. Since 1980, NCA's State Cemetery Grants Program has obligated over $189 million to 30 states and the Commonwealth of Guam and the Northern Marianas for the establishment, expansion or improvement of 55 state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, Operations, maintenance, renovation, and construction funding must continually be adjusted to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration; and

WHEREAS, Congress must provide sufficient major construction appropriations to permit NCA to accomplish its stated goal of ensuring that burial in a national or state cemetery is a realistic option by locating cemeteries within 75 miles of ninety percent of

all veterans; and

WHEREAS, The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act eliminated the headstone allowance of $85, which was paid to all eligible veterans in lieu of a government-provided headstone or marker and now directly provides a standard government headstone or grave marker to eligible veterans anywhere in the world; and.

WHEREAS, VA pays a burial allowance of $2,000 for veterans who die of service-related causes. For veterans who were receiving VA compensation or pension VA pays $300 for burial and funeral expenses and $300 for a plot. The plot allowance would still be payable to state veterans cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, If a veteran passes away in a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital, nursing home, or domiciliary, or in an institution at which the individual was receiving hospital or nursing care at the expense of the United States at the time of death, VA will pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial; however, a veteran who passes away in a State Veterans Home is not allowed transportation cost for the remains to the place of burial by VA; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support the establishment of additional national and state veterans cemeteries and columbaria wherever a need for them is apparent and petition Congress to provide required operations and construction funding to ensure VA burial in a national or state veterans cemetery is a realistic option for veterans and their eligible dependents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion go on record as being opposed to any attempt, now or in the future, to collect "User Fees" for burials in any national or state veterans cemetery; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support restoration of a veterans burial allowance for veterans who died of a service-connected cause to seventy-three percent (73%) of the average cost of a funeral and twenty-two percent (22%) for veterans who died while receiving VA disability compensation or pension or who were indigent; that these percentages be made permanent; also, that the average cost of a funeral be tied to the Consumer Price Index, along with restoration of the pre-1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act criteria to provide eligibility for a government-furnished headstone or marker allowance and restoration of the burial plot allowance for all honorably discharged veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support action to provide that when an eligible veteran dies in a state veterans hospital or nursing home, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall pay for the cost of transporting the remains to the place of burial as determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Resolution No. 141: The GI Bill Of Health
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion's intention in its initial draft of the GI Bill of Health was to ensure the permanent existence of an effective veterans health care delivery system for the nation's veterans and their eligible dependents into the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, For the past 50 years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has provided high quality health care to America's veterans, trained numerous health care providers, engaged in innovative research, and supported the Department of Defense and the

Federal Emergency Management Agency in times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, VA began to change the way it delivers health care in the past several years through restructuring and legislative initiatives, which has resulted in the implementation of several of the original provisions of the GI Bill of Health; and

WHEREAS, The elements of the GI Bill of Health that have already been accomplished under measures established by Eligibility Reform in 1996 and the Millennium Bill in 1999, include:

- Portability
- An equitable standardized resource distribution method
- Extension of health care access to all veterans
- A defined benefits package
- Long-term care for veterans rated 70 percent or higher
- or for service-connected conditions; and

WHEREAS, There are two main components of the GI Bill of Health that should be given legislative priority for enactment as separate legislation. The first bill will be known as the "GI Bill of Health-Medicare Reimbursement," and the second as the "GI Bill of Health-Dependents in VA;" and

WHEREAS, The provisions of these bills shall remain the same as the original GI Bill of Health that dealt with these sections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support enacting additional components of the GI Bill of Health through the "GI Bill of Health-Medicare Reimbursement" and the "GI Bill of Health-Dependents in VA."

Resolution No. 143: The American Legion Policy On Agent Orange
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was the most common herbicide used in Southeast Asia by the U.S. Armed Forces during the Vietnam War from 1962-1971; and

WHEREAS, Agent Orange was contaminated by the carcinogen dioxin (2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin [TCDD]); and

WHEREAS, Over 2 million veterans served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War and are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange; and

WHEREAS, Scientific evidence has linked human exposure to dioxin and certain diseases; and

WHEREAS, A significant number of Vietnam veterans have developed various cancers, neurological disorders, liver dysfunction and other severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported Public Law 96-151 which mandated that VA fund a non-government scientific body to conduct a major epidemiology study of Vietnam veterans; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has still not funded the major epidemiology study mandated by public law; and

WHEREAS, In view of the current absence of alternative judicial recourse to remedy the injustice perpetuated on so many disabled Vietnam veterans, their families and survivors, The American Legion will continue to monitor other pending dioxin-related suits; and

WHEREAS, Information has recently been released by the Department of the Defense on numerous locations other than Vietnam where the herbicide was tested,

sprayed, and stored, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York, in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in the 1960s and 1970s and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 1968-69; and the storage of unused herbicide on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific from 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, set forth certain presumptions that apply to claims for service connection based on herbicide exposure by veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in other locations during these periods who may have been exposed to the herbicide and who may have developed one of the recognized Agent Orange-related diseases, set forth in title 38, United States Code, section 1116 and title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, section 3.309, are not entitled to presumptive service connection for their disability, rather they must meet the more stringent requirements for direct service connection; and

WHEREAS, This inequity was not contemplated at the time of the enactment of Public Law 102-4, the Agent Orange Act of 1991, as amended, due to limited available information on the full extent of the United States' Agent Orange testing, spraying, and storage activities; and

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, benefits are payable to children of veterans that served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period January 9, 1962, to May 7, 1975, and who suffer from the birth defect spina bifida; and

WHEREAS, Prior to and during this period, Agent Orange was also sprayed by U.S. Armed Forces in numerous areas other than the Republic of Vietnam, including: testing at Fort Drum, New York in 1959; spraying in the Panama Canal Zone in 1960s and 1970s and the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 1968-69; and storage of unused Agent Orange on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific in 1972-78; and

WHEREAS, Recent legislation has extended the spina bifida benefits to include the children of veterans who served in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone during the period of September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, and determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to have been exposed to herbicides during such service; and

WHEREAS, The children of veterans who served in locations other than Vietnam and Korea who were possibly exposed to Agent Orange would be denied entitlement to compensation for spina bifida under the current statute and regulations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continue to urge the completion of the scientific study mandated by Public Law 96-151; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion vigorously support the liberalization of the rules relating to the evaluation of studies involving exposure to dioxin and the adjudication of claims based on Agent Orange exposure; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the development of all ongoing research on the long-term effects of Agent Orange exposure and point out to the proper officials any perceived deficiencies or discrepancies in these projects; and to ensure that government committees charged with review of such research are composed of impartial members of the medical and scientific community; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That veterans reporting to VA medical care facilities claiming exposure to Agent Orange be provided examinations and treatment which are

thorough and appropriate, and that VA physicians demonstrate compassion in responding to the medical needs of these veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, section 1116, to provide entitlement to these presumptions for those veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in areas other than the Republic of Vietnam where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, Chapter 18, to provide entitlement to spina bifida benefits for the child or children of any veteran who was exposed to Agent Orange as the result of service in the Republic of Vietnam or in other locations where Agent Orange was tested, sprayed, or stored.

Resolution No. 149: The American Legion Policy On Department Of Veterans Affairs Mental Health Services
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has a substantial mental health population. According to the Committee on Care of Veterans with Serious Mental Illness, 17% of the 4.7 million patients who received health care in the VA system in 2003 received some type of mental health service; and

WHEREAS, There has been significant restructuring of VA mental health services during the past several years; and

WHEREAS, This restructuring has often resulted in a downsizing of in-patient-based care, and the shift of treatment programs from residential-based to ambulatory-based programs; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate re-investment of resources in alternative treatment modalities to maintain community-based mental health services to treat veterans who were de-institutionalized by the closure of inpatient programs; and

WHEREAS, VA has failed to comply with the mandate of Public Law 107-135 to maintain required capacity to treat veterans with mental illness or substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) distribution system has under-funded all mental health cohorts, in particular the cost of treatment for veterans with serious mental illness; and

WHEREAS, The VA Advisory Committee on Seriously Mentally Ill estimates the shift in resources from mental health programs may be as much as $600 million; and

WHEREAS, Since FY 1996, the number of veterans provided specialized substance abuse treatment declined by 14% and the funding for such treatment declined by more than 50%; and

WHEREAS, Since the restructuring, the Veterans Health Administration now has more mental health patients seeking treatment with fewer mental health providers; and

WHEREAS, Veterans continue to need increased access to mental health services, including, but not limited to, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Substance Abuse Disorder Programs, and Compensated Work Therapy Programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall support the development and appropriate funding of the full continuum of VA mental health services required by veterans seeking treatment; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA comply with Public Law 107-135, and maintain required capacity to treat veterans with mental illness or substance disorders; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That a VA-based model be used in assessing and addressing the mental health needs of the veteran community within the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress provide annual oversight of VA's mental health services.

Resolution No. 153: VA Role In National Emergency Preparedness
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Under title 38, United States Code, 8111A, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been established as the principal medical care back-up for military health care "during and immediately following a period of war, or a period of national emergency declared by the President or the Congress that involves the use of the Armed Forces in armed conflict"; and

WHEREAS, Under the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the Federal Response Plan (FRP) VA's specialized duties entail conducting and evaluating disaster and terrorist attack simulation exercises; managing the nation's stockpile of pharmaceuticals for biological and chemical toxins; maintaining a rapid response team for radiological releases; and training public and private NDMS medical center personnel around the country in properly responding to biological, chemical, or radiological disasters; and

WHEREAS, The VA Strategic Plan for 2001-2006 lists as an objective, "Improve nation's response in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster by providing timely and effective contingency medical support and other services"; and

WHEREAS, If VA is to play a key supporting role as part of the FRP and the NDMS, it must have adequate resources to execute its role; and

WHEREAS, The Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process was designed to ensure that VA's capital infrastructure meets the needs of veterans for health care services in 2010 and beyond; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That implementation of the CARES decision must take into consideration and sustain VA's ability to perform its fourth mission as a back up to the Department of Defense; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to continue to take an active role in the development and implementation of plans to enhance federal homeland security initiatives; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly urge the President and Congress to provide VA with the funding necessary to further enhance its capacity to act as a back-up to DoD in times of war and to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to national emergencies.

Resolution No. 154: The American Legion Policy On The State Veterans Home Program
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, State Veterans Homes were founded for indigent and disabled Civil

War veterans beginning in the late 1800s and have continued to serve subsequent generations of veterans for over one hundred years; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are 109 State Veterans Homes facilities in 47 states with over 23,000 beds providing nursing home, hospital and domiciliary care, with more capacity being added annually; and

WHEREAS, The State Veterans Home Program has proven to be a cost-effective provider of quality care to many of the nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, This program is an important adjunct to VA's own nursing, hospital and domiciliary programs; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, authorizes VA per diem payments for veterans residing in State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, Under the provisions of title 38, United States Code, VA is also authorized to make payments to states to assist in the construction and maintenance of State Veterans Homes; and

WHEREAS, The Grant for Construction of State Veterans Home Program, which provides funding for 65% of the total cost of building new veterans homes, has not been able to keep pace with the number of grant applications; and

WHEREAS, The enactment of the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits bill makes it mandatory that VA provide institutional care and nursing home service to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated at 70% or higher; and

WHEREAS, Currently the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will only provide these services to 70% or higher service-connected veterans, if the veteran either resides in a VA long-term care facility or a private contracted facility, but not in a State Veterans Home; and

WHEREAS, Veterans with a rating of 50% or greater service connection receive VA pharmaceutical benefits at no cost; and

WHEREAS, Pharmaceutical services are available at the Veterans State Homes for these veterans, but they are required to unnecessarily travel to VA facilities to receive them; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing the growth in long-term health care needs of older veterans, it is essential to maintain the State Veterans Home Program as a viable and important adjunct health care provider to the VA system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004That The American Legion support an increase of the authorized VA per diem payments to a rate of 50% of the cost of providing care in a State Veterans Home; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to pass legislation that adequately funds the State Veterans Home Construction Grant projects; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA should allow for full reimbursement of nursing home care to 70% service-connected veterans or higher, if the veteran resides in a State Veterans Home; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support the receipt of prescription drugs and over-the-counter medication in State Homes by veterans enrolled in the VA health care system who have a VA disability rating of 50% or greater; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the National Association of State Veterans Homes and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to support mutual planning efforts, enhanced medical sharing agreements, and enhanced-use

construction contracts with qualified providers.

Resolution No. 155: Revision Of The Work-Rate Standards For Department Of Veterans Affairs Adjudicators
Origin: Washington
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work-rate standards are based upon a series of work credits or End Products (EPs) that can be taken upon completion of work at the various stages in the processing of a claim; and

WHEREAS, This data is used to measure and evaluate each individual adjudicator's performance as well as the station's overall performance; and

WHEREAS, Under this type of system, the amount of work performed is measured in terms of the cumulative number of EPs reported without regard to whether the action taken, as indicated by the EP, was correct or proper; and

WHEREAS, Since all action-good and bad-receives the same amount of work credit, there is no incentive to do good quality work or disincentive to do poor quality work, which makes the use of these work credits prone to manipulation and abuse; and

WHEREAS, The use of a piecemeal approach to work measurement does not provide accurate or reliable information on the actual amount of work being performed, its quality, or the amount of time and resources needed to properly process a claim; and

WHEREAS, The number of new appeals filed each year and the overturn rate by the Board of Veterans Appeals (BVA) and the courts can be useful tools in gauging claimant satisfaction with the "quality" of a VA regional office decision and how the BVA views the propriety of these decisions; and

WHEREAS, Since decisions of VA regional office adjudicators do not become final until ruled upon by the BVA, or the claimant does not file a timely appeal within one year; and

WHEREAS, Without a fundamental change in the work measurement system, the BVA will continue to be burdened with an inordinate number of unnecessary appeals, and veterans and their families forced to endure prolonged hardship while waiting for a final decision on their claim; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide that VA regional office adjudicators shall not receive work credit for a claim until the decision in that claim becomes final, meaning that no future action is permitted by statute, either because the claimant has failed to initiate a timely appeal or the Board of Veterans Appeals has rendered a final decision on the claim.

Resolution No. 198: The American Legion Policy On Radiation
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1112, lists various diseases which will be presumed to be service-connected in radiation-exposed veterans; and

WHEREAS, The term "radiation-exposed veteran" (or atomic veteran) is defined as a veteran who participated in a radiation-risk activity while on active duty or inactive duty for training; and

WHEREAS, The term "radiation-risk activity" is defined as involving onsite

participation in an atmospheric nuclear weapons test, or the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki during the period beginning on August 6, 1945, and ending on July 1, 1946, or internment as a POW in Japan during WWII which resulted in an opportunity for radiation exposure, or, more recently, participation in underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, Alaska prior to January 1, 1974, or service at gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio, or Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, In addition to those radiogenic diseases recognized in the statute as being presumed to be related to the veteran's exposure to radiation in service, Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 3.309, now includes bone, brain, colon, lung and ovarian cancer; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, CFR, section 3.311, requires VA to consider the circumstances of the veteran's service and make a determination of whether the veteran's disease resulted from the claimed exposure; and

WHEREAS, Such determinations are based heavily on an estimate of the veteran's probable dose exposure; and

WHEREAS, It is well documented that, because thousands of veterans who participated in the atmospheric nuclear weapons tests and various other radiation-risk activities did not have dosimetry badges, and record-keeping by the military and other Federal agencies concerning individual and group exposures was poor, current radiation dose estimates have been arbitrary, unreliable, and inaccurate; and

WHEREAS, VA's continued use of questionable radiation dose estimates has caused the claims of thousands of radiation-exposed veterans to be denied; and

WHEREAS, Congress recently expressed concern about this problem in a provision of Public Law (PL) 106-419 requiring VA to conduct a two-year study of the radiation dose estimate program and report back to Congress; and

WHEREAS, Based on the lack of credible historic data as to the amount of radiation atomic veterans were actually exposed to, The American Legion believes this requirement in the regulations should be eliminated; and

WHEREAS, PL 106-398 included provisions amending the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 to include workers in Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons-related programs who were exposed to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, thousands of veterans have been assigned duty at various DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities, such as Hanford, Washington, Oak Ridge, Tennessee and others, and would have been similarly at risk of exposure to radiation, beryllium, or silica; and

WHEREAS, The claim for a radiogenic disease or a disease related to beryllium or silica by such veterans would be denied by VA, because their military duty does not meet the current definition of a radiation-risk activity in title 38 and proof of such exposure for direct service connection would be difficult if not impossible to obtain, nor do these veterans meet the eligibility criteria for benefits under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion seek legislation to eliminate the radiation dose estimate requirement in claims of veterans who were exposed to ionizing radiation during their military service; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to recognize military duty at all DOE nuclear weapons development, testing and manufacturing facilities as a "radiation-risk activity"; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion seek legislation to include in title 38, United States Code, those diseases recognized for benefit purposes under the Radiation Compensation Act of 1990 as amended, including those resulting from exposure to beryllium and silica.

Resolution No. 199: The American Legion Policy On Prostate Cancer Research And Treatment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer, other than skin cancer, among men in the United States and is second only to lung cancer as a cause of cancer-related death among men; and

WHEREAS, About 16 percent of American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lives; 8 percent will develop significant symptoms; and 3 percent will die of the disease; and

WHEREAS, The American Cancer Society estimates that 231,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed and that approximately 29,900 men will die of the disease in 2004; and

WHEREAS, Prostate cancer has been demonstrated to be service-connected to Agent Orange exposure and, pursuant to the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has determined that a presumption of service connection based on exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam is warranted for prostate cancer, in that VA has found a positive association between the condition and such exposure; and

WHEREAS, Advances in biomedical research are leading to new treatments and cures for all forms of cancer, and will lower long-term health care costs; and

WHEREAS, VA is very productive in advancing medical knowledge, improving health care for veterans and all other citizens, and obtained in 2003, funding for 1286 projects totaling $43 million in prostate cancer research; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That federal funding for prostate cancer research, treatment, and therapies at the National Institutes of Health, Department of Defense, and Department of Veterans Affairs be significantly increased and that Congress and the Administration re-double their efforts to find a cure for prostate cancer; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Health Administration increase its investment in prostate cancer clinical research by improving and accelerating clinical trials at VA hospitals and affiliated university medical centers and research programs.

Resolution No. 200: Support Medicare Reimbursement For The Department Of Veterans Affairs
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides medical care to eligible beneficiaries as authorized by title 38, United States Code; and

WHEREAS, The fundamental branch of VA that administers and operates this medical care delivery system is the Veterans Health Administration (VHA); and

WHEREAS, VHA is the nation's largest comprehensive, integrated health care delivery system that provides excellence in health care value, service, education and research; and

WHEREAS, The mission of VHA is to meet the medical needs of America's veterans by providing specialized care, primary care and related medical and social support services for eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA consists of hospitals, ambulatory clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries and readjustment counseling centers located nationwide; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be the nation's largest educator of health care professionals through its affiliations with medical schools, academic medical centers and other research institutions; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to be a major national research asset conducting basic, clinical, epidemiological and behavioral studies across the entire spectrum of scientific discipline; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to serve as a contingency back-up to Department of Defense (DoD) medical services and, during national emergencies, supports the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS); and

WHEREAS, Open enrollment in VHA for all eligible veterans is based on honorable military service; and

WHEREAS, Enrollment in VHA could be limited by the availability of existing annual federal discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA continues to seek other revenue streams to supplement limited annual federal discretionary appropriations and meet the growing demands for quality treatment of enrolled veterans; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect and retain payments from enrolled veterans and their health care insurers, except Medicare, for inpatient and outpatient care, outpatient medications and long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is a prepaid, federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans; and

WHEREAS, Medicare is an entitlement program for nearly forty million Americans; and

WHEREAS, VA is prohibited from billing and collecting Medicare reimbursements for the treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions of enrolled Medicare-eligible veterans; and

WHEREAS, Indian Health Service has successfully demonstrated the ability to bill and collect Medicare reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's GI Bill of Health proposes Medicare Reimbursement for VA, as a realistic health care entitlement for enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans seeking treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions in VHA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 1, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion advocate to Congress amending title XVIII of the Social Security Act, to allow Medicare Reimbursement for VA on a fee-for-service basis for the treatment of nonservice-connected medical conditions of enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That enrolled, Medicare-eligible veterans be authorized to participate in the Medicare Advantage option by choosing VA as their primary health care provider.

Resolution No. 201: Open-Ended Presumptive Period For Undiagnosed Illnesses

For Gulf War Veterans
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Thousands of Gulf War veterans still suffer from chronic unexplained physical symptoms; and

WHEREAS, The numerous symptoms experienced by sick Gulf War veterans are not well understood and the causes of such symptoms remain elusive and answers could likely remain evasive for some time; and

WHEREAS, There currently is little significant research on long-term health effects of many of the agents Gulf War veterans were potentially exposed to during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Additional research into the long-term health effects of exposures is needed, a fact confirmed in a September 2000 report by the Institute of Medicine on the health effects of exposures during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, The current presumptive period for undiagnosed illnesses expires at the end of 2006; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge that legislation be enacted to extend the presumptive period for service connection for ill-defined and undiagnosed illnesses indefinitely.

Resolution No. 202: The American Legion Policy On Gulf War Veterans Illnesses
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Approximately 700,000 members of the United States Armed Forces were deployed to the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, More than 40,000 women served in theater during the Gulf War; and

WHEREAS, Over 20 percent of new recruits in the Armed Forces today are women and that percentage is likely to grow in the coming years; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of Gulf War veterans are in good health, thousands of Gulf War veterans nevertheless suffer from unexplained physical symptoms known as "Gulf War veterans illnesses"; and

WHEREAS, Over 200 scientific studies are investigating these illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Few of the aforementioned studies are focused exclusively on the illnesses experienced by women Gulf War veterans; and

WHEREAS, Misleading information about Gulf War veterans illnesses has spread on the Internet and through the media, and this information has caused a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the severity and prevalence of Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine is currently preparing reports that evaluate the nature, the likely causes and the Federal Government's response to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, These reports directly effect Department of Veterans Affairs compensation programs for Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several independent expert scientific committees and organizations have stated that a number of suspected causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses are not likely associated with those illnesses, whereas others are more likely associated with those illnesses; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary of Veterans Affairs recently established a committee

comprised of doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans and veteran service organization representatives to provide guidance and advice on future Gulf War-related research efforts; and

WHEREAS, Pyridostigmine bromide was used by the United States and some coalition troops as a nerve agent pre-treatment during the Gulf War although the Food and Drug Administration had not approved the drug for that use and some researchers contend that pyridostigmine bromide may be associated with Gulf War veterans illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Several medical studies have found that the unexplained physical symptoms reported by Gulf War veterans are similar to other medically unexplained symptom syndromes like chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States recently signed into law legislation amending the Gulf War Undiagnosed Illness Law (title 38, United States Code, section 1117) to include medically unexplained disabilities such as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, and irritable bowel syndrome; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's contract with a medical consultant from the University of Connecticut proved invaluable in helping the organization strive towards its goal of serving Gulf War veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to devote the appropriate resources to finding effective medical treatments to alleviate the unexplained physical symptoms of Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs fund more scientific studies that exclusively investigate the health of women Gulf War veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to quickly implement any reasonable recommendations contained in Institute of Medicine reports, or recommendations offered by the newly established Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans Illnesses, regarding its Gulf War veterans programs and research; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the scientific community to focus its efforts on the most likely causes of Gulf War veterans illnesses and to refrain from supporting or encouraging investigations of risk factors that are not likely related to Gulf War veterans illnesses; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Defense to not use investigational drugs on U.S. troops without their informed consent; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourage the Department of Veterans Affairs to closely monitor the implementation of the changes to title 38, United States Code, section 1117, to ensure proper application of the law at the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office level; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Veterans Affairs continue to develop the Persian Gulf Registry; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion will continue to consult with medical experts from time to time in order to ensure the effectiveness of its advocacy.

COMM CHRM MORIN: I now call on Rick Simmons, South Carolina,

Subcommittee Secretary to continue reading of the resolutions.

...At this time Subcommittee Secretary Simmons read the following:

Resolution No. 203: Provide Full Funding For VA Construction Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The health care delivery facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are increasingly aging physical plants in need of replacement; substantial renovation and improvements relating to fire, safety and privacy standards are necessary, as well as modernization and reconfiguration to meet the demands of the advances of medicine; and

WHEREAS, The increasing demands placed upon the outpatient and ambulatory care facilities of VA require substantial alterations to meet changing space requirements; and

WHEREAS, No health care delivery system can be expected to provide quality care if the physical settings that house that care are allowed to deteriorate to a state which places them beyond redemption; and

WHEREAS, VA has undertaken a Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) planning process with the stated intent to realign its medical facilities and services more effectively and more efficiently; and

WHEREAS, The CARES process will develop a National CARES Plan that will require detailed implementation plans; and

WHEREAS, Major and minor construction appropriations for VA have been consistently targeted for reduction since such funding is regrettably the most vulnerable to annual assault; and

WHEREAS, Sufficient funding must be provided to maintain, improve and realign VA health care facilities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge Congress to annually appropriate sufficient funds for the Department of Veterans Affairs construction program to ensure the continued provision of quality health care to our nation's veterans; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) receive necessary construction funding in transforming the VA health care system within the proposed National CARES Plan to ensure veterans have increased access to a modern VA health care system.

Resolution No. 206: Annual State of VA Medical Facilities Report
Origin: Georgia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 18 (MI); Resolution No. 147 (MA); and Resolution No. 248 (PA))

WHEREAS, The Legionnaires at the 85th National Convention (2003) of The American Legion in St. Louis, Missouri, passed Resolution 147, "A System Worth Saving: National Commander's VA Facility Report"; and

WHEREAS, The resolution states The American Legion shall continue nationwide site visits of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers and other health care facilities; and

WHEREAS, These site visits are to be made by the National Commander or his

designee and require a final report to be submitted to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, This report is titled the "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" and held as a priority issue in the portfolio of The American Legion; and

WHEREAS, The National Commander uses all means to communicate and advocate the importance of the Task Force findings and the "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" to the President, the administration and the Congress of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The National Commander's schedule is such that he is not always available to communicate this message to Congress or the President; and

WHEREAS, The information garnered gives strong support to The American Legion's position supporting Mandatory Funding for the VA medical system; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission is one of the four pillars of The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion, through the Veterans Affairs Commission, continue the yearly publication of the "State of VA Medical Facilities Report"; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That these site visits be conducted by the National Commander's System Worth Saving Task Force members and/or the staff of The American Legion Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That information be gathered through site visits and through questionnaires filled out by VA medical center staff to create an annual "State of VA Medical Facilities Report"; and, be it further

RESOLVED, This annual report be given annually to The President of the United States, the administration, the members of Congress and to the American People; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The annual report be given to the National Convention of The American Legion.

Resolution No. 212: Include World War II Veterans In Priority Group 6 For VA Health Care

Origin: Texas

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

(As amended)

WHEREAS, World War II ended nearly sixty years ago; and

WHEREAS, Veterans who served in this war have been called the "Greatest Generation"; and

WHEREAS, Many served in combat areas for over three years, and participated in as many as six or seven invasions; and

WHEREAS, Most have exhausted their funds for proper medical care; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has had a longstanding position in support of priority health care for World War II veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support legislation to amend title 38 to include World War II veterans in the Priority Group 6 enrollment category for VA health care.

Resolution No. 217: Exempt VA Benefits And Services From Pay-Go Provisions

Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Budget Enforcement Act (BEA) significantly amended the laws pertaining to the budget process by constraining direct spending through a Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) requirement for all legislation affecting the direct spending of all federal agencies and departments; and

WHEREAS, Under this statute, as an example, if Congress wishes to establish a new entitlement or expand an existing program for veterans, it must find the money to fund such change within existing budget limits; and

WHEREAS, Wartime disabled veterans have earned the benefits and services they, their dependents and survivors receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as a result of the injuries sustained during their period of wartime service; and

WHEREAS, The benefits and services received by wartime-disabled veterans as a result of their service-connected disabilities are an extension of the cost of war; and

WHEREAS, This country has a moral obligation to continue to care for these citizen-soldiers who have risen in defense and support of the ideals of this great nation and who have returned to civilian life with service-connected disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Since BEA PAY-GO requires Congress to fund new benefits or services within existing spending limits, this, in effect, requires one group of disabled veterans to give up benefits or services, so that another group of wartime disabled veterans can receive benefits or services to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The budget implications of PAY-GO are often a deterrent to favorable congressional action on major changes in veterans legislation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support legislation to exempt VA benefits and services provided to service-connected disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors from the Pay-As-You-Go (PAY-GO) provision of the Budget Enforcement Act.

Resolution No. 218: Urge VA To Establish A Policy For Reimbursement Of Payments When A Claim For Service Connection Is Awarded
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Veterans assigned to VA Health Care Priority Groups 7 and 8 who have a pending VA claim for service-connected conditions and receive care at Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Centers must make copayments for that care and prescribed medications; and

WHEREAS, Third party health insurance providers must also make payments for medical care when properly billed; and

WHEREAS, There is no uniform application of current procedures to ensure proper repayment of first and third party payments when any claimed condition is rated service-connected; and

WHEREAS, Most veterans are not aware or informed that they can apply for such reimbursement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to initiate action to ensure that there is uniform application of the procedures to grant reimbursement of copayments when

service connection is granted to a veteran; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The Department of Veterans Affairs should be urged to ensure veterans are made aware of how to apply for reimbursement of medical and prescription copayments by providing written instructions within each Award Letter advising veterans of the proper procedure to initiate such reimbursement action.

Resolution No. 219: Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives To Develop Claims For The Department Of Veterans Affairs
Origin: New York
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, There are over 25,000,000 honorably discharged veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there are approximately 430,000 veterans who have some type of action pending on their claims by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, Approximately 80,000 of those claims are over six months old; and

WHEREAS, In addition, there is a growing backlog of pending appeals, which is now over 129,000 cases, as well as over 16,000 cases at the Appeals Management Center; and

WHEREAS, Appeals are, by definition, among the oldest claims in the system and reflect the claimant's belief that they have not received a fair or proper decision; and

WHEREAS, The nation's veteran population is dying at a rate of over 1,300 veterans a day; and

WHEREAS, Proposed legislation to reduce the backlog of veteran's claims at VA was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Under that proposed legislation, the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers offered to partner with VA in order to eliminate the backlog of claims for veteran's benefits; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of the County Veterans Service Officers who are members of the National Association are, in fact, accredited representatives of The American Legion and employed by local municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The proposed legislation would have allowed the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to choose a County Veterans Service Office for development of a claim based upon the office's geographical proximity to the claimant; and

WHEREAS, County Veterans Service Officers are already working long hours to assist veterans and eligible dependents in the application for, administration of, or receipt of benefits under any federal, state, or county veterans benefits program; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals to a County Service Officer imply a dual role, that of advocate for the veteran and adjudicator of the veteran all at the same time; and

WHEREAS, VA referrals could jeopardize the veteran-service officer confidentiality and even violate the Privacy Act and Power of Attorney relationship; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any federal legislation requiring an American Legion-accredited representative to develop claims for VA.

Resolution No. 220: Oppose Increased Co-Payments And An Enrollment Fee For Priority Groups 7 And 8 Veterans To Receive VA Health Care

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Since the enactment of Public Law (PL) 104-262, that authorized eligibility reform and open enrollment process, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), has experienced a dramatic growth from 2.5 million veterans to over 6 million veterans enrolled in VA health care; and

WHEREAS, FY 2002 saw the astronomical growth of Priority Group 7 veterans seeking health care at their local VA medical facility and the creation of a new Priority Group 8; and

WHEREAS, VA, upon creating the new Priority Group 8, placed an immediate suspension on all new Priority Group 8 enrollments; and

WHEREAS, VHA is authorized to bill, collect, and retain co-payments and third party insurance payment revenue streams of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, VA plans to increase the outpatient co-payment from $15 to $20 and the prescription co-payment from $7 to $15 per 30 day supply and levy a $250 enrollment fee on Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans; and

WHEREAS, The co-payment increases and enrollment fees could suppress the demand for VA services at the expense of Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans who may not be able to afford the co-payment increases and $250 out-of-pocket enrollment fee; and

WHEREAS, VA believes these initiatives will ultimately drive 1.2 million veterans away from the VA health care system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion adamantly oppose any effort to increase co-payments or impose an enrollment fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 veterans to receive VA health care.

Resolution No. 221: Support Legislation To Mandate The National Institutes Of Health To Reimburse VA For The Facility And Administrative ("Indirect") Costs Of NIH-Funded Research Conducted At VA

Origin: New York

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Research and Development (ORD) conducts research projects sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH); and

WHEREAS, There are associated costs of conducting this research that include administrative costs and use of facilities, referred to as "Indirect Costs"; and

WHEREAS, NIH has been unwilling to reimburse VA ORD for these indirect facilities and administrative (F&A) costs; and

WHEREAS, Universities, non-profit research organizations (NPROs) and even foreign investigators in France receive F&A costs in addition to their NIH award grants; and

WHEREAS, The university/NPRO F&A rate is as much as 45% of the grant amount, and the rate for the French researchers is 8%; and

WHEREAS, Currently, VA hosts approximately $200 million in NIH-funded research that would qualify for "indirect" cost reimbursement at universities and other sites, but for which VA receives nothing; and

WHEREAS, VA estimates that an F&A rate of 23.5% would result in a total cost recovery of $47 million; and

WHEREAS, That amount constitutes a small proportion of the $29 billion NIH

budget, but a substantial portion of the $400 million appropriated VA research budget; and

WHEREAS, Title 42, United States Code, section 238d, states, in pertinent part: "Appropriations to the Public Health Service available under this chapter for research, training, or demonstration project grants...shall also be available on the same terms and conditions as apply to non-Federal institutions, for grants for the same purpose to Federal institutions, except that grants to Federal institutions may be funded at 100 per centum of the costs"; and

WHEREAS, NIH's refusal to reimburse VA ORD for these F&A costs has forced VA to divert funds from medical care, infrastructure repairs and meritorious research at a time when VA is struggling to deal with expanding workload and inadequate appropriations; and

WHEREAS, NIH refuses to reimburse VA for F&A costs because NIH holds that those costs are supplemental to VA's appropriation and considers such reimbursement illegal; and

WHEREAS, At a meeting held in November 2002 between VA and NIH lawyers it was agreed that NIH reimbursement of VA F&A costs did not constitute a supplement to VA's appropriation, yet NIH refuses to reverse its position, even following hearings by the House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in 2002 that strongly supported VA receiving F&A dollars; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the American Legion seek legislation that would amend title 42, United States Code, section 238d, to add specific language to mandate that NIH must reimburse the Department of Veterans Affairs for the facilities and administrative ("Indirect") costs of NIH-funded research conducted at VA facilities at a rate of 100% of the determined facilities and administrative costs.

Resolution No. 235: Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Remove The Specific Date For The Award Of Dependency And Indemnity Compensation Benefits For Surviving Spouses Of Former POWS

Origin: Wyoming

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Benefits Act, Public Law 106-11, authorized payment of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits to the survivors of former POWs who died after September 30, 1999, and who were continuously rated totally disabled due to a service-connected disability for a period of not less than one year immediately preceding death; and

WHEREAS, There are thousands of widows whose spouse was a former POW who died before September 30, 1999, and who was rated totally disabled for over one year for a service-connected disability; and

WHEREAS, These widows are not able to become eligible for DIC because their husband's death was before September 30, 1999; and

WHEREAS, When other survivor benefit programs were liberalized, they usually covered the widows of veterans who died before the enactment of the law, e.g., deaths from cancers from Agent Orange; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in

Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to amend section 1318 of title 38, United States Code, to remove the date of September 30, 1999, and substitute "who died any time after discharge from active duty and who were rated totally disabled for over one year."

Resolution No. 236: The American Legion Policy On Department Of Veterans Affairs National Service Life Insurance
Origin: Wyoming
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, No regular government life insurance program was available to veterans entering and leaving service in the period January 1957 to September 1965; and

WHEREAS, Veterans of the Vietnam War serving on active duty during the period beginning September 29, 1965, through May 7, 1975, were covered under either the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program or, later, the Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) program; and

WHEREAS, Upon discharge or separation from service, individuals had only 120 days within which to convert their government life insurance to a private commercial policy, with Veterans Group Life Insurance not becoming available until August 1974, with a retroactive open period to 1970 for unconverted active or inactive SGLI policies, but not applying to the major portion of the Vietnam War; and

WHEREAS, Many of these veterans experienced extraordinarily severe readjustment problems and were often financially and/or emotionally unable to take advantage of the conversion provision within the 120-day time limit after discharge from service; and

WHEREAS, Many Vietnam War veterans who did not convert their government life insurance to a private policy, as well as veterans of the World War II and Korean War period whose National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) polices may have lapsed, and veterans of the Cold War period of 1957-1965 who had no government life insurance coverage for their families' protection, but because of disability may not be able to purchase commercial insurance; and

WHEREAS, There is precedent for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program in that it was previously reopened in 1965-1966 for World War II and Korean War veterans with disabilities who had been eligible to apply for NSLI on or after October 8, 1940, through December 31, 1956, (disabilities could have been service-connected and/or nonservice-connected); and

WHEREAS, Since 1951, veterans granted a service-connected disability and who are otherwise in good health may purchase up to a basic $10,000 of NSLI service-disabled insurance at standard rates within two years from the date the VA notifies them of the grant of service connection (one year prior to September 1, 1991); and

WHEREAS, Many such eligible veterans, due to financial hardships and problems associated with their service-connected disabilities and adjustments to civilian life, or to notification problems resulting from VA procedures, did not apply for NSLI service-disabled insurance within the prescribed eligibility period; and

WHEREAS, VA service-disabled life insurance does not permit an eligibility period for increases in previously rated service-connected disabilities, but only for new ratings; and

WHEREAS, Those who may now be able to afford insurance at standard

NSLI-disabled rates, and who still would meet the underwriting criteria, cannot apply due to the statutory bar; and

WHEREAS, The continuous inflation of the past four decades has rendered the maximum face value of $10,000 for basic NSLI coverage totally inadequate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion sponsor and support legislation to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the reopening of the National Service Life Insurance program for a minimum of one year for all disabled veterans within underwriting criteria similar to that of the Veterans Reopened Program of 1965-1966, to include a similar reopened period for the service-disabled insurance program for those veterans in good health except for their service-connected disabilities, regardless of the date of their service-connected rating, and that such reopened issues be at a maximum optional face value at a level that appropriately reflects current inflationary experience.

Resolution No. 237: The American Legion Policy On Nurse Recruitment And Retention

Origin: Wyoming

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has the largest nursing work force in the country with over 55,000 nursing personnel; and

WHEREAS, This work force has four basic categories of employees consisting of advanced practice nurses (APNs), registered nurses (RNs), licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and nursing assistants; and

WHEREAS, VA nurses are one of the most important resources in delivering high-quality, compassionate care to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The nation is facing an unprecedented nursing shortage that could potentially have a profound impact on the care given to our nation's veterans; and

WHEREAS, A study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* found there were shorter inpatient stays and lower complication rates in hospitals with higher staffing levels, while there were longer inpatient stays and increased urinary infections, gastrointestinal bleeding, pneumonia and shock or cardiac arrest in hospitals with lower staffing levels; and

WHEREAS, VA nurses are consistently reporting that nurse staffing levels are inadequate to provide safe and effective care; and

WHEREAS, Many VA nurses also report that wage scales and benefits are inadequate and restrict the ability of VA to keep beds and programs functional; and

WHEREAS, VA nursing workforce data support the conclusion that it is likely the number of current VA nurses in the workforce will decline sharply and rapidly; and

WHEREAS, This decline is attributed to an aging workforce wherein large number of nursing personnel will be eligible for retirement through 2005; and

WHEREAS, VA must be able to retain and recruit well-qualified nurses in order to maintain the quality of care provided to veterans; and

WHEREAS, A significant part of this recruitment and retention effort is VA-administered initiatives to enhance the educational preparation of nursing personnel, including scholarship and loan repayment programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion

urge the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop an aggressive strategy to recruit, train, and retain advanced practice nurses, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing assistants to meet the inpatient and outpatient health care needs of veterans; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion affirm its support of VA education-assistance programs for APNs, RNs, LPNs, and nursing assistants; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to provide equitable and competitive wages for APNs, RNs, LPNs, and nursing assistants.

Resolution No. 239: Support Research About Breast Cancer
Origin: Wisconsin
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Breast cancer is second only to skin cancer in women; and

WHEREAS, Its prevention, cause and cure remain largely undiscovered; and

WHEREAS, One out of nine women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Breast cancer is on the increase in men; and

WHEREAS, Military personnel may be subjected to higher risk due to exposure to radioactive materials, chemicals, chemical protective garments and nuclear powered vessels; and

WHEREAS, The incidence of breast cancer increases with age, particularly after the age of forty (40), which is the time when military personnel have already, or, are contemplating retirement and may be unaware of the potential difficulty; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense and other appropriate federal agencies to initiate and develop a comprehensive study to determine if breast cancer is increasing at a faster rate for current or retired military personnel than for the civilian population; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this study should also determine if there is a greater incidence of breast cancer in those who are, or were, exposed to radioactive materials, chemicals and nuclear generated energy.

Resolution No. 305: Reduce The Number Of Years Of 100% Service Connection Required For DIC Purposes
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is paid to the widows and widowers of service-connected disabled veterans who die as a result of their service-related condition or who at the time of death were rated 100% service-connected disabled for at least ten years; and

WHEREAS, Many veterans don't reach the 100% level until they are much older and their condition has worsened; and

WHEREAS, They often pass away due to other then their service-related condition well before they have been receiving the 100% rate for the required length of time; and

WHEREAS, The spouse has usually been the primary care giver and companion for these disabled veterans throughout the veterans lifetime and the VA compensation has been a primary means of support; and

WHEREAS, The surviving spouse in many instances can no longer count on VA benefits for assistance due to 100% rating of less then ten years; and

WHEREAS, This causes a dramatic change in the quality of life of the surviving spouse; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to reduce the number of years a veteran must be rated 100% from 10 years to 5 years for eligibility to DIC payments.

Resolution No. 306: Exempt Certain Income From VA Pension Rate Determination
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Serving on jury duty is a civic obligation, which all citizens, when called, should take very seriously; and

WHEREAS, At many polling places, there is a shortage of needed supervisory personnel and serving as an election judge helps insure a fair and impartial election process; and

WHEREAS, Veterans and surviving spouses in receipt of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits under Public Law (PL) 95-588 must report all income received from outside sources, since this directly affects the amount of VA pension to which they are entitled; and

WHEREAS, The amount of financial remuneration received from these types of civic activities is relatively small, but it can result in the reduction in monthly benefits, dollar for dollar, or the complete loss of entitlement to pension; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt income received from jury duty and income from service as an election judge in determining the VA pension rate under PL 95-588.

Resolution No. 307: Allow Beneficiaries To Retain $90 Of Their VA Benefits While In Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, When a veteran without dependents in receipt of pension benefits is covered by Medicaid for nursing home care, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension is reduced to $90 for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, However, when a veteran without dependents who is receiving compensation benefits and is similarly covered by Medicaid, only $30 a month is allowed for incidentals; and

WHEREAS, When a helpless child who is in receipt of pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no

provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, When a surviving parent who is in receipt of Parent's DIC and is similarly covered by Medicaid, there is no provision for VA to reduce the individual's award for incidental expenses; and

WHEREAS, Under current VA and Medicaid statutes, the service-disabled veteran, helpless child, and surviving parent are financially disadvantaged; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to authorize that, while in a Medicaid-covered nursing home, veterans in receipt of VA compensation, or a helpless child in receipt of VA pension or DIC, or a surviving parent in receipt of VA Parents' DIC shall be allowed to keep up to $90 of their monthly VA benefits for incidental expenses.

Resolution No. 312: Exempt Purple Heart Recipients From Prescription Co-Payment

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Under the new category system at the VA medical centers, those who were awarded the Purple Heart have been singled out as a special group of veterans deserving special consideration for their service and sacrifice to their country; and

WHEREAS, This special group of veterans has been placed in Priority Group 3; and

WHEREAS, Priority Group 3 veterans do not have to make any co-payment for any of their inpatient or outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, These same veterans, if they are rated under 50% service-connected disabled or receiving prescriptions for a nonservice-connected condition are charged a $7 co-payment for each 30 day supply of medication; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall sponsor and support legislation to exempt all those who were awarded the Purple Heart from any co-payment for prescription drugs.

Resolution No. 318: The American Legion Policy On Department Of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Long-Term Care (LTC) has been the subject of discussion and legislation for nearly twenty years. In a landmark July 1984 study, Caring for the Older Veteran, it was predicted that a wave of elderly veterans had the potential to overwhelm VA's long-term care capacity; and

WHEREAS, The recommendations of the Federal Advisory Committee on the Future of Long-Term Care in its 1998 report VA Long-Term Care at the Crossroads, made recommendations that serve as the foundation for VA's national strategy to revitalize and reengineer long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, enacted in November 1999, required VA to continue to ensure 1998 levels of extended care services (defined as VA nursing home care, VA domiciliary, VA home-based primary care, and VA adult day health care) in its facilities; and

WHEREAS, The Millennium Act specifically requires VA to maintain its in-house Nursing Home Care Unit (NHCU) bed capacity at the 1998 level of 13,391. However, VA has never met this mandate, and now, the FY 2005 VA Budget Submission calls for a VA NHCU Average Daily Census of 8500, a deficit of nearly 5000 beds; and

WHEREAS, Recent General Accounting Office reports show that VA has failed to fully implement mandates of the Millennium Act that would expand non-institutional long-term care services; and

WHEREAS, VA's FY 2005 Budget Submission calls for the shift of some $270 million to non-institutional long-term care programs, which will be to the detriment of VA's inpatient NHCU capacity and veterans who need this level of care; and

WHEREAS, To meet the requirements of the Millennium Act, VA is seeking statutory authority to count non-VA nursing home beds, primarily State Veterans Homes' capacity, as their own; and

WHEREAS, Despite twenty years of forewarning, the February 2004 CARES Commission Report to the Secretary of VA states that VA has yet to develop a long-term care strategic plan with well-articulated policies that address the issues of access and integrate planning for the long-term care of seriously mentally ill veterans; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That VA should be required to restore its nursing home care unit capacity as intended by Congress to the 1998 level of 13,391; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA must create incentives and receive appropriate funding to maintain its nursing home care unit beds rather than abandon them to alternative sources; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That VA be prohibited from counting any but their own nursing home care unit beds for the purposes of compliance with the provisions of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress should appropriate sufficient funds to support the provisions of the non-institutional long-term care mandates of Public Law 106-117, the Millennium Act, so that VA is not forced to reduce its nursing home care unit capacity in order to comply with said non-institutional care mandates.

Resolution No. 319: Amend Title 38, United States Code, To Increase The Special Monthly Compensation K Award

Origin: Illinois

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The American Legion is a national organization of veterans who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state and nation; and

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code (USC), section 1114, provides for the payment of disability compensation for a service-connected disability, which is rated from ten percent to one hundred percent under the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Schedule for Rating Disabilities for the particular disability; and

WHEREAS, An additional $82 in Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) is payable, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k), where a veteran, as the result of a service-connected disability, has suffered the anatomical loss or loss of use of one or more creative organs, or one foot, or one hand, both buttocks, or blindness in one eye and having only light perception in the other eye, or rendered unable to speak, or deafness in both ears, or in the case of a female veteran, suffered the anatomical loss of one or both

breasts, including by mastectomy; and

WHEREAS, The SMC (k) award, which is paid over and above the amount of compensation authorized under title 38, USC, section 1114, for these losses or loss of use disabilities, is intended to recognize the lifelong physical limitations and psychological trauma associated with such loss or loss of use of the veterans' limbs or other body parts; and

WHEREAS, In contrast to regular increases in the rates of disability compensation through the years, the SMC (k) award, which was initially authorized in 1939, has been increased infrequently; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, the SMC (k) award was originally $18.75 when the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled was $75; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, the SMC (k) award is currently $82 and the rate of compensation for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled is $2239; and

WHEREAS, Veterans are again being placed in harm's way, and many of the seriously wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have suffered loss or loss of use injuries; and

WHEREAS, The token payment of $82 is a disgrace to those men and women who have put their bodies on the line in the service of their country and paid a heavy price, as a result; and

WHEREAS, To restore the original twenty-five percent (25%) differential that existed in 1939 between the amount of the (k) award and the compensation rate for being totally or one-hundred percent disabled, the SMC (k) award should be increased to $560; and

WHEREAS, This substantial increase would provide a more appropriate level of additional compensation to those veterans who have suffered these types of grievous wounds; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support an increase in the SMC (k) award, under title 38, USC, section 1114(k), from $82 to $560.

Resolution No. 327: The American Legion Policy Regarding Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)

Origin: California

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, A Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) is a health care site in a fixed position that is geographically distinct from the parent medical facility; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC can be a site that is VA-operated; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC site can also be contracted since the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act, Public Law 104-262, significantly enhanced VA's sharing authority so that it may now be used to contract for primary care and/or for a CBOC; and

WHEREAS, Since 1995, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) of the Department of Veterans Affairs has activated over 600 new CBOCs to more efficiently and effectively serve eligible veterans and provide care in the most appropriate setting; and

WHEREAS, The establishment of CBOCs is subject to multiple criteria including the development of a CBOC business plan and application of national CBOC criteria, VA Central Office approval and notification of Congress, the availability of funds within the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), and applicable federal statutes and VA

regulations; and

WHEREAS, A CBOC must have the necessary professional medical staff, access to diagnostic testing and treatment capability, and referral arrangements needed to ensure continuity of health care for currently and potentially eligible veteran patients; and

WHEREAS, The VISN Network remains the focal point for CBOC planning, allowing decisions regarding needs and priorities to be made in the context of local market circumstances; and

WHEREAS, CBOC proposals must meet minimum uniform criteria and standards to ensure consistency nation-wide; and

WHEREAS, There has been a major shift in the delivery of mental health services away from inpatient care and towards outpatient care; and

WHEREAS, There has not been a commensurate shift in resources to support the necessary continuum of outpatient care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion affirm its support for the development of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) that meet established criteria as a means of improving veterans access to high quality health care services in the most appropriate setting and in a cost-effective manner; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continue to monitor the incorporation of mental health services as an integral component in the planning, development, and activation of CBOCs to promote reasonable access to services, and to ensure sufficient resources and capacity at CBOCs to meet the mental health needs of the local veteran population.

COMM CHRM MORIN: I now call on Pat Phillips of Georgia, Secretary for continuance.

...At this time Secretary Phillips read the following:

Resolution No. 328: Project 112/Operation "Shipboard Hazard And Defense" (SHAD)
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 26 (MT))

WHEREAS, Project 112 refers to a program of chemical and biological tests planned by the Department of Defense (DoD) conducted in 1962-1973 and that encompassed both land and sea-based testing; and

WHEREAS, Operation "Shipboard Hazard and Defense" (SHAD)-the ship-based portion of the testing-was conducted to assess the vulnerabilities of U.S. Navy ships and their ability to maintain operational readiness in the event of a chemical or biological attack; and

WHEREAS, Identified SHAD tests were conducted on various open sea locations in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, and off the coasts of San Diego, Hawaii, the Marshall Islands and Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, The land-based component was conducted in, mainly, Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Georgia, Maryland, Utah, Canada, Great Britain, Panama and one unspecified location; and

WHEREAS, Participants included, primarily, Navy and Marine Corps personnel, with assistance from Air Force and Army personnel; and

deceased, to establish guidelines to be used in examining participants of SHAD and awarding appropriate compensation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend that VA and any government agency that conducts health or mortality studies on SHAD participants disclose their findings to the public; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA be urged to reopen all cases involving veterans of identified units to determine any long-term health effects from exposure to chemical and biological agents during these tests and, when supported by medical and scientific evidence, that these veterans be granted compensation and benefits for disabilities associated with their participation in Project SHAD and associated tests.

Resolution No. 329: The American Legion Policy On Department Of Veterans Affairs Compensation
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The current disability compensation program has proven to be a fair and equitable manner in which to indemnify veterans suffering disabilities that are incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the military, naval, or air service; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is totally supportive of every benefit that is currently provided to veterans for their past contributions to their country and its welfare; and

WHEREAS, Disability compensation is a monthly payment made by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) based on a schedule of ratings of reduction in earning capacity from specific injuries as set forth in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations; and

WHEREAS, It is the opinion of The American Legion that there is no way to adequately compensate a veteran for loss of ability to be a working, productive member of society, and that the current monthly rates do not adequately compensate these disabled veterans for the loss due to reduced earning capacity; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes Congress should periodically review the amount of disability compensation veterans are receiving and provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to assure they have sufficient economic support; and

WHEREAS, Periodically, proposals are made to tax VA disability compensation benefits; and

WHEREAS, Taxation of these benefits would amount to nothing more than a permanent, enduring reduction in benefits and would demean the sacrifice and service of our nation's service-connected disabled veteran population; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion vigorously oppose any proposal that would subject VA disability compensation benefits to taxation; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any administrative or legislative proposal to dilute or eliminate any provision of the disability compensation program; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion support legislation to amend Title 38, United States Code, section 1114, to provide a periodic COLA increase and to increase the monthly rates of disability compensation; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any legislative effort to automatically index such cost-of-living adjustments to the cost-of-living adjustment

WHEREAS, Testing the effectiveness of shipboard detection and protective procedures against chemical and biological threats exposed participants to simulated and live biological and chemical agents, as well as decontaminates, that have potential adverse health effects for those participating; and

WHEREAS, Veterans involved in the tests suffer from multiple complaints, especially illnesses associated with the respiratory system; and

WHEREAS, DoD has concluded its Project 112/SHAD investigation and submitted its report to Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); and

WHEREAS, DoD has identified 5,842 participants of Project 112/SHAD and provided this information to VA; and

WHEREAS, VA has been attempting to notify all of the identified service members of their participation in Project 112/SHAD and encourage them to visit VA medical facilities to receive medical evaluations for health effects experienced that are believed to have resulted from Project 112/SHAD exposures, or if they believe they were exposed to harmful agents; and

WHEREAS, 134 tests had been planned: 50 tests were actually conducted and 84 had been cancelled; and

WHEREAS, DoD has declassified the medically relevant information necessary for VA to determine health risks to exposed participants of Project 112/SHAD and created fact sheets containing the names of the units involved with the various tests; and

WHEREAS, DoD created fact sheets with information about the nature of the tests, those who participated, the time frame and location of the tests, the chemicals, decontaminates and other agents used; and

WHEREAS, VA is working to establish a new system of records that can be used as a mechanism for processing claims; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense's Deployment Health Support Directorate will provide information to the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist SHAD participants in their claims by verifying their units' participation in Project SHAD; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That DoD consider all new information that surfaces and disclose any new developments related to Project 112/SHAD in a timely manner; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to ensure that all of the 5,842 participants involved in the tests receive prompt notification of their entitlement to benefits and health care for any ailment that may have resulted from their exposures; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to keep an organized account of claims from Project 112/SHAD participants in order to monitor any trends in ailments and to keep abreast of the number of claims granted for SHAD-related ailments; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend that VA routinely disseminate all declassified information pertaining to Project 112/SHAD, especially long-term health consequences of exposure to various agents used in SHAD, names of participants identified as well as ships and units involved, to all department medical facilities and regional offices responsible for processing disability benefit claims; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge VA to conduct thorough health assessments of participants as they are located, as well as the records of those

authorized for Social Security recipients, nonservice-connected disability recipients and death pension beneficiaries.

Resolution No. 330: The American Legion Policy On Former Prisoners Of War
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, In its interest for the welfare of all those who have served in the nation's Armed Forces, one of the major concerns of The American Legion has been the welfare of those who have been prisoners of war (POWs); and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has supported various legislative measures intended to alleviate the disabilities that afflict former POWs as a result of experience during internment; and

WHEREAS, In the past, The American Legion supported enactment of Public Law 97-37, the Former Prisoners of War Benefits Act of 1981, approved August 14, 1981, and the presumptions included in Public Law 100-322; and

WHEREAS, The number of surviving former POWs of the four American Wars of the Twentieth Century is rapidly declining; and

WHEREAS, Continued scientific observation of their condition during the years subsequent to their internment indicates additional health problems probably associated with the conditions of their internment; and

WHEREAS, The United States has a fundamental obligation to do everything possible to alleviate any and all health problems of former POWs and see to their physical, social, and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes there is a need to further modify the current provisions of title 38, United States Code, that provide for former POWs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall support legislation to amend section 1112 of Title 38, United States Code, so as to provide presumptive service connection for the following conditions in the absence of demonstrable intercurrent disease or injury:

1. **Hepatitis or other infectious diseases of the liver;**
2. **Organic residuals of hypothermia, e.g. trench foot, immersion foot or hand, Raynaud's disease;**
3. **Arthritis, including osteoporosis;**
4. **Chronic pulmonary disease (where there is a history of forced labor in mines during internment);**
5. **Chronic liver disease;**
6. **Heart disease;**
7. **Stroke;**
8. **Adult-onset diabetes; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The Department of Veteran Affairs rescind the requirement that a POW must be held in captivity for at least 30 days to receive benefits and medical care, and grant compensation for disabilities incurred in captivity on a presumptive basis; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall support any and all efforts on the part of the United States government to alleviate and ameliorate social, economic, and physical disabilities experienced by former POWs where such disabilities can reasonably be attributed to the effects of internment by the enemies

of the United States.

Resolution No. 331: The American Legion Policy On VA Medical Care Mandatory Funding
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 89 (ND))

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) annual budget consists of both mandatory and discretionary funding; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding refers to a process where the level of funding is governed by formulas or criteria set forth in authorizing legislation rather than by appropriations; and

WHEREAS, Under budget law, a mandatory program is one that requires provision of benefits to all who meet the eligibility requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding is provided for programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and VA compensation and pension; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, discretionary funding is "all other" funding subject to the annual appropriations process, and

WHEREAS, Discretionary funding in VA's current annual budget provides for programs such as medical care, major and minor construction, National Cemetery Administration, State Extended Care Facility Grants, and State Cemetery Grants; and

WHEREAS, There have been annual struggles to obtain sufficient funding to provide access to quality care for eligible veterans seeking care in VA facilities; and

WHEREAS, A method to provide dependable, stable and sustained funding for veterans health care is needed, and

WHEREAS, Mandatory funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms to ensure adequate VHA funding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That Congress designate VA medical care as mandatory spending; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress continue to provide discretionary funding required to fully operate other programs within the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) budgetary jurisdiction; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress provide, if necessary, supplemental appropriations for budgetary shortfalls in VHA's mandatory and discretionary appropriations to meet the health care needs of America's veterans.

Resolution No. 431: The American Legion Policy On Opening The Federal Supply Schedule For Pharmaceuticals To Medicare And Medicaid
Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 126 (VA); Resolution No. 216 (TX); and Resolution No. 232 (WV))

WHEREAS, The Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals (FSS-P) is a schedule of pharmaceutical supply contracts awarded to responsible vendors supplying comparable products and services at fair and reasonable prices to the Government; and

WHEREAS, FSS-P is essentially a price catalog of approximately 24,000 pharmaceutical products available to the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the largest purchaser of

pharmaceuticals under FSS-P; and

WHEREAS, Pricing of pharmaceuticals to VA is at least 24% below and as much as 60% below drug manufacturers' most favored non-federal, non-retail customer pricing; and

WHEREAS, Known as Federal Ceiling Prices (FCP), these prices are generally 14-20% lower than regular negotiated FSS-P prices; and

WHEREAS, Medicaid is a joint Federal and State program that pays for medical assistance for individuals and families with low incomes and relatively few assets; and

WHEREAS, Forty-one states predicted shortfalls in Medicaid funds in 2003 and most have implemented aggressive measures to control growth and curb expenditures, including prescription drug expenditures; and

WHEREAS, States Medicaid drug expenditures have quadrupled since 1992 from $6.6 billion to $29.7 billion in 2002; and

WHEREAS, Beneficiaries of prescription drug benefits under Medicaid who also receive medical care under Medicare Parts A and B are known as "dual-eligibles"; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligibles" are mostly elderly poor who account for 34% of the enrolled Medicaid population, but 80% of the Medicaid drug bill; and

WHEREAS, "Dual-eligibles" are scheduled to be transferred onto the new Medicare Part D prescription drug benefit when that program becomes fully implemented in FY 2006; and

WHEREAS, Legislation is currently pending in the 108th Congress (S. 2053, H.R. 3707) that would tie the new Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Benefit to FSS-P; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA90) required drug manufacturers to provide rebates to State Medicaid programs for outpatient drug purchases in exchange for Medicaid reimbursement; and

WHEREAS, Manufacturers are willing to price FSS-P low because it accounts for a very small fraction of the total domestic drug market and because up to 70% of new doctors receive some residency training in medical school affiliated VA medical centers, thereby creating a continuous flow of loyal prescribers of their products; and

WHEREAS, When OBRA90 Medicaid rebates went into effect, manufacturers responded by raising FSS-P pricing to VA some 14%; and

WHEREAS, If Federal legislation mandates that the new Medicare Part D drug benefit be tied to FSS-P, pharmaceutical manufacturers will act predictably to raise FSS-P prices to VA; and

WHEREAS, U.S. veterans receiving outpatient VA pharmacy benefits requiring co-payments of $7.00 for a 30-day supply of medication would almost certainly end up paying more were VA to lose its protected FSS-P pricing; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has consistently opposed increases in prescription co-payments in the past, arguing that corrections to other programs should not be made "on the backs of veterans"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion oppose any Federal legislation that would open the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals to Medicaid, Medicare Part D, or any other entity or program not now specifically authorized to purchase on the Federal Supply Schedule for Pharmaceuticals.

Resolution No. 432: The American Legion Policy On VA's Capital Realignment For Enhanced Services (CARES) Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) owns and/or operates a vast and extensive inventory of capital assets (land and buildings); and

WHEREAS, VA's facilities, built and designed decades ago, do not consistently support optimal veterans access to care for the least cost; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that VA was spending too much money, one of every four dollars, to operate and maintain its buildings and other assets; and

WHEREAS, There have been numerous changes in the dynamics of VA health care delivery during the past several years that have shifted care from an inpatient setting to outpatient treatment; and

WHEREAS, VA continues to experience an unprecedented growth in the number of veterans enrolling for VA health care services; and

WHEREAS, Public Law 106-117, the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (The Millennium Bill), directs VA to conduct a comprehensive capital asset management/strategic planning policy study to identify mission realignment proposals; and

WHEREAS, In response to the aforementioned factors, VHA initiated the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) process with the stated goal of enhancing current and future health care services to veterans by realigning its capital assets to improve the delivery of services; and

WHEREAS, Initially, the process was designed to be completed in three phases until all Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) were evaluated and health care delivery options provided to VA; and

WHEREAS, A pilot study of the CARES process was conducted in VISN 12; resulting in a subsequent reorganization; and

WHEREAS, To ensure objectivity, VA established a CARES Commission of external non-VA members to review the draft National CARES Plan and make recommendations to the Secretary for a final decision; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes much of the underutilized space in VA facilities is the result of budget-driven decisions rather than demand-for-services; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned that CARES could result in an effort to reduce VA expenditures under the pretext of cost-savings without regard to the needs of the veteran population; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's position is that no VA medical facility should be closed or realigned for the sole purpose of cost reduction; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's position is that no VA medical facility should be closed, realigned or mission changes made until the receiving facility is prepared to provide the services in full; and

WHEREAS, The Millennium Bill mandates VHA to provide nursing home care to service-connected veterans rated 70 percent and higher and those veterans with service-connected conditions that require nursing home care; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) and VA are seeking ways to integrate their health care services through additional sharing agreements and joint venture opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Homeland Security requirements will begin at the grassroots level and many VHA capital assets may serve local, state and national needs in its role as a contingency back-up to DoD medical services and the National Disaster Medical System

(NDMS) during national emergencies; and

WHEREAS, It is crucial that the CARES process attain its goal to evaluate the best ways to provide quality care to more veterans, now and in the future; and

WHEREAS, The Secretary released the CARES Decision document that contained implementation guidance that will happen over many years; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, That The American Legion stay actively involved in the CARES implementation process at the local, VISN and national level; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the CARES implementation process must be an open and transparent process that continually and fully informs the Veterans Service Organizations of CARES initiatives, criteria, proposals and time frames; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That VA provide a current list of VHA's capital assets to Homeland Security personnel for consideration in strategic planning at the local, state, and national level.

Resolution No. 433: The American Legion Policy On VA's Pharmacy Benefits Program

Origin: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

WHEREAS, The VA basic Medical Benefits Package includes prescription drugs and supplies; and

WHEREAS, VA has experienced unprecedented demand for prescription drugs since open enrollment in 1998; and

WHEREAS, By law (Public Law (P. L.) 101-508 and P. L. 106-117) VA must charge veterans a co-payment for each 30-day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a nonservice-connected condition; and

WHEREAS, The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act (P. L. 106-117) authorized VA to increase the co-payment amount and to establish an annual cap on the amount of medication co-payment charged; and

WHEREAS, The amount of the medication co-payment and the annual cap may be changed on an annual basis; and

WHEREAS, VA increased the amount of the co-payment from $2.00 to $7.00 dollars effective February 4, 2002; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion opposed the rate of that pharmacy co-payment increase citing alternative options; and

WHEREAS, There is now further discussion about tiered increases of the pharmacy co-payment; and

WHEREAS, The Office of Inspector General reported its audit of VA regarding pharmacy co-payment levels and restrictions on filling privately written prescriptions for priority group 7 veterans in December 2000; and

WHEREAS, This report raised the issue that the indirect cost of re-writing private prescriptions that are filled by VA physicians can exceed the direct cost of the prescriptions themselves; and

WHEREAS, VA's policy to fill only prescriptions written by VA physicians and the processes that have been developed to comply with this policy affects all veterans receiving or eligible to receive VA health care; and

WHEREAS, VA has been unable to provide all enrolled veterans with services in a

timely manner and this has generated interest in filling prescriptions from outside providers; and

WHEREAS, Various legislative proposals have been offered to grant VA the authority to provide veterans with pharmaceuticals prescribed by physicians or other health care professionals who have no affiliation with VA; and

WHEREAS, VA is a managed health care system that requires enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Authorizing VA to fill prescriptions from a private sector physician without the veteran enrolling would fundamentally change the system; and

WHEREAS, VA provides medications and pharmaceutical supplies to veterans, with limited exceptions, only in the course of providing medical care; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion oppose significant and/or tiered pharmacy co-payment increases at the expense of veteran beneficiaries, in lieu of seeking alternative funding sources, such as Mandatory Funding and Medicare Reimbursement, that would generate and provide VA with more adequate system-wide funding; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion supports the provision of VA Pharmacy Benefits to enrolled veterans only when prescribed by an authorized VA physician or provider in the course of providing them medical care.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation

Resolution No. 13 (NC): Ensure Patient Privacy In The Transcription Of VA Medical Records

Resolution No. 16 (AZ): Corporate-Sponsored Air Travel For Disabled Veterans

Resolution No. 80 (UT): Oppose Non-Physicians Performing VA Eye Surgery

Resolution No. 85 (TN): Oppose Non-Physicians Performing VA Eye Surgery

Resolution No. 97 (OH): Make VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program More Accessible To Service-Disabled Veterans

Resolution No. 106 (CO): VA Contract Health Care in Remote Areas

Resolution No. 134 (MA): Presumptive Medical Treatment For Persian Gulf War Veterans

Resolution No. 224 (NY): Government Sponsored Insurance Coverage for Servicemembers

Resolution No. 230 (WV): Establish A National Trust Fund To Compensate Veterans For Service-Connected Illnesses Caused By Asbestos Exposure

Resolution No. 234 (WV): Oppose The Current VA Policy Allowing Optometrists To Perform Eye Surgery

Resolution No. 247 (PA): Urge VA to Cease Allowing Non-Surgeons To Perform Invasive Eye Surgery

Resolution No. 310 (IL): Urge Improvement In VA Procedures For The Issuance Of Veterans Preference Letters

Rejected

Resolution No. 2 (AK): Veterans Access to Newer Psychiatric Medications

Resolution No. 15 (AZ): Equipment Allowance For Oxygen-Dependent Veterans On Commercial Flights

Resolution No. 83 (NE): Support Mandatory Care For All Veterans

Resolution No. 86 (PI): The American Legion Policy On Parity Of Benefits For

Filipino Veterans

Resolution No. 87 (PI): Endorse Senate Bill, The Filipino Veterans' Benefits Improvements Act Of 2003

Resolution No. 226 (NY): Require VAROs To Promptly Transfer Appeals To The BVA Upon Receipt Of Substantive Appeal

Resolution No. 231(WV): Urge Passage Of Senate Bill 2290 To Fix The Asbestos Litigation System

Resolution No. 257 (MX): Urge VA To Expand The Availability Of Pamphlets And Forms In Spanish

Resolution No. 262 (MX): Establish VA Accredited Service Officers Within The Jurisdiction Of The Dept. Of Mexico

Resolution No. 308 (IL): Support Legislation To Reinstate Reimbursement For A Private Headstone Purchase

Resolution No. 313 (IL): Eliminate The Benefit Payment Loophole For Certain Incarcerated Veterans

Resolution No. 316 (IL): Request Federal And State Funds For The Guest House At The Quincy, IL Veterans Home

COMM CHRM MORIN: Thank you, Pat. At this time I wish to thank K. Robert, Rick and Pat for assisting in reading this report. Mr. Commander, Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, a duly elected and registered Delegate to this Convention, I move for the adoption of this report respectfully submitted.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Okay. I have a motion and I've heard a second. I indicate that Microphone No. 2, that there is a question. Would somebody give some lights? I can't even see Microphone No. 2. There we are. For what purpose do you rise, sir?

DELEGATION CHRM WINTER (CO): Mr. Commander, I'm Doug Winter, Delegation Chairman from the Department of Colorado.

I rise to ask the Chair to set aside Resolution 106 entitled "The VA Contract Health Care in Remote Areas," resolution for separate consideration.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a request to set aside. And where 's my parliamentarian? Is that a separate motion to do? For what purpose do we set it aside, sir?

DELEGATION CHRM WINTER (CO): Mr. Commander, I understand during the VA&R discussion, there may have been some misinformation. We would ask for the opportunity to correct this information, and therefore I move the Resolution 106 be referred to the VA&R Standing Commission at the October Meetings.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: At this point what we'll do is that I will set it aside. We'll move on the report and then we'll come back to you and allow you to make a motion.

Is there any other discussion? Put Microphone No. 2 back on.

I've been told that your motion can be in order and in that way we don't have to read it and it will be referred and it will be taken up at the NEC, or the Standing Commission.

So, you're making a motion to change from reject 106, to refer 106, is that correct?

DELEGATION CHRM WINTER (CO): Yes, sir.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Do I hear a second to that?

...Second from the floor.

All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' That motion carries. So, we now have the

amended report. Do I have any other discussion? All those in favor of adopting the report as amended say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' The report on VA&R is adopted.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you to all of those who stayed.

Let me make on quick comment that I think is important. This is an election year, and all of our Resolutions that have legislative intent, expire with every Congress. That means that as we go into next year with a newly elected Congress, we have no Resolutions unless we adopt again or restate positions. As a result, we have to go through this to renew. I know this is tedious, but it's also important. Having served as the legislative chair, we have no position. We cannot take action without the Resolutions adopted.

So what we're doing is important work and I realize that we've taken a long time today. We got behind this morning with a politician and we stayed behind, and I really appreciate you sticking with us.

Presentation: William F. Lenker National Service Trophy
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

With the adoption of the VA&R report, it's appropriate to announce the winner of the William F. Lenker National Service Trophy. This trophy is awarded annually to the Department that best supports and implements programs to benefit veterans, their families and their survivors.

For the 2003-2004 program year the trophy is awarded to the Department of Ohio.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Chair recognizes the Dean of our Chairman, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Credentials and Internal Affairs, Herm Harrington of New York for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters
(Section II of Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters)
Herman G. Harrington, New York, Chairman

Forty-four members of the Credentials and Internal Affairs Committee, Section II, elected Herman G. Harrington of New York as Permanent Chairman, and Larry J. Besson of Illinois as Permanent Secretary, and considered nineteen resolutions, fifteen of which originated with Departments of The American Legion and four which were created by the committee. Of these, five were approved; six were referred; three were received and recorded, four were rejected and one was out of order.

Approved

Resolution No. 326: Preserve WWI Veterans Memorial In Mojave Desert
Origin: California
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The motto of The American Legion has been "For God and Country" since its founding by veterans of World War I in 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Department of California, assembled in convention in Riverside County, California, in 2003, by vote of delegates did pass a resolution in support of legislation to officially designate as the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial the site at which in 1934 a cross was erected in tribute to veterans; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress passed legislation designating that site as an official veterans memorial and providing for its preservation by exchanging that one-acre site for a five acre site privately owned, thus placing the veterans memorial in private hands to be cared for by veterans organizations; and

WHEREAS, Notwithstanding that action by Congress, the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has recently ruled at the request of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) that the cross at the Mojave Desert Veterans Memorial must be removed or destroyed; and

WHEREAS, The ACLU has sought and obtained hundreds of thousands of dollars in attorneys fees awarded by judges pursuant to the authority granted to the courts to award attorney fees in such cases pursuant to the Civil Rights Act, 42 United States Code, Section 1988; and

WHEREAS, The authority of judges to impose on taxpayers the burden of paying attorney fee awards to the ACLU for pursuing lawsuits to remove or destroy religious symbols derives exclusively from 42 U.S.C. Section 1988 established by Congress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That Congress should amend 42 U.S.C. Section 1988, to expressly preclude the courts from awarding attorney fees under that statute, in lawsuits brought to remove or destroy religious symbols.

Resolution No. 405: Appreciation To Host City

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The 86th National Convention has been held in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31-September 2, 2004; and

WHEREAS, There has been a spirit of cooperation and friendship along with mutual helpfulness evidenced by the Legionnaires of Tennessee, the officers of the Convention Corporation and the Department, and by the officials and the people of Nashville, Tennessee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That we express our deep appreciation to the Department of Tennessee, Governor Phil Bredesen, Mayor Bill Purcell; the city officials of Nashville, Tennessee, including the Fire Department, Police Department, and other Public Safety Officials, and to the 2004 National Convention Corporation Officers, Jennings B. Loring, President. Around this nucleus has been built the moving force that provided for every necessity that made for a successful and enjoyable Convention.

Resolution No. 404: Legal Immunity For Volunteers

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion volunteer for innumerable activities in support of their communities, States, and the Nation; and

WHEREAS, These volunteers may be sued and forced to undergo a great deal of

unnecessary legal expense for merely trying to help their fellow human beings; and

WHEREAS, In a large number of states the law currently does not afford volunteers sufficient protection from frivolous, improper and harassing lawsuits; and

WHEREAS, This resolution (No. 314, Credentials & Internal Affairs, Section II) was passed by The American Legion while in National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 7, 2000, and reiterated by Resolution No. 252 while in National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 28, 2002, and since not all of the proper legislation has passed, this resolution is for reiteration; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That all state legislatures be urged to introduce and pass legislation to provide volunteers who receive no monetary value for their efforts in helping their fellow citizens, immunity from all suits alleging negligence in their volunteer capacity, except those who may demonstrate willful, gross or intentional negligence.

Resolution No. 403: Award Medal Of Freedom To Harry Colmery

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the "G.I. Bill" was written in long hand by Harry W. Colmery, the act had long been recognized as one of the most influential laws enacted in this century; and

WHEREAS, The veterans of this great nation owe a deep and lasting debt of gratitude to Harry W. Colmery for his ability to set down on paper a document which truly transformed their lives and gave them an opportunity to advance their status in life; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is fully aware of Harry W. Colmery's contribution as well as the fact that he has not had the recognition he so richly deserves for this meaningful service to all servicemen and women; and

WHEREAS, This resolution (No. 330, Credentials & Internal Affairs, Section II) was passed by the American Legion while in National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, September 9, 1998, and since no action has been taken by The President of the United States, this resolution is submitted by reiteration; and

WHEREAS, There is a concurrent resolution working in the 108th Congress (passed by the House but currently in the Senate—SCON 117) which expresses the sense of Congress that the President should posthumously award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Harry W. Colmery; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That Congress be asked to pass a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the President of the United States award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Harry W. Colmery; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the American Legion continue efforts to ask the President of the United States of America to ensure the posthumous award of the Medal of Freedom to Harry W. Colmery, Past National Commander of The American Legion and author of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the "G. I. Bill"; in recognition of his role in one of the most significant single pieces of legislation in the history of the United States.

Resolution No. 402: To Support An Amendment To The Internal Revenue Code To Require The Secretary Of The Treasury To Set The Charitable (Volunteer) Standard Mileage

Origin: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

Submitted by: Convention Committee on Credentials and Other Internal Matters, Section II

WHEREAS, The reliance upon volunteer services continues to grow as government programs are reduced due to budgetary reductions; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion, as one of the nation's largest and most active community service organizations, recognizes the need to create an environment which would promote a greater level of volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, President Bush has recognized this need by promoting volunteer activism by creating the USA Freedom Corps and encouraging citizens to commit at minimum 100 hours a year to serving neighbors in need; and

WHEREAS, Subsequently, 75,000 service organizations now work with USA Freedom Corps, 50,000 people are enrolled in AmeriCorps, and the Peace Corps has expanded to over 7,500 volunteers in 2003, the highest level of participation in almost three decades; and

WHEREAS, The Internal Revenue Code provides for the standard mileage rates for business and medical or moving use to be adjusted by the Secretary of the United States Department of the Treasury; and

WHEREAS, Mileage rate adjustments are based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile, however, this study does not account for operating cost associated with charitable activities; and

WHEREAS, The charitable rate is set by Congress, and as such the Secretary of the Treasury lacks the authority to make subsequent annual increase adjustments to the charitable rate; and

WHEREAS, A similar resolution (No. 256, Credentials and Internal Affairs, Section II) was passed by The American Legion while in National Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, September 4, 1996, and since the volunteer rate does not undergo an annual review; and

WHEREAS, To continue to encourage volunteer activism, The American Legion believes an increase in the standard mileage rate for charitable use will serve as an incentive for volunteers to continue providing their essential services throughout the nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges Congress to amend the Internal Revenue Code to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury to annually set the standard mileage rate for charitable use; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Secretary of the Treasury maintain a perpetual ratio consistent with the standard mileage rate for business use to be adjusted to at least 50 percent of the standard mileage business rate.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Internal Affairs Commission

Resolution No. 243 (WI): In God We Trust On Legion Envelopes

Resolution No. 261 (MX): Rename Department Of Mexico

Resolution No. 325 (FL): Organizations For Male Spouses Of Female Legionnaires

Referred to the Standing Internal Affairs Commission, Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee

Resolution No. 98 (OH): Mourning Pennant For Posts

Resolution No. 101 (NJ): POW/MIA Seed Packet Program

Referred to the Standing Commission on Convention

Resolution No. 246 (PA): City of Pittsburgh Offers to Host Future National Convention

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 136 (MA): Paul A. Morin Recommendation for National Commander

Resolution No. 223 (NY): Honor U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. John Basilone Postage Stamp

Resolution No. 245 (PA): Endorses Andrew Newman as NVC of Sons of The American Legion

Rejected

Resolution No. 110 (CO): Certificates of Appreciation from Posts to WWII Veterans

Reason for Rejection: Matter of routine administrative business. Certificates are changed on website to recognize veterans and military members for special situations.

Resolution No. 150 (WA): POW/MIA Day of Recognition

Reason for Rejection: Department of Defense has already designated the third Friday in September for POW/MIA Day of Recognition.

Resolution No. 210 (TX): Post Categories in the National Historian's History

Reason for Rejection: Historian's History Reports are judged on quality and size of Post does not matter.

Resolution No.: 227 (MN): Region Six Information Meetings to Be Held in Fall

Reason for Rejection: Normal routine policy. Region must get 100% concurrence from all departments in region and submit request to National Headquarters for change.

Out of Order

Resolution No. 211 (TX): Congressional Change In Eligibility Dates For Membership in The American Legion

Reason for out of Order: Resolution does not follow established protocol for changes to constitutional matters. When a Congressional change is requested, the language in the appropriate sections of The American Legion Constitution and By-Laws must be in accordance with the change when it becomes effective. When there is a constitutional change resolution, the resolution must state, word-for-word, the current portion of the constitution to be changed and the exact words for the proposed change. General statements are not sufficient.

It was regularly moved, seconded and carried that the Permanent Committee Chairman and Permanent Secretary be authorized to sign the Committee report on behalf of the Committee.

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

COMM CHRM HARRINGTON: Mr. Commander, thank you for allowing me the time to make my report. And as a duly elected and registered Delegate from the Department of New York, I move the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Now I want to make sure I understood. You want to adopt the Resolution or the report?

COMM CHRM HARRINGTON: The report, sir.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I've got a second to that, too. Any discussion? All in favor indicate by saying 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' The ayes have it, the report of Credentials and Internal Affairs Section II is adopted.

The Chair recognizes Judge Vincent Gaughan of Illinois, Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments for the purpose of making a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Constitutional Amendments
Vincent M. Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

To the 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion, Nashville, Tennessee, August 31st, September 1, 2.

The Committee on Constitutional Amendments met at 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 29, 2004 at the Gaylord Hotel, Hermitage A. Committee Liaison Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD) called the roll and announced that 47 members of the Constitutional Amendments Committee were present. The following report was agreed upon by the members and submitted to this Convention.

The meeting was opened by Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr. (MD), who acted as temporary chairman. He stated a quorum was present and proceeded to the first order of business, which was the election of a permanent chairman and secretary.

Honorable Vincent M. Gaughan (IL) was elected Chairman and Cathy Gorst (WI) was duly elected Secretary, thereupon they assumed their respective places.

Copies of all the Resolutions, the Report of the Standing Committee, and copies of the National Constitution and By-Laws were made available to all members of the Committee. A motion was made by Charles Mills (NY), and duly seconded by Dave Matern (UT) that all guests and members of the Standing Committee on Constitution and By-Laws who were present at the meeting be seated with voice but no vote. The motion was carried by the members.

The Chair called upon Philip B. Onderdonk, Jr., National Judge Advocate, to give a summary background report on the resolutions to the Committee, which was done.

The Chair then stated, based upon the National Judge Advocate's report to the Committee with regards to the requirements for consideration of resolutions to amend the Constitution, he would rule out of order those resolutions which did not meet those requirements.

The Chair announced that he was in agreement with the Report of the Standing Committee that Resolutions Nos. 93 (OH), 242 (WI) and 320 (CA) were out of order.

T. Les Galloway (OR) moved that the Chairman's position be adopted by the Committee, seconded by Bill Roy (NH) and unanimously carried.

The Chair then asked for a motion that the Chairman and Secretary be permitted to sign the Report to the Convention on behalf of the members of the Committee. Tony Vaughn (NV) made the motion, and it was seconded by John Bush (KY). The motion carried.

Ron Hansell (MT) made a motion to recess, subject to the call of the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Harvey Peterson (ND). The Chairman then thanked the Committee for its cooperation and productive meeting. The meeting was then declared in recess pending a call from the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to the 86th National Convention of The American Legion, I move that this report be adopted.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you for the motion and the second. Any discussion? All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' The report on the Constitutional Amendments is adopted.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Please rise. If you will face the Colors of our country we'll salute by the numbers. Ready. One! Two!

...The Delegation rose and saluted the Colors.

The time for tomorrow morning is 9:00 a.m. The time is now 4:58 and we shall see you in the morning. It's recessed.

...At 4:58 p.m., the Convention recessed to convene the following day, Thursday, September 2, 2004, at 9:00 a.m.

PROCEEDINGS
THIRD DAY

Thursday, September 2, 2004

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

...At 9:00 a.m., the Delegates assembled for the third day of the 86th Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had:

Salute to the Colors

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Convention will come to order. Delegates, please stand. Face the Colors and we'll salute by the numbers. Ready. One! Two!

...The Delegation stood and saluted the Colors.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Now please uncover and I call on our National Chaplain, the Reverend Dr. Bill Doubek of Neosho, Missouri.

Invocation
Rev. William J. P. Doubek, Missouri
National Chaplain

Let us pray. We come into Your holy presence once again our God. Thanking You for Your love; Your mercy. Thank You for You promise that You will be with us if we truly seek You.

Today, Lord, we lift up the Department of Florida, and to all of the other Departments and even islands that are subject to the damage of this hurricane, praying Lord that You would protect lives and property. We also remember Lord those children that are being held hostage by terrorists. We remember their parents and pray for strength for them, and as that You unite this world to end this sort of evil.

We pray Your divine blessing and guidance upon us now as we come here on the closing day of this convention to serve our fellow comrades, our country and You, our God, through The American Legion. Thank you for this organization that you have given us. Thank you for the tasks we are to perform. Prevent us from growing weary in our labor; sustain us in all of our efforts. To that end, bless and guide us and our country. In Your holy name we pray. Amen.

Pledge of Allegiance

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The National Convention is now in session.

Presentation: The American Legion Fourth Estate Award
John A. Brieden, III, Texas, National Commander

We begin this morning by recognizing outstanding journalism which has a positive impact on the community. The American Legion Fourth Estate Award is difficult to earn, a testament to the demanding nature of the competition and the quality of entries.

This year the award goes to the investigative editor for the *United Press*

International. Most often the impact of winners reporting is felt in a civilian community. This year, those that benefitted were our comrades, members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Writer-reporter Mark Benjamin of *UPI* uncovered the plight of hundreds of sick and wounded U.S. soldiers languishing in hot cement barracks at Fort Stewart, Georgia while they waited sometimes for months to see doctors. The response was rapid, the Pentagon rushed doctors and dollars to Fort Stewart to provide assistance to the Army Reserve and National Guard. Senator Kit Bond of Missouri credited *UPI* for triggering big improvements in medical care for soldiers and vowed to conduct hearings into the conditions uncovered by Mark Benjamin and confirmed by Senator Pat Leahy.

It's an honor to present The American Legion Fourth Estate Award for 2004 to Mark Benjamin of the *United Press International.*

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion 2004 Fourth Estate Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Journalism, presented to Mark Benjamin, United Press International, for "Hidden Casualties" investigative reporting on the problems of sick, injured and wounded troops in medical hold at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

Presented at the 86th National Convention, September 2, 2004, Nashville, Tennessee.

MR. BENJAMIN: I'm incredibly flattered and thrilled beyond words. This is the greatest honor I can think of for my work. I've been doing issues with respect to soldiers returning from war, and veterans issues for over a year now and this is just an incredible thrill for me.

I'm just going to say two quick things. The first is that I'm not from a military family. I did not served in the military, and my family is not a military family. And the last year, I recognize I'm preaching to the choir, but it's been an incredible experience for me.

I've been to eight installations in the United States and Europe, visiting with, I guess at this point, hundreds of soldiers and learning about their experiences. You can't help but, as a reporter to a certain extent, fall in love with the American soldier. They have been incredible to me. They're incredible professionals and I have been impressed beyond words with their service.

I was going to mention just one more thing and this is, I guess, a call to action. Again, I realize I'm preaching to the choir, but my reporting seems to show we're dealing with a situation right now in American history, where organizations like this are needed beyond belief. I think my reporting seems to show that there are some very distinct challenges coming for us in terms of caring for the soldiers from the war on terror. I hope that the United States will pledge the resources and expertise available to do the right thing. I have to say I'm a bit concerned.

With this particular war we have some of the same challenges that I know other people in this room know a lot about. We have some distinct ones. For example, for whatever reason, there are mental problems among soldiers returning from this war at a shocking rate, I believe. This is a serious issue, along with the physical problems. We have some new challenges in terms of—I know it sounds strange—filling a lot of our soldiers up with drugs and vaccines which, believe it or not, seem to be having some strange effects. So, we have some distinct new challenges here.

I'm also concerned that soldiers may not receive proper compensation from the Pentagon, for example, through the Medical Evaluation Board. I wanted to reiterate how

important it is. I do not think that the press has done a good enough job documenting these issues. I hope that changes. I certainly am going to stick with it, and I hope that everyone in this room will continue to be energized about these issues. I hope that we do better for the American soldier.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you, Mark.

The Chair now recognizes Dave Rehbein of Iowa, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on Foreign Relations, for the purpose of a report.

Report: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
Dave Rehbein, Iowa, Chairman

At 8:30 a. m., Sunday, August 29, 2004, 43 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations met in the Washington B, Presidential Mezzanine at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. David Rehbein (IA) was elected Chairman.

At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions and to sign the report on behalf of the delegates. A total of 19 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

Following this initial meeting, two Ad Hoc administrative convention subcommittees met in separate locations to consider the resolutions that had been assigned to them. The following were appointed Chairmen: General Foreign Policies, Melvin "Doc" Simon Vermont; and Regional Affairs, Chairman David Rehbein, Iowa.

The Ad Hoc Subcommittee reports contain resolutions that will, in conjunction with resolutions previously adopted, provide an effective and viable foreign relations program for The American Legion. This program will fully support a strong and dynamic U. S. foreign policy to promote democracy around the world and discharge America's responsibility as leader of the free world in the continuing struggle to defend and promote liberty.

I call upon Doc Simon, Chairman of the General Foreign Policy Ad Hoc Subcommittee to give the report of that Subcommittee.

AD HOC SUBCOM CHRM SIMON: The following resolutions were approved.

General Foreign Policy
Approved

Resolution No. 194: Adequate Resourcing For The U. S. Department Of State
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States Department of State is the first line of defense of the nation in combating the myriad of security threats that face America from abroad, and is charged with a number of missions that are vital to the nation; and

WHEREAS, These missions include: Managing diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing nations together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities; and

WHEREAS, The State Department's role as "first responder" to international crises was brutally accentuated by the Al-Qaeda bombing of American Embassies on August 7, 1998 in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in which a total of 223 people were killed and 4,650 people were wounded; and

WHEREAS, The State Department has been allocated just little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish all of these tasks in contrast to the approximately 16% spent on defense: and

WHEREAS, In recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion vigorously supports adequate funding for the United States Department of State in order that it can maintain a credible initial deterrent to international threats to the United States and effectively promote American interests abroad.

Resolution No. 196: Terrorism
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, On September 11, 2001 The United States was attacked by terrorists who hijacked four civilian airliners to use as weapons of terror, and inflicted among other results, damage of the Pentagon, the complete destruction of the World Trade Center complex in New York City, and the deaths of almost 7,000 American; and

WHEREAS, These unprovoked and despicable acts were carried out by ruthless radicals who despise America's involvement in world affairs and our individual freedoms that Americans enjoy and cherish as well as our national values; and

WHEREAS, For three decades, The American Legion has strongly opposed terrorism in resolutions calling for the U. S. government to not make concessions to terrorists and to use all available means to apprehend terrorists and bring them to justice; and

WHEREAS, The events of September 11th have made the response to the attack on America and the wholesale elimination of terrorism the singular national priority; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion condemns the cowardly attacks on America by terrorists and urges the U. S. Government to use any and all means necessary to determine who is responsible for the attacks on America and punish the perpetrators; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government, in concert with allies and friendly nations, to embark on a campaign using military, diplomatic, economic, intelligence and other resources to systematically and completely eliminate terrorism.

Resolution No. 197: U. S. Foreign Policy Objectives
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Members of The American Legion, as veterans of wartime service in the defense of liberty, have a special concern for maintaining peace with freedom and recognize that a strong U. S. foreign policy is vital in that regard; and

WHEREAS, The official concern of The American Legion stems from that part of the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion which states: "We associate ourselves together...to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy..."; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion believes that the following objectives should be incorporated into U. S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy:

1. **Recognition that the U. S. has great and multiple responsibilities as the singular leader of the Free World**
2. **Dedication to achievement of world peace with freedom, secured by a peace through strength posture**
3. **Support for a global war on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism**
4. **Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U. S. national interests and national power**
5. **Participation in essential collective security alliances, provided our allies contribute their fair share**
6. **Negotiation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U. S. national security**
7. **Opposition to the spread of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or long-range ballistic missiles to terrorist, communist or aggressor nations**
8. **Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking**
9. **Support for responsible international organizations that are consistent with U. S. sovereignty and serve U. S. national interests**
10. **Participation in an increasingly interdependent Free World trading system based on fair and equitable trading practices**
11. **Recognition that the President must be the chief architect of U. S. foreign policy as envisioned in the U. S. Constitution, while Congress performs important functions of advice, oversight and funding**
12. **Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U. S. vital national interests world-wide.**

Resolution No. 255: War On Drugs
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, At the Cartagena Drug Summit in 1990 in Cartagena, Colombia called by then President Barco of Colombia, the United States and six Latin American nations (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela) agreed to a comprehensive plan of action to reduce the supply of illegal narcotics and the demand for them within the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS, The Cartagena agreements, reaffirmed and expanded in the San Antonio Drug Summit in February, 1992, in San Antonio, Texas, encompass a vast array of weapons in the battle to stop the devastating traffic in illegal drugs including eradication, crop substitution, education, police training and economic assistance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion

urges the U. S. Government Executive Branch to cooperate fully with Latin American nations to destroy the international traffic of illegal drugs and to provide appropriate economic assistance to aid in this vital endeavor; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Congress to provide adequate funds to support this program.

Resolution No. 260: Social Security Benefits For Non-Resident Alien Spouses
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, All Legionnaires pledge themselves to "devotion to mutual helpfulness"; and

WHEREAS, From its inception The American Legion has been dedicated to guarding the well being of the surviving spouses of members and veterans of the armed services; and

WHEREAS, The survivors of veterans living in countries where appreciable numbers of U. S. military forces are based benefit from treaties and administrative agreements which are not applicable to other foreign domiciled "nonresident alien beneficiaries"; and

WHEREAS, Existing Public Law and administrative regulations of the Social Security Administration require Mexican and Central American nationals who claim survivor benefits to provide proof of physical presence inside the territory of the United States either: (a) 30 days every six months or (b) one day per month every month of the year, but such physical presence may not be required of Social Security beneficiaries of other nationalities when residing outside the United States depending upon whether or not the Social Security Administration has entered into international agreements with the governments of those beneficiaries; and

WHEREAS, Establishing a physical presence in the United States requires considerable expense and disruption of family life when a Mexican or Central American beneficiary lives anywhere except along the US-Mexico border; and

WHEREAS, The U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a bureau of DHS (formerly the "Immigration and Naturalization Service" or "INS") exercises the ability to legally deny entry to non-U. S. citizens even when such persons hold valid visas issued by the U. S. Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Since the events of September 11, 2001 the INS and USCIS have increased the level of its control of persons attempting to enter the United States; and

WHEREAS, The USCIS and INS have denied entrance into the United States by visa-holding surviving beneficiaries of veterans based solely upon their apparent lack of means of support even though they would have enjoyed a decorous level of income once they had met the physical presence requirements of the law; and

WHEREAS, The regulations implementing Public Law relating to Social Security Survivor Benefits are inherently unfair because they impose different conditions upon surviving spouses which may vary according to the location of that person's domicile; and

WHEREAS, Existing law allows an individual USCIS officer to be the arbitrator as to whether or not a potential recipient may enter the U. S. for the purpose of meeting the physical presence requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Proposed new Department of Homeland Security regulations would limit visitor visas to a period insufficient to establish physical presence under the requirements of the Social Security legislation; and

WHEREAS, Mexican and Guatemalan surviving spouses of American veterans have requested that The American Legion assist them in gaining relief from these unfair and country-specific regulations; and

WHEREAS, Section 233 of 42 U. S. Code 433 allows for the establishment of agreements between the social security system established by the act and the social security system of any foreign country; and

WHEREAS, Section 404. 463 of the Social Security Act contains a listing of the countries which meet the social insurance or pension system requirements which may result in relief from Section 404. 460 "nonpayment of monthly benefits"; and

WHEREAS, The countries of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama are included in this listing; and

WHEREAS, The present situation can be remedied by administrative action by the Office of International Programs of the Social Security Administration without the necessity of any new legislation; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration's own Internet web site indicates that in some cases bilateral negotiations are being conducted or are being planned, but that such negotiations are not currently planned for all countries of Central America and negotiations with Mexico have been postponed on more than one occasion; and

WHEREAS, The Social Security Administration has responded in writing to requests for information by Legion staff indicating that no discussions are even contemplated with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, or Panama; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion petition The Social Security Administration's "Office of International Programs" to expedite the negotiation of international agreements with the governments of Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Panama necessary to permit the recession of the nonpayment provisions of Section 404. 460 of the Social Security Act, thereby allowing the payment of survivors' benefits and any other legally accrued benefits to the non-resident alien spouses and children of U. S. veterans residing in the above named countries; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That Congress establish uniform eligibility requirements applicable to all persons receiving Social Security benefits and specifically that all foreign nationals receiving such benefits shall be subject to the same eligibility requirements regardless of the location of the recipient's domicile.

Resolution No. 321 Priority POW/MIA Actions
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Many thousands of Americans are still reported as missing in action from most of America's recent wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The families of these Prisoners of War and Missing in Action still suffer untold grief and uncertainty due to the lack of any accurate accounting in spite of the heroic efforts of U. S. search teams, and some reports indicate that some of these Americans could be alive in the former enemy areas; and

WHEREAS, It appears that certain information from these areas has been

deliberately and cruelly withheld from their families; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is convinced, for example, based on available evidence, that American POWs were detained by Vietnam after Operation Homecoming in 1973, and there is sufficient evidence to lead us to believe there is a chance of American POWs still being held in Indochina today; and

WHEREAS, Specific locations of alleged remains of U. S. serviceman have now been identified by the U. S. Government; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U. S. Government POW/MIA operations are still inadequate, and the President's normalization of relations with Vietnam has not achieved substantially greater progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the President of the United States of America and every member of the U. S. Congress to speak out on every occasion to expedite the return of those U. S. servicemen who are still Prisoners of War or Missing in Action; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to exert the maximum effort to account for MIAs from World War II, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Cold War and the First and Second Persian Gulf Wars; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes the following priority actions should be taken by the U. S. Government:

- **Continue to provide sufficient personnel and resources so that investigative and recovery efforts can be broadened and accelerated**
- **Continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to public review**
- **Initiate or strengthen joint commissions with Russia, the People's Republic of China, and North Korea to increase POW/MIA recovery efforts**
- **Establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to ensure continued action by the executive branch in addressing the POW/MIA issue**
- **Take further favorable actions toward Vietnam only after the Vietnamese government provides the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia it controlled during the Vietnam War**
- **Take favorable actions toward Laos or Cambodia only after those nations provide the fullest possible accounting for POW/MIAs**
- **"Fullest possible accounting" is defined as turning over live prisoners, repatriating remains of those who were killed in action or died in captivity, or providing a valid, conclusive report when neither is possible.**

Resolution No. 322: United Nations
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion played a significant role in helping to establish the United Nations after World War II, believing it would help prevent the outbreak of future wars; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has remained generally supportive of the United Nations over the succeeding years, although it has been critical of particular ineffective, wasteful or undesirable activities of the United Nations; and

WHEREAS, The Foreign Relations Commission conducted a year long study to

determine whether U. S. participation in the United Nations serves U. S. national interests and submitted its report in May 1995; and

WHEREAS, Although the United Nations in half a century of operation has not fulfilled the lofty purposes of international peace and human betterment envisioned by its founders, it continues to be in the national interest for the United States to function as a member of the United Nations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to seek the following reforms in the United Nations and to use American leverage to obtain these desired ends:

- **Encourage the United Nations to focus on limited, necessary, achievable tasks that truly better the lot of humankind in a sensible, cost-effective manner**
- **Encourage the United Nations not to infringe on national sovereignty when operating economic and social programs**
- **Professionalize the UN staff on the basis of merit and qualifications**
- **Provide truly independent authority to the Inspector General and ensure that UN agencies become subject to periodic, unannounced auditing, the finding of such audits to be reported to member nations**
- **Admit the Republic of China to full membership in the United Nations since that nation has fulfilled all that is expected of a developing country by adopting democracy, respect for human rights, free enterprise, and a peaceful foreign policy**
- **Establish an equitable fiduciary relationship between the United States and the United Nations.**

Resolution No. 323: America's Leadership In The New Millennium
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The attacks of September 11, 2001 have forced America to take a forceful role in world affairs to ensure the security of our country and our allies; in response to terrorists and rogue regimes we have embarked on a global war on terror that has brought about major shifts in international relations and America's role in the world and the perception of this role by others; and

WHEREAS, The United States has deployed military, diplomatic, intelligence and law enforcement forces to every major area of the globe to fight and root out terrorists and those that sponsor terror; and

WHEREAS, Some countries have been critical of America and its coalition's efforts to eliminate terrorism at its sources, especially the war in Iraq, including allies such as France and Germany; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion through previous resolutions supports the U. S. government's efforts wage a global war on terrorism and to liberate Iraq and to rid that country of its weapons of mass destruction capabilities; and

WHEREAS, U. S. forces that have been stationed in Germany, South Korea and elsewhere for many years are experiencing increased local government regulation of training activities and are increasing antagonism toward U. S. forces and any U. S. presence; and

WHEREAS, Other allies of the United States –namely the United Kingdom, Australia, Spain and Poland—have stood by the U. S. even in the face of stalwart

opposition from other countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports a bipartisan American foreign policy that secures peace and security for the United States and reflects our values and national character; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Congress and the President to reevaluate our strategic relationships with other countries as well as our collective security commitments; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this reassessment should determine if reductions, relocation to other regional partners or even removal of U. S. forces stationed in other countries would be beneficial to U. S. and regional security interests and this reevaluation should also include a review of all diplomatic relations and collective security agreements; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this reevaluation be conducted expeditiously and incorporate the views of all elements of American society including those that reflect our national goals and values and The American Legion encourages a vigorous debate on these reassessments as part of the upcoming 2004 national elections.

AD HOC SUBCOM CHRM SIMON: Mr. Chairman, that completes the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on General Foreign Policy.

COMM CHRM REHBEIN: I will now give the Report of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Regional Affairs. The following resolutions were approved:

Regional Affairs
Approved

Resolution No. 1: Sovereignty In Iraq
Origin: Iowa
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The United States invaded Iraq and deposed the regime of Saddam Hussein to end his acquisition and production of weapons of mass destruction and to establish stability and security in a historically volatile region of the world, and while Hussein's government has been overthrown, the massive task of reestablishing a self-governing Iraqi state and rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure looms before us and is a preeminent long-term United States goal; and

WHEREAS, It is absolutely essential that the United States achieve a reasonable level of success in these tasks in the shortest time possible, lest Iraq fall into lawlessness, or worst ethnically-charged civil war with the result that the United States will lose much of our leverage and influence in all parts of the globe; and

WHEREAS, The predominance of the American military in the current security forces has developed a perception in the Iraqi people that the American military is primarily an occupying force rather than a security force, resulting in the creation of a potential flash-point for resistance and resentment of the United States military and citizens; and

WHEREAS, The massive outlays of taxpayer dollars and utilization of a majority of our military forces, including the guard and reserve, are putting strains on the economy and the quality of life of current members of the armed forces at a level disproportionate

to achieve the goal for all nations of a stable, productive Iraq, it is essential that the U. S. garner as much assistance as possible from allied and friendly nations to ease the burden of our work in Iraq; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion applauds the turnover of sovereignty and responsibility for governing of the Iraqi people to indigenous authorities and urges the responsibilities for infrastructure rebuilding in Iraq be turned over to competent authorities as soon as practicable; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the involvement of all Iraqi citizens and groups in the formation of a new government and expresses the expectation that elections of the new government be free, fair, and inclusive for Iraqi citizens of all ethnic backgrounds; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion encourages efforts by the United States to continue to involve as many nations as possible under the appropriate multinational alliance umbrella to support the rebuilding efforts in Iraq and to deploy military forces to provide security as to lessen the burden for United States forces in Iraq and reduce potential resentment toward the international security force.

Resolution No. 4: Support For Taiwan
Origin: Alaska
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Chinese Communist regime is a major potential threat to the nations of the Far East and the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Chinese Communist regime has approximately five hundred ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is a strategically located island and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, Under the provision of the Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8). the United States has an obligation to provide defense equipment and defense services, in such quantities that the Government of the Republic of China may maintain a sufficient self-defense capability; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the continued sales of sophisticated U.S. weapon systems, including, but not limited to, naval vessels, submarines, military aircraft, air-defense systems, and electronics and communications equipment to the Republic of China.

Resolution No. 5: Support For Peaceful Resolution Of Taiwan Strait Tensions
Origin: Alaska
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The Republic of China is a long-time friend, ally, and seventh largest trading partner of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China, closely cooperated with the United States against Japanese imperialism during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Taiwan is a strategically located island and is extremely important to the peace, prosperity, and stability of the Pacific Rim; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of China has recently held a peaceful presidential

election, which shows a commitment to the democratic process, and is an example to the Chinese mainland and other nations of the Pacific area; and

WHEREAS, It is in best interest of all parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve political differences peacefully; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports and encourages the democratic process in Taiwan, while urging the parties on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to promote peaceful dialogue and avoid any actions, which could lead to military conflict.

Resolution No. 104: Policy On Africa
Origin: Vermont
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, Decades of colonization, authoritarian rule, severe problems, internal conflicts, and in many cases great resistance to change have overwhelmed the African continent; and

WHEREAS, Today some African nations are beginning to economically develop, and are making determined efforts to put the continent on a more solid democratic course with multi-party democracies and other significant changes; and

WHEREAS, Promoting policies that support democracy, conflict resolution, economic development, free and open trade and disease prevention in African countries are in the National interest of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion calls upon the President and the Congress to develop a comprehensive bipartisan U.S. policy which identifies the areas where the United States can make a difference in Africa, such as combating terrorist operations and influence in the region, investment to spur economic growth and promote trade, helping combat environmental damage, leading efforts to halt the proliferation of land mines, sponsoring multilateral efforts which seek conflict resolution and assistance for building African capabilities to effectively deal with their peacekeeping and humanitarian relief issues; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that U. S. policies toward African nations which are state sponsors of terrorism should be oriented exclusively on limiting the influence and isolating these nations both economically and diplomatically.

Resolution No. 193: Human Rights In Vietnam
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The human rights of Vietnam's ethnic and religious minorities, especially in the Central Highlands, are being abused by the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, The Montagnard people of the Central Highlands who fought valiantly alongside American military forces during the Vietnam War have borne the brunt of this abuse which includes imprisonment, restriction of information from outside sources and even executions; and

WHEREAS, The U. S. Department of State in its 2002 report on Human Rights Practices said the government of Vietnam "continued to commit serious [human rights]

abuses" and "significantly restricted freed of speech, freedom of the press freedom of assembly and freedom of association"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has adopted resolutions in the past that offer our support to the plight of the Montagnards; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support Congressional legislation that would highlight the human rights situation in Vietnam and seek to compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to improve the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, especially in the Central Highlands, in order that they can enjoy the basic freedoms that all humans deserve.

Resolution No. 195: Panama Canal
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The American Legion has been concerned about issues relating to the Panama Canal since our founding and has historically supported the stationing of U. S. military forces in Panama to protect the canal from outside influence in order to keep the waterway neutral, open for world commerce and a maintain a vital key to U. S. international trade; and

WHEREAS, Since the transfer of the canal to the Republic of Panama in 1999, Panamanians have been impressive stewards of the canal making improvements, raising revenue and at the same time operating the canal in a safe an efficient manner; and

WHEREAS, It has become clear that major improvements to the canal must be made in the near future which will probably include the construction of a fourth set of locks and or widening the canal in order that the canal can remain economically relevant in the world commercial system; and

WHEREAS, The Armed Forces of Panama were disbanded in the aftermath of the U. S. invasion of 1989, leaving national security the responsibility of the Panamanian National Police; and

WHEREAS, In recent months multiple press reports indicate that a large number of Panamanians would look favorably on the return of a U. S. government presence to Panama possibly on a temporary basis to either assist with canal security or canal improvements; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports collaborative efforts between the U. S. government and the Republic of Panama to improve and maintain the security of the Panama Canal in order that it can maintain its vital role in the world trading system.

Resolution No. 252: Free Trade Area Of The Americas
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS, The United States government began an new era of economic and democratic development in this hemisphere on June 27, 1990 when it introduced the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative with its goals of establishing an hemispheric free trade zone and the stimulation of regional prosperity by relying on economic reform and investment rather than monetary aid; and

WHEREAS, The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative has assisted and continues to assist countries of this hemisphere develop their economies and democratic governmental

institutions; and

WHEREAS. The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative provided part of the basis for the implementation of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, celebrated between Canada, Mexico, and the United States; and

WHEREAS. The Executive Branch of the United States government has been active in promoting the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and

WHEREAS. The FTAA negotiators, including the U. S. government's representative have stated that the FTAA will promote economic integration which will promote increased productive capacity and competition, improve macroeconomic stability, strengthen democracy, create prosperity and realize human potential throughout the Western Hemisphere; and

WHEREAS. The FTAA is designed to promote trade liberalization which will result in generating economic growth and prosperity in the hemisphere and create an open and balanced global trading system; and

WHEREAS. The FTAA can co-exist with and not inhibit existing bi-lateral or sub-regional trade agreements; and

WHEREAS. The representatives of the 34 nations negotiating the FTAA have recommended that the agreement become effective in January of 2005; and

WHEREAS. The cooperation and trade between nations may be enhanced by the efforts of individual citizens who understand the cultural and institutional differences that may exist between the peoples and societies of different countries; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion does support the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas no later than January 31, 2005; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion continues to support the long term goals of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative that enhance economic growth and cooperation between the governments and peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

Resolution No. 253: Cuba
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS. The communist government of Cuba has ruined the Cuban economy, repressed the Cuban people, provided a base area for forces inimical to the United States, and committed aggression in many lands; and

WHEREAS. Following the demise of the Soviet Union and the liberation of Eastern Europe, Cuba has lost the sources of foreign subsidies that alone sustained its inefficient communist economy; and

WHEREAS. If the Free World remains firm in its rejection of communism in Cuba, many economic, social, and political indicators point to the likely collapse of the Castro dictatorship in Cuba; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base continue intelligence overflights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

Resolution No. 254: U. S. -Latin American Educational Programs
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations
(As amended)

WHEREAS. The United States and Mexico are historic neighbors with a common heritage and thousands of miles of common boundary; and

WHEREAS. The United States Congress and the Executive Branch have entered into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico; and

WHEREAS. The United States Congress and the Executive Branch are about to establish more open relations with all hemispheric countries through participation in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA); and

WHEREAS. College scholarships and educational exchanges go a long way in breaking international barriers and promoting good will and understanding; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the U. S. government to increase its emphasis on Mexican-U. S. cooperative endeavors on all fronts to enhance the prosperity and security of both nations as well as that of the Western Hemisphere; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes student exchange programs between the United States and the Latin American countries of Mexico, Central America, and South America should be conducted by both private and governmental
agencies for the purpose of acquainting the future leaders of all countries in the hemisphere with their neighbors; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to establish such procedures that it may continue to provide student visas to all qualified foreign students and exchange program participants while maintaining the capability to verify that all recipients of student visas actually do maintain their status as legitimate students.

Resolution No. 256: Central America
Origin: Mexico
Submitted by: Convention Committee on Foreign Relations

WHEREAS. Over the past decade Central America has made great strides toward establishing democratic societies; and

WHEREAS. The American Legion has taken a great interest in supporting democracy, development, and security in this area so close to our borders and strategically situated between the naval lifeline between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Panama Canal, and one of our major trading partners, Mexico; and

WHEREAS. In the light of the decreasing threat from subversion in Central America as well as budget restrictions in the United States, it is inevitable that U. S. aid to Central America must be reduced; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the U. S. government to continue economic aid to friendly, democratic Central American nations which are seeking to develop democratic societies with market economies.

Referred to the Standing Commission on Foreign Relations
Resolution No. 6 (AK): Maintaining Adequate U. S. Military Force Levels In South Korea

COMM CHRM REHBEIN: That completes the Report of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Regional Affairs.

As a duly elected Delegate from the Department of Iowa, Mr. Commander, I move the adoption of the entire Report of the Convention Committee on Foreign Relations.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion from the Chairman and hear a second. Is there any discussion? All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Motion carries and the Report of Foreign Relations is adopted.

The Chair now recognizes Allen Titus of Indiana, the Chairman of the National Convention Committee on National Security.

Report: Convention Committee on National Security
Allen L. Titus, Indiana, Chairman

At 9:00 a.m., Sunday, August 29, 2004, 243 delegates and alternates assigned to the Convention Committee on Security met initially in the Governor's South Ballroom, Sections C&D of the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. At this meeting, motions were approved authorizing the Committee Chairman and his Secretary to make technical corrections to the resolutions reported out of the Committee to ensure proper wording and form without changing the substance or meaning of the resolutions. Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) was elected Chairman and John Michalski (Indiana) was appointed Secretary.

General Security Ad Hoc
Nancy L. Carder, Chairman, Illinois
Kenneth Krizan, Secretary, Iowa
Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke, Chairman, South Dakota
Michael Thurlow, Secretary, Idaho
Aerospace
Daniel M. Dellinger, Chairman, Virginia
Terry Huisman, Secretary, Alaska
Homeland Security and Defense Civil Preparedness
Erwin Gus Williams, Chairman, Connecticut
Melvin Goslar, Secretary, Idaho
Law and Order
George W. Wehrli, Chairman, Florida
Harry Easley, Secretary, Washington
Merchant Marine
Charles Moreland, Chairman, Florida
Charles P. Powell, Jr., Secretary, Virginia
Military Affairs
Clayborn Lofton, Chairman, Illinois
Marty Rhyne, Secretary, Virginia
Naval Affairs

Gerard W. Cheffer, Chairman, Illinois
James L. VanHorn, Secretary, Alaska

On Sunday afternoon, August 29, 2004, the delegates again assembled in the Governor's South Ballroom, Sections C&D, in the Gaylord Opryland Hotel for a final meeting of the Convention Committee on Security. Reports of all Convention Committees were read and their recommended actions on resolutions considered. A total of 83 resolutions were assigned to the Convention Committee on Security or prepared by the Committee to meet problems which were held to be of concern to The American Legion and germane to its principles and objectives. The Convention Committee authorized the Chairman and Secretary to sign the report of the Convention Committee on National Security on behalf of its delegates.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I will now call for the Report of the Committee Chairmen. National and Homeland Security Council, Nancy L. Carder.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Carder reads the following:

General Security Ad Hoc Committee
Nancy L. Carder, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 11: Foreign Investments in the American Defense Industries
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, In this era of changing technology, the United States must maintain ownership and control of critical defense industries so that U. S. technological secrets can be protected and adequate production facilities can be maintained to meet any national emergency; and

WHEREAS, The generally declining strength of the dollar in the mid-1980s and the downsizing of our industrial base in the 1990s have made it very lucrative for foreign entities to purchase U. S. firms, including those involved in national defense production; and

WHEREAS, In recent years, three of the largest 36 foreign business investments in the United States were manufacturers of electronics and semiconductors, both of which are areas of vital importance to maintaining U. S. national security; and

WHEREAS, The Administration's waiver of sales of space satellite technology to the People's Republic of China (PRC) as well as proposed sales of supercomputers and aerospace technology to that potential adversary needs to be thoroughly investigated; and

WHEREAS, Some Allies of the United States, which lease or purchase U. S. advanced technology, may transfer or resell to actual or potential enemies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Such proposed actual sales threaten the security of classified U. S. military technologies and U. S. technological superiority; and

WHEREAS, The alleged theft of unclassified nuclear information at the White Sands Laboratories could endanger the national security of the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American

Legion urges the U. S. Government to ensure that foreign entities are not permitted to own critical industries, especially those involved in producing defense items; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion opposes the transfer and sales of sensitive technologies which may endanger our national security and economic interests; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to thoroughly investigate the sales of aerospace and satellite technology to the PRC, or any actual or potential adversary of the United States, which could seriously jeopardize national security interests of the U. S. and her allies.

Resolution No. 12: Rebuilding America's Defense Industrial Base
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Past defense budget share included limited funding for technological research and development which resulted in a production shortfall in a time of national emergency; and

WHEREAS, Developing new technologies for the Armed Forces can be hindered by budget shortfalls despite the fact that the U. S. is currently the world leader in development of new technology, thereby disrupting materiel development vital to national security; and

WHEREAS, Much of our defense industrial base, including weapons production and revitalization of the ship-building industry, has been eroded by plant closures and layoffs; and

WHEREAS, The United States fighting forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technological advances to assure their capability to win on the modern battlefield, whether on land, sea, or in the air; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to rebuild America's industrial base by continuing to adequately fund research, development and acquisition budgets to assure that our military production can meet national requirements whenever U. S. military power is committed.

Resolution No. 125: Combating Cyberspace Threats
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended and consolidated with Resolution No. 192 (MD))

WHEREAS, The security of the United States is being challenged increasingly by non-traditional threats which may extend the fields of battle and terrorism to computer cyberspace and in which inexpensive nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, including disease as a weapon of war, may be employed; and

WHEREAS, The President of the United States unveiled the formation of a comprehensive and integrated system of federal agencies, including the Armed Forces, law enforcement, intelligence and public health, to detect, deter and defend against cyberspace threats to critical government and private infrastructures; and

WHEREAS, The President also has appointed a National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection and Counterterrorism; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in

Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004 That The American Legion urges the Congress to appropriate the necessary funding and resources to combat the continuing cyberspace and other threats to the United States in the 21st Century; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the American public to be vigilant of cyberspace attacks, and that all efforts be made to detect, deter and defend against the threats of cyber warfare, and to prosecute violators to the fullest extent of the law.

Resolution No. 156: National Security Principles
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Over two centuries ago, our distinguished forefathers wrote the Preamble to the Constitution which began with the words: "We the People" shall "provide for the common defense..."and by so doing, they established the principle that protecting our nation from hostile threats was the fundamental purpose of the Government of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion since its founding in 1919 has always supported a strong national defense which is reflected in its own Preamble to the Constitution, namely, "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America," and "to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation"; and

WHEREAS, Although the threat posed by the former Soviet Union is diminished, the United States is faced with a myriad of short and long term threats and challenges which are far more complex, perplexing and difficult to deal with than was the more predictable and unified threat posed by the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, It is urged that the Department of Defense conduct a global posture review; and

WHEREAS, Although the two-war National Security Strategy has been amended, the Armed Forces are fighting the war on terrorism, maintaining homeland security and conducting peace enforcement operations with a reduced strength of 1.388 million and active military force structures composed of only 10 Army Divisions, 12 active Navy aircraft carriers and 13 Air Force fighter wing equivalents; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion upholds the following national security principles as fundamental to the best interests of the United States:

1. **The National Security Strategy needs to be reassessed so that missions and resources are more closely aligned.**
2. **The credibility of the United States in an unstable world needs to be maintained by retaining the requisite military capabilities. Such a strategy requires that the Armed Forces be more fully structured, equipped and budgeted to achieve this strategy. Active military end strengths should be increased to an absolute minimum of 1.6 million for the foreseeable future.**

   At least twelve full-strength Army Divisions, 12 deployable Navy aircraft carrier battle groups, 3 Marine Corps Expeditionary Forces, and 15 or more active Air Force fighter wing equivalents should be retained as the minimum baseline foundation.
3. **The National Guard and Reserves must be realistically manned, structured,**

equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels and not over-utilized in order to accomplish their increasing and indispensable missions and roles in our national defense.

4. **Peacetime Selective Service registration should be retained so as to maintain our capability to rapidly reconstitute forces in the event of emergencies.**
5. **Force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded, and not further delayed, or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives in the years ahead. Production of airlift and sealift assets needs to be expedited.**
6. **The American people expect that whenever U.S. forces are committed, that they will be committed only when America's vital national interests are threatened and only as a last resort after all reasonable alternatives have been explored and tried.**
7. **Peacekeeping, peace enforcement, peace-making and humanitarian operations detract from our declining combat power and readiness and our capability to wage the sustained.**
8. **War on terrorism. Such operations should be limited, Congressionally approved and separately appropriated on a case-by-case basis.**
9. **The honorable nature of military service should be upheld as it not only represents fulfillment of American patriotic obligation but is also a privilege and responsibility that embodies the highest form of service to the nation.**
10. **The United States Government must honor its obligations to all service members, veterans, military retirees and their families, and lasting compensations and incentives should be equitable.**
11. **Major incentives for military service to include an enhanced GI Bill for education and training, improved quality of life features, and a reduced operational tempo in order to recruit and retain a quality and fully-manned force which is professionally led.**
12. **Urge the United States Government to retain the necessary deployed forces worldwide to accomplish both short term as well as long term commitments and contingencies.**

Resolution No. 157: Ensure a Strong National Defense
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States faces a myriad of worldwide diverse and difficult threats and challenges to include the War on Terrorism and Homeland Security and regional threats to European instability in the Balkans as well as the continuing challenges to stability posed by North Korea, the People's Republic of China and by the vehemently defiant Iraq and Iran. Additionally, the United States must continue to be ever vigilant to the challenges of terrorism and the non-traditional threats of increasing nuclear proliferation and the potential usage of chemical and biological weapons by rogue nations; and

WHEREAS, The serious three major strategy reviews conducted by the Department of Defense, namely, the 1991 Base Force Strategy, 1993 Bottom-up Review and the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review all shared the common belief that the United States can remain a global power-the "sole universal power"—at substantially lower defense budget levels than during the Cold War; and

WHEREAS, As the world's "sole universal power," the United States has increasingly responded to terrorist attacks and worldwide regional and ethnic disputes,

while previously reducing its military forces and defense budgets and reprogramming budgetary resources for domestic programs; and

WHEREAS, Defense economists have pointed out that without larger defense procurement budgets, the military services would have no choice but to further reduce force structure and manpower levels and to accept higher military risks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges that the Congress implement the following recommendations, as a minimum, with regard to current and future defense budgets:

- **Passage of defense budgets which call for enhanced military quality of life features for the Active and Reserve Components and closing the pay gap with the private sector, an improved military healthcare system, improved benefits under the Montgomery G.I. Bill and reducing the operations tempo.**
- **Defense spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product needs to be maintained at least 3.5 percent annually.**
- **Defense and supplemental budgets must continue to cover the escalating costs of the War on Terrorism.**
- **The mismatch between resources and ever-increasing military peace enforcement missions needs to be eliminated.**
- **Finally, force modernization for the Services needs to be realistically funded and not further delayed or the United States is likely to unnecessarily risk American lives; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the American people to express their gratitude to the men and women in uniform for their many sacrifices and to urge their elected representatives in Congress to support the requisite funding for a stronger national defense.

Resolution No. 158: Buy American
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 315 (IL))

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of veterans which pledges to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense contracts with large corporations for the construction and repair of military hardware to include ground systems, armament, aircraft and other systems for all of our military branches; and

WHEREAS, These large corporations must rely on subcontractors for the production of, and overhaul, of individual components and subsystems to be used in the construction of these pieces if equipment; and

WHEREAS, The corporation constructing a system or systems may choose to enlist the services of subcontractors located in foreign countries over those which have comparable equipment and comparable costs; and

WHEREAS, The choices made by the corporation not only can affect the security of our Nation as well as the employment of many Americans and veterans who may work at these subcontractors at both the originating and overhaul facilities located in the United States; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American

Legion urges Congress to require government contractors to utilize American-made components and subsystems in construction of their equipment over those made by foreign subcontractors for use by the United States military services to ensure the defense of the country as well as the continued employment of Americans and veterans at subcontractor facilities.

Resolution No. 159 National Missile Defense System
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 between the United States and the Soviet Union had placed a cap on deploying missile defense systems and limited more advanced research on such defensive systems; and

WHEREAS, The Bush administration in January 2002 had given Russia and our allies the required six-months notice of U.S. intent to withdraw from the 1972 ABM Treaty and did so this past June; and

WHEREAS, Work on the underground silos for the first missile interceptors in Alaska began in June 2002 which reflected the urgency to begin moving on a missile defense system; and

WHEREAS, As unreliable, hostile nations such as North Korea and Iran seem determined to acquire the capability to deliver a nuclear strike over long distances, including striking the continental United States, the need for a national missile defense as an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security for the continental United States has become as urgent as ever; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the United States Government to develop and continue to deploy a national missile defense system which is in the national interest of the United States and the American people and an essential ingredient of our Homeland Security.

Resolution No. 160: United States Military Forces in Peacekeeping Operations
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The stated purpose of the War Powers Act (P.L. 93-148) was to "...fulfill the intent of the framers of the Constitution to insure that the collective judgment of both the Congress and the President will apply to the introduction of the United States Armed Forces into hostilities or into situations where imminent hostilities were clearly indicated"; and

WHEREAS, During the Cold War, former Secretary of Defense Weinberger in 1985 set forth specified conditions that had to be met before American military forces were committed to combat, namely, that the United States Government had to determine that our vital national interests were at stake; that we were prepared to commit sufficient forces to win; that political and military objectives were clearly defined; that there was reasonable assurance of support from the American people; that U.S. forces should be committed as a last resort; and that the United States had a clear exit strategy; and

WHEREAS, The successes of United States military operations in Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf demonstrated what our Armed Forces could achieve with well-defined goals and objectives and the unquestioned support of the American people; and the tragedies of Lebanon and Somalia have shown what can happen when they had neither, and

WHEREAS, Peacekeeping operations have increased by 300 percent since 1993 and members of the armed forces have been deployed to as many as 143 countries which has been wearing out military personnel and equipment; and

WHEREAS, According to current Department of Defense policy, United States military personnel captured during such peacekeeping, peacemaking, humanitarian, or nation-building operations are not designated as prisoners of war but as hostages or detainees with no defined legal rights under the Geneva Convention; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion believes that the following principles should be an integral part of the United States national security and foreign policy decision-making process when considering the commitment of United States military forces: America needs a clear definition of its vital national interests as they relate to all military operations to include peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; that Congress should approve any commitment of United States troops to any further peacekeeping and humanitarian operations; that United States military forces should not be placed under foreign or United Nations operational control except in exceptional circumstances where Congress grants specific approval; and that American service men and women captured during these types of operations should be granted full POW status and afforded all the protections of the Geneva Conventions; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, The American Legion voices its grave concerns about the continued commitment of the U.S. armed forces to peacekeeping operation unless four conditions have been fulfilled; That there will be a clear statement by the President of why it is in our vital national interests to be engaged in a particular operation; guidelines will be established for the mission, including a clear exit strategy; that there be support of the mission by the U.S. Congress and the American people; and that it be made clear U.S. forces will be commanded only by U.S. officers which we acknowledge are superior military leaders.

Resolution No. 161: The Armed Forces Retirement Homes

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home (USSAH) and the United States Naval Home (USNH), jointly called the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), are continuing care facilities which were created more than 150 years ago to offer retirement homes for distinguished veterans who had served as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in our Nation's conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The AFRH system, which is available to retiree veterans from all the Armed Services whose active duty was at least 50 percent enlisted or warrant officer, has been supported by a trust fund resourced by 50 cents a month withheld from active duty enlisted and warrant officer paychecks as well as from fines and forfeitures from disciplinary actions, resident fees and interest income; and

WHEREAS, The extensive downsizing of the Armed Forces has resulted in a 39 percent decrease in revenue and, coupled with rising nursing home care costs, the Homes have been operating at a $8-10 million annual deficit which would reportedly require both Homes to close their doors; and

WHEREAS, The Congress has authorized the Department of Defense to raise servicemembers' assessments from 50 cents to $1.00 per month which has yet to be exercised; and such an increase could raise revenues by about $7.5 million annually; and

WHEREAS, Even if these potential sources of income reach fruition, they will not likely provide the permanent, long-term funding which is vital to assure the solvency and viability of the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the U.S. Naval Home; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to support and fund those measures, to include annual Congressional appropriations, which will provide for the long-term solvency and viability of the United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home and the United States Naval Home.

Resolution No. 162: The Transformation of the Armed Forces
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The current national security strategy, contained within the Quadrennial Defense Review, establishes a new strategy for American's defense that would embrace uncertainty and is premised on the idea that to be effective abroad, America must be safe at home; and

WHEREAS, A central objective of the strategy is to shift the basis of defense planning from a "threat-based" model to a "capabilities-based" model for the future; and

WHEREAS, The strategy requires adapting existing military capabilities to new threats and circumstances, while experimenting with the development of new capabilities or the transformation of U.S. forces, capabilities and institutions to extend America's asymmetric advantages well into the future; and

WHEREAS, Transforming America's defense for the 21st Century will require a long-standing commitment from our Country and its leaders, but the challenges are here and now: They include protecting our critical bases of operation, including the U.S. homeland, and projecting and sustaining U.S. forces in distant environments as well as preemptive actions to confront threats before they emerge; and

WHEREAS, Transformation includes assuring our information systems and providing persistent surveillance, tracking and rapid engagement of adversarial forces by U.S. and allied joint operations; and

WHEREAS, Over time, the promise of transformation will be realized as resources translate into new concepts, capabilities and organizations that maximize our warfighting effectiveness; and

WHEREAS, The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2002, confirmed the Government's strategic direction as well as the soundness of such planning principles to include its emphasis on homeland defense, on offensive action against global terrorism, on surprise, on preparing for asymmetric threats like terrorism, on developing new concepts of deterrence, and the need to balance the different dimensions of risk; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the United States Government and our Armed Forces, as we contend with the difficult challenges of the war on terrorism, to continue to proceed on the path of transforming America's armed forces into a modern force capable of providing for the security of all Americans, strengthening and expanding military capabilities, and in honoring America's commitments worldwide as well as on the home front.

Resolution No. 163: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS)
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion supported legislation in the early 1970s to establish the F. Howard Herbert School of Medicine and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), thus creating the Nation's only military medical school dedicated to the provision of uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists who will ensure readiness, retention, force health protection, the medical response to natural and man-made disasters and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and medical support during humanitarian missions; and

WHEREAS, USUHS was created by Congress under the Department of Defense in 1972 to provide the Uniformed Services of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) with a cadre of dedicated, career medical officers who would ensure continuity, leadership, and medical readiness for the medical corps; due to both the extensive military-unique training provided in the multi-Service environment of USUHS and the extraordinary retention rates of the USUHS graduates who serve, on average, at least 18.5 years, USUHS has met, or has exceeded, the goals set by Congress; and

WHEREAS, In return for their education, USUHS School of Medicine (SOM) graduates must fulfill a service obligation of at least seven years following their residency training, while the service obligation of scholarship graduates is a year of obligated service per year of education, normally on the side of four years; due to their excellent retention rates, the 2,526 USUHS graduates on active duty in the Army, Navy, and Air Force currently represent twenty-one percent of the 11,907 physicians on active duty in the Armed Forces (in addition 94 USUHS SOM graduates continue on active duty in the USPHS); following their board certifications, USUHS graduates remain on active duty for an average of nine years, three times longer than scholarship graduates; in addition, of the USUHS SOM alumni who have completed their residency training, approximately one out of every two USUHS graduates holds an operational or leadership position ; and

WHEREAS, Since the first USUHS graduation in 1980, USUHS has graduated 3,268 uniformed physician officers and 183 advanced practice nurses who ensure continuity for the Military Health System (MHS); in addition, the SOM has conferred 727 advanced degrees to include 229 Doctors of Philosophy; 11 Doctors of Public Health; 69 Masters of Science; 386 Masters of Public Health; 4 Masters of Science in Public Health; 25 Masters of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; and, 3 Masters of Military Medical History; and

WHEREAS, The General Accounting office documented in a 1995 report that USUHS, when compared to other sources of military physicians, is an economical source of career medical leaders based on expected years of service and all federal costs; in addition, the Joint Meritorious Unit Award granted to USUHS by the Secretary of Defense on December 11, 2000, officially recognizes that USUHS annually generates over $24.6 million in documented cost avoidance for the Department of Defense through the provision of clinical services by the USUHS faculty in the military treatment facilities and the University's continuing education programs; and

WHEREAS, For over 25 years, USUHS has been the only University in the United States to integrate WMD-related education and training throughout its standard SOM curricula; Public Law 107-287, has directed that the Department of Veterans' Affairs

(VA) work with USUHS to assist the VA health care professionals in preparing to respond to WMD-related incidents; and

WHEREAS, The USUHS has led a collaborative effort with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Offices of Homeland Defense and Health Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Reserve Components, and the United States Public Health Service to coordinate the cost-effective sharing of WMD-related expertise and training among the above listed offices and departments; in addition, the VA Satellite Communication Network and video studios will be utilized by three WMD-related USUHS Centers to access the Internet for the cost-effective provision of multi-source, quality-ensured, WMD-related training and expertise to all National responders and health care providers who have access to the Internet; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States has strongly endorsed the continuation of USUHS annually through legislative direction since 1993 and the Department of Defense has officially recognized the value and cost effectiveness of the University through its presentation of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to USUHS in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Since the matriculation of its first SOM class over 27 years ago, there has been no additional construction on the USUHS campus; and, the accrediting organizations for USUHS have directed that additional space be provided for the Graduate School of Nursing and other University educational programs; on September 25, 2001, USUHS was notified that its construction project has been included in the TRISERVICE Medical MILCON Program for Fiscal Year 2006; and, accelerated design was approved on January 7, 2003 for the design process to begin in May of 2003; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to continue its determination to retain and expand the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences as a continued source of uniformed physicians, advanced practice nurses, and scientists dedicated to careers of service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the United States Public Health Service; and, be it further;

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly endorses the funding of the USUHS Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, the USUHS Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine, and the USUHS Casualty Care Research Center to endure the cost-effective provision of quality-assured, weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-related training and expertise, via the Internet, for the uniformed, Federal, and civilian emergency responder and health care provider communities; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion strongly supports accelerated new construction at the University campus immediately upon the completion of the on-going accelerated design to fulfill the urgent need for small classrooms and housing for the USUHS Graduate School of Nursing, the School of Medicine, and the Graduate Education Programs.

Resolution No. 164: Support for the Armed Forces and Their Families
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces and allied forces are performing their

missions with great courage and distinction in carrying out air, land and sea attacks against Iraqi military targets; and

WHEREAS, The ability of the Armed Forces to successfully perform their mission requires the support of their nation, community and families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion commends and expresses the unequivocal support and appreciation of the Legionnaires here assembled, to the members of the United States Armed Forces who are carrying out their missions with excellence, patriotism, and bravery; and to the families of the United States military personnel who are providing support and prayers for their loved ones currently engaged in military operations.

Resolution No. 435: The Pentagon Channel
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has established the Pentagon Channel television and Internet service to improve senior leaders' communication with the 2.6 million active duty and National Guard and Reserve military members worldwide, while enhancing their mission understanding and situational awareness; and

WHEREAS, The Pentagon Channel is available to military bases at home and abroad, and is offered free to stateside satellite and cable providers to increase nationwide public availability and thereby strengthen communication with the 1.2 million members of the National Guard and Reserve who live and work in communities across the country often far from a military base; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the Department of Defense Pentagon Channel internal communications outreach to military members worldwide and efforts for increased public availability of the Pentagon Channel in local stateside communities to ensure that service members at home, especially members of the National Guard and Reserve, are equipped with the military news and information that supports their readiness and success; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion expresses the unequivocal appreciation of the Legionnaires here assembled to the members of the United States Armed Forces who are carrying out their missions with excellence, patriotism, and bravery; and that The American Legion supports the Pentagon Channel in providing military news and information to help keep America's Armed Forces the best-informed military in the world.

Rejected

Resolution No. 25 (MT): Reopening the Project Shipboard and Defense (SHAD) Investigation

SUBCOM CHRM CARDER: That concludes the Report of the General Security Ad Hoc Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Conservation of Natural Resources, Chairman Don Clarke.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Clarke reads the following:

Conservation of Natural Resources
Donald T. Clarke, South Dakota, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 27: Domestic Energy and Production
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States' continued reliance on foreign sources of energy places our national security and economic well-being as a nation at risk during times of crisis; and

WHEREAS, The United States continues to import approximately 50 to 60 percent or more of its oil while its domestic production continues to drop to its lowest levels in over 24 years, thus further compounding our foreign trade deficit at a time when our energy demands continue unabated; and

WHEREAS, The war on terrorism and the continuing conflict in the volatile Middle East has brought into sharp focus the heavy reliance of the United States on imported foreign oil which necessitates a re-evaluation of our current and long-range energy policies; and

WHEREAS, Like our domestic oil and gas resources, nuclear energy is a safe resource where price and supply are not subject to manipulation by foreign countries; and nuclear energy is our second-largest source of electricity in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Congress has denied petroleum exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Region even though such exploration could have reduced our reliance on foreign sources of energy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That, The American Legion urges the Congress and the administration to pursue further development of domestic sources of energy to include:

1. **Increasing U.S. petroleum exploration and production in an environmentally sensible manner so as to reduce America's reliance on foreign petroleum.**
2. **Building new nuclear energy plants and renovating America's electrical grid.**
3. **Implementing domestic oil and gas exploration.**
4. **Development and implementation of sources to separate and recycle domestic recyclable materials thus reserving our natural resources for future generations.**
5. **That the provisions of the Energy act of 1992 be fully implemented and carried out as mandated in the Act.**
6. **That conservation of energy and natural resources be more actively pursued in the American private and public sectors.**

Resolution No. 28: Nuclear Energy and Nuclear Waste
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Nuclear energy has contributed greatly to U.S. energy independence, having displaced over 4.6 billion barrels of oil and saved over $145 billion in oil payments since the 1973 Arab oil embargo; and

WHEREAS, Oil imports remain the single largest contributor to the U.S. trade

deficit; and

WHEREAS, The United States must have a secure reliable supply of energy to fuel our economy and to protect our national security; and

WHEREAS, A growing supply of electricity is essential to U.S. economic growth, U.S. industry and the general well-being of the American people; and

WHEREAS, With a moderately growing economy, the U.S. will still need about 200,00 megawatts of new generating electrical capacity by 2010; and

WHEREAS, The virtues of using a diversity of energy sources including nuclear energy, to produce our electricity are well-recognized; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear energy is our second largest source of electricity providing 20 percent of our electricity supply safely, reliably and without damage to the environment; and

WHEREAS, The nuclear power plants operating in the United States continue their record-breaking electricity production performance by generating billions of kilowatt-hours of electricity; and

WHEREAS, The National Energy Policy Act of 1992 calls for new, safer, plant design and standardization, as well as Nuclear Regulatory Commission certification, continued studies of proposed sites, and modernized licensing procedures; and

WHEREAS, Over $14 billion has been committed to the Nuclear Waste Fund, and DOE has indicated it is unwilling to accept used fuel until at least 2010, and perhaps as late as 2015; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled that the federal government has a legal responsibility to take used fuel from the Nation's commercial reactors; and

WHEREAS, Nuclear power plants are running out of space to store used fuel and at least 27 of the Nation's 109 nuclear power plants will run out of on-site storage space. By 2010, 80 nuclear plants will have no space to store fuel; and

WHEREAS, Re-licensing of nuclear power plants is subject to a rigorous program of Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversight, inspection, preventive, and corrective maintenance and extensive equipment testing ensuring required safety safeguards are met; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion calls on the President and Congress to compel the Department of Energy to comply with the requirements of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act by establishing a process to develop an integrated used fuel management system and find sites for interim, centralized storage; making timely progress in the characterization of any proposed repository sites at various locations; and increasing funding to allow critical science and engineering studies to program on schedule; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the local government directly affected by interim storage and/or permanent disposal should be involved in planning and receiving appropriate benefits from such facilities.

Resolution No. 77: Alternative Energy Resources
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The need for development of alternate sources of energy is critical and vital to America's maintaining competitive advantage in the world economy; and

WHEREAS, Our growing dependence on foreign oil adversely affects the United States and world economics as was discovered during the oil embargo in 1973 and

interruption in the supply of foreign oil during the years of conflict between Iran and Iraq; and

WHEREAS, The United States has the opportunity to take the initiation and lead in developing new and alternate sources of energy; and

WHEREAS, There is a growing need for creating new employment for the American people and developing new skills especially for our veteran population, as well as for removing the dangers now attendant to continued use of nuclear power by development of further safeguards; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That, The American Legion urges the Congress and our industrial complexes that it favors legislation or plans for funding of research and development of all alternative sources of energy including the utilization of our coal reserves and our vast supply of natural gas and/or methanol and ethanol as well as nuclear energy so as to ensure that our Nation will never be an economic hostage; and we can always meet the ever growing completion of Japan and other Far Eastern industrial complexes and the European Common Market; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That our Federal Government be strongly encouraged to substantially expand its incentive to industry, either through tax incentives or through research and development grants, in a greatly expanded effort to develop and use alternative energy resources, including substitute power and heating supplies.

Resolution No. 78: Energy Conservation
Origin: Utah
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, War and conflict in the Middle East coupled with the rising world oil prices are giving rise to renewed domestic oil and gas exploration; and

WHEREAS, Despite these noted concerns, excessively high energy consumption continues unabated in the United States; and

WHEREAS, It is in our national interests to develop and utilize diversified alternate sources of energy so to conserve our primary source of energy and to minimize any potential disruption of energy sources targeted by terrorist attacks on our Homeland Security; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the Administration and the Congress to encourage energy conservation by accomplishing the following, as an example:

1. **Continuing to require the production of fuel efficient automobiles**
2. **Continuing to encourage through tax incentives better insulation in new homes and other building and upgrading insulation in existing structures**
3. **Maintaining and expanding mass transit systems**
4. **Encouraging research, along with greater practical usages, of solar and nuclear energy**
5. **Encouraging the continued development and usage of efficient, cost beneficial, coal gasification and liquefactions process**
6. **Expand research and possible development of new technology to find possible uses in the energy consumption field.**

SUBCOM CHRM CLARKE: Mr. Chairman that concludes the Report of the Conservation of Natural Resources.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Aerospace Committee, Dan M. Dellinger, Chairman.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Dellinger reads the following:

Aerospace Committee
Daniel M. Bellinger, Virginia, Chairman

Resolution No. 121: Aeronautical Production and Space Exploration
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States has been the world leader in aeronautics for over 75 years, since the creation of the Nation's first aeronautical research laboratories; and

WHEREAS, The United States has become the global pacesetter in military and commercial aircraft and space technology through long-range research and development; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aviation and space research has had a profound impact on our Nation's quality of life and its economic social and political institutions; and

WHEREAS, U.S. advancements in aeronautics and space technology have made all areas of our earth more accessible and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has committed itself to the advancement of aeronautics and space exploration and the necessary research, engineering and development to propagate these technologies by creating within the National Security Commission an Aerospace Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004 That The American Legion deems it imperative that the United States, in the face of increasing competition, maintain its hard won status as the world leader in aeronautics and aircraft production and in space exploration and research. To realize this goal, we urge the Congress to provide:

1. **Adequate funding for the nation's civilian and military aerospace research and development programs.**
2. **Adequate funding to build, upgrade and enhance the Nation's civilian and military aerospace research facilities and wind tunnels.**
3. **A renewed national commitment to education involving academia in aeronautical and aerospace engineering research and technologies insuring a state of the art educated work force.**
4. **Overwatch and investigating functions and related activities with respect to the transfer of American aerospace technology abroad; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That the Nation must sustain its commitment to aerospace engineering research and development if it is to maintain its role as the world leader as we move into the next century.

Resolution No. 122: Supporting the National Space Program
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The national security, technology and economic welfare of the United

States are of paramount importance to the people of America; and

WHEREAS, U.S. progress in aerospace research has had a profound impact on our Nation's quality of life and its economic, social, environmental and political institution and made possible communication on a global scale; and

WHEREAS, The dissemination and use of space systems technology, the research programs on which it is based, and the spin-off products, techniques and services derived from the U.S. space program are vital components of the nation's economy and the well-being of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. space program has kept the nation on the leading edge of the technology frontier, has created jobs, improved communications, electronics, material, diagnosis and treatment of medical care for veterans and all Americans, fostered new scholastic interest in space science, provided insight into the evolution of the universe and current state of the earth, its environment and its solar system, and has provided visions and objectives for the future for business, industry and academia and the nation's youth; and

WHEREAS, In view of changes in domestic and international priorities in the areas of geopolitics, foreign policy, national security, economics and science, affirmation of new long range and lasting objectives are required for the manned and unmanned U.S. national security, civil and commercial space programs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004 That The American Legion urges the Congress to adopt the following objectives with regard to the National Space Program:

1. **A managerially efficient NASA as the steward of the Nation's civil and commercial space program dedicated to focusing on the use and exploitation of space and technology derived from our efforts there; and**
2. **Continued research and development on affordable lift into space using new space launch concepts, propulsion systems, metals, fuels, and materials and emphasis on interrelationships of programs such as launch, on-orbit retrieval operations, celestial and extraterrestrial exploration; and**
3. **Establishment of special working liaisons and agreements with other space-faring nations who share U.S. goals in space and who will also share costs, technologies and resources with a concern not to compromise national security and leading edge technology; and**
4. **Endorse and actively support those specific goals of the U.S. space program that have high probability to achieve cost effectiveness and nation-wide beneficial results in national security, scientific research and exploration goals based on a permanent national space policy which allows clear, definable progress for the nation at consistent, predictable funding levels; and**
5. **National commitment to build, upgrade and enhance the Nation's aerospace research facilities and facilitate academic involvement in aerospace disciplines; and**
6. **That programs such as the Nation's space activities are crucial to America's well-being and must co-exist with other national budgetary priorities; and, be it finally**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes that as we move into the 21st century, we must continue to venture beyond and into the promises of space.

Resolution No. 123: Funding the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Budgets
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 118 (VA))

WHEREAS, In the pioneering days of aviation, this nation recognized the important values for aeronautics research. Therefore Congress established the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA the predecessor to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration NASA), with follow-on investment in national aeronautics research laboratories and wind tunnels, which amounts to billions of dollars since 1915. The result was that every US aircraft, used NASA technology; and

WHEREAS, The aeronautic advances we currently enjoy have provided this nation with leading edge technology, world leadership and air superiority in the civil and military arena, some of which has taken 10 to 20 years of extensive research. Now the Nation's aeronautics research programs are in serious decline and NASA aeronautics research appropriations have declined about 40% since FY 1994. The proposed FY05 budget request further reduces to approximately a mere $919 million out of the agency's $16.2 plus billion; and

WHEREAS, The September 11 terrorist attacks resulted in a complete shutdown of the US air transportation system for several days. The impact emphasizes just how dependent we all are on air transportation. Although the immediate response was a sharp reduction in the demand for air travel. Within the year airlines will be pressing the limits of system capacity again. In addition, the stunning success of air power in Afghanistan is the result of research performed a decade or more ago and reminds us that continued emphasis on military aviation R&T is essential to future U.S. air superiority. and

WHEREAS, NASA's top priority, the new space exploration initiative (SEI), threatens to consume even larger portions of the agency's budget. As a consequence NASA will not achieve the 10 national aviation-related outcome goals announced in the 1997 under the ("Three Pillars For Success," #1 Global Civil Aviation, #2 Revolutionary Technology Leaps, #3 Access to Space) which was the response to the 1995 Presidential Report on Aeronautics and Space and pronounced all three pillars as critical to this Nation's continued leadership; and

WHEREAS, In civil air, less than 10 years ago Boeing and McDonnell Douglas had more than 70% of the world market. Europe's AirBus now has more than 50% and is focused on 60-70% with a goal of total domination of global aeronautics. This Nation needs to awaken to the fact that competitive nations have recognized the importance of aeronautics for economic and technology reasons and have built new wind tunnels and expanded research, and Boeing and Lockheed Martin are doing a significant portion of their wind tunnel testing abroad because the tunnels are newer and more advanced. Also of significant concern and according to Company officials the Joint Strike Fighter aircraft has also been tested abroad; and

WHEREAS, Critics who view aeronautics research as "corporate welfare" do not recognize the long-lead-time research and technology advances vs. market realities or the national stake (economy, jobs, trade, balance, prestige) in this technology. NASA's aeronautics laboratories have the research facilities, including wind tunnels and technical expertise to conduct the cutting-edge scientific inquiry need to advance the state-of-the-art military and civil aircraft; and

WHEREAS, In February 2002, NASA released "The NASA Aeronautics Blueprints Toward a Bold New Era of Aviation." NASA administrator was quoted as saying "the

aeronautics blueprint identifies a new and revolutionary technology vision." The blueprint provides an excellent statement of the problems facing aviation today, and presents a vision of what can be achieved by national investments in aeronautics research. It does not provide a program plan to realize the vision, nor does it address the huge miss-match between the current NASA aeronautics funding level and what is required to realize the vision. It is important for the Congress to act now to ensure that the essential first steps are taken. NASA must be directed to develop a national program plan to realize the technologies needed to achieve its aviation vision. Congress must also take action to strengthen the FY05 NASA aeronautics budget in order to position the agency to implement the plan in FY06; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion, in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004 That The American Legion urges the Congress to restore full funding to the NASA budget and mandate an amount equal to ten percent of NASA's budget for aeronautics research programs; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress direct NASA to achieve the 10 national aeronautics-related outcome goals announced in 1997 under "Three Pillars For Success," and that Congress mandate that all military aircraft research, engineering and development be performed within the boundaries of this Nation while upgrading research facilities of this Nation and encouraging civil-aero testing within these facilities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That Congress direct and fund NASA to develop the technologies needed to achieve its aviation vision in the FY02 aeronautic blueprint towards the new era of aviation; and, be if further

RESOLVED, That with the decline of the United States global commercial aircraft market of 90% to below 50%, the aging of our military aircraft, and the increased investment by other countries in aeronautics, that NASA aeronautics budget be fully restored to 1994-1995 funding levels to meet the challenges of the 21st Century in military and civil aeronautics and NASA commit 10% of budget directly to aeronautics; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion shall employ maximum effort to make this Nation and the Congress rectify the serious decline in aeronautics research which is critical to the Nation's continued world leadership prosperity and military superiority.

Resolution No. 124: Support for the United States Air Force
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, People are the United States Air Force's top priority: the Air Force is the world's premier aerospace force because its great people-active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian-continue to serve selflessly as a total force under increasingly difficult circumstances, and in order to grow the force, recruiting and retention are among its highest priorities; to continue attracting and retaining dedicated men and women, the Air Force recognizes that it must continue its efforts to improve pay, benefits, and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, In the past four years, America's Air Force has accelerated its post-Cold War high operations tempo despite a 40 percent force size reduction since 1986; and to maintain this pace while minimizing the adverse impact on its people, equipment, and infrastructure, the Air Force; and

WHEREAS, To meet the challenges of adversaries at home and abroad, Air Force strategy calls for a capabilities-based approach to defense planning: This enables the Service to answer a broad range of challenges posed by potential adversaries, while also developing the capabilities it needs for the future; and

WHEREAS, In assessing existing and potential adversaries' capabilities against our own, the Air Force is developing Task Forces for a variety of mission requirements, from strategic response to homeland security: For example, Global Strike, Task Force, which describes how we will operate in an anti-access scenario, is the next step in the journey to fully achieve Air Force missions, while also opening doors to adaptive and innovative operational plans, and relevant organization structure; and

WHEREAS, Continued investment in the core competencies of aerospace power-aerospace superiority, global attack, precision engagement, information superiority, rapid global mobility, and agile combat support-will continue to be the key to preserving the Air Force's ability to respond to threats to America's national security whenever and wherever they occur; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004 That The American Legion urge the Congress to appropriately support the United States Air Force's commitment to attract, retain, and train quality people and to mold them into an expeditionary aerospace force capable of flexibly responding to threats to America's national security; to enhance readiness through its continued focus on total force integration and the integration of air and space systems; and to build and implement a transformation and modernization program that will maintain America's dominance in air and space well into the 21st Century.

SUBCOM CHRM DELLINGER: Mr. Chairman, that concludes the Report of the Aerospace Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness, Erwin Gus Williams, Chairman.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Williams reads the following:

Homeland Security and Civil Preparedness Committee
Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 168: Funding Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because previous emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, had been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 established the new Department of Homeland Security as well as a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and

policies; and

WHEREAS, Although the Congress has appropriated funding for the Department of Homeland Security and its numerous agencies and functions, appropriations continue to be required to fund homeland security tasks and functions at regional, state and local levels across the Nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security so as to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congress also fully fund those homeland security tasks and functions being performed at regional, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 169: Support for Homeland Security and the War On Terrorism
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on American soil have made Americans painfully aware of their vulnerability to violence from international terrorism; and

WHEREAS, These terrorists were able to carry out their attacks because emphasis by the U.S. Government on homeland security and intelligence collection, while improving over recent years, have been inadequate and incapable of preventing such attacks; and

WHEREAS, The multiple federal and local government agencies responsible for safeguarding the United States homeland are disjointed, have had multiple chains-of-command, inadequate communications links and were incapable of effective coordination; and

WHEREAS, On September 20, 2001, President Bush announced the establishment of the Office of Homeland Security, a new cabinet position designed to be the single source of authority, at the highest levels, for all homeland defense programs and policies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the War on Terrorism and the Department of Homeland Security and urges the United States Government to make the security of the United States the top national priority; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress to arm the Department of Homeland Security with the legal powers and fiduciary tools to harmonize the many agencies and offices with Homeland Security responsibilities into a viable and credible deterrent to those who seek to inflict violence on the United States and the American people; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That our national intelligence agencies be fully funded and their efforts and data collection be expanded and coordinated.

Resolution No. 170: Support for the Non-Federal Roles of the National Guard
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Members of the National Guard swear dual allegiance to support and

defend the United States as well as the individual states in which Guardsmen reside and serve; and

WHEREAS, In the history of our country, activated National Guard units have served with distinction in all of our Nation's wars, and in combination with Reserve units, composed 50 percent of the total United States' forces deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units also perform such invaluable non-federal roles as quelling domestic civil disturbances to include, for example, the employment of Guardsmen in the Los Angeles rioting; providing relief assistance in man-made or natural disasters as in Hurricane Hugo, the California earthquakes and the Mississippi River floods; as well as civil defense and drug interdiction functions, and other vital missions as determined by state authorities; and

WHEREAS, National Guard units are often the first relief or rescue forces to provide immediate on-scene response in the event of such emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Past rioting and looting on the order of that in Los Angeles and the reoccurrence of large scale natural and man-made disasters could be repeated across the country requiring the immediate intervention of military units to supplement and assist state and local authorities and our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, With the extended deployment of National Guard units, and their increasing employment in numerous overseas missions, their participation in these traditional non-federal roles may be severely limited or even eliminated in some cases; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to retain National Guard units at reasonable readiness levels so that in addition to their active duty missions they may continue to provide civil disturbance and natural and man-made disaster assistance; perform civil defense and drug interdictions functions as well as other essential state roles as required.

Resolution No. 191: Support the United States Coast Guard in Homeland Security
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 7 (AK))

WHEREAS, By public law the United States Coast Guard is at all times one of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was able to respond to the terrorism attacks of September 11, 2001, within hours and its homeland security missions have doubled; and

WHEREAS, Included in the numerous peacetime and wartime missions of the Coast Guard are law enforcement in its many facets to include drug interdiction and interception of illegal aliens; environment protection, maritime safety including search and rescue responsibilities and inspecting and licensing Merchant Marine ships; and National Security to include port security and serving as an essential wartime and peacetime partner of the U.S. Navy; and

WHEREAS, Each year the Coast Guard saves about $2.5 billion in property, saves 4,000 lives, repaying to the American taxpayer about seven times their annual operating budget for search and rescue. During 1999, the Coast Guard seized drugs worth more than $3.9 billion-five times more than the Coast Guard's annual operating expense budget for drug interdiction. This kept 28,872 pounds of marijuana and a record-level

111,689 pounds-506 million doses-of cocaine from reaching our nation's streets and school yards; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard was transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security, these homeland security missions will continue during the War on Terrorism; and

WHEREAS, To carry out these critical missions, it is essential that highly skilled and motivated men and women continue to be attracted and retained by the Coast Guard and its Reserves and that cutters, aircraft, and required facilities be fully funded; and

WHEREAS, Without adequate resources, the United States Coast Guard will be unable to meet its national and international commitments to the detriment of the American people and other democratic nations; and

WHEREAS, The Coast Guard has proposed an "Integrated Deepwater System" to modernize and recapitalize its deepwater assets that was strongly endorsed by the President's Interagency Task Force on Coast Guard roles and missions as a "near-term national priority." The Deepwater Program compromises the acquisition of integrated surface, air, sensors and communication assets that will allow the Coast Guard to efficiently and effectively support national maritime security interests well into the 21st century; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully fund the United States Coast Guard budget so it can achieve its numerous vital missions including homeland security, law enforcement, environmental protection, maritime safety and other missions as assigned as well as the funding of its "Deepwater" initiatives; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the annual Congressional passage of the Coast Guard Authorization Act; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Homeland Security to support pay and benefits equity for Coast Guard men and women as well as the same quality of life features as authorized for the other Armed Forces of the United States.

Resolution No. 434: The American Legion Role in Homeland Security
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 81 (MX))

WHEREAS, Since before September 11, 2001, our Nation has been at risk to the new and changing invisible threat of terrorism launched from abroad; the United States, even during the War on Terrorism, has no more important mission than protecting the homeland and her citizens from future terrorism; and

WHEREAS, The National Strategy for Homeland Security aligns and focuses homeland security functions into six critical mission areas, namely, intelligence and warning; border and transportation security; domestic counterterrorisms; protecting critical infrastructure; defending against catastrophic terrorism; and emergency preparedness and response; and

WHEREAS, The responsibility for providing homeland security is shared between federal, state and local governments, and the private sector; many homeland security activities, such as intelligence gathering and border security, are properly accomplished at the federal level: In other circumstances, like first responder capabilities, it is more

appropriate for state and local governments to handle these responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, After the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, Presidential and Congressional budgets identified four priority areas for additional resources and they included: Support first responders, defend against bioterrorism, secure America's borders and to use 21st century technology to secure the homeland; and

WHEREAS, Although there are Homeland Security appropriations committees in the United States Congress, there are no Homeland Security authorizing committees; and

WHEREAS, According to the Council for Excellence in Government, the greatest resource the United States has for enhancing homeland security-which has been largely untapped thus far-is the American people; and

WHEREAS, Polls have indicated that over 62 percent of Americans say they would be willing to spend time volunteering with homeland security planning, training and practicing drills in their communities, yet some 84 percent of Americans and first responders polled admitted to low awareness of federal, state and local emergency preparedness plans; and

WHEREAS, As former members of the Armed Forces trained in vigilance and security, who would be more qualified citizens than veterans to assist in many homeland security activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges its Legionnaires, Posts and Departments to assist in Homeland Security efforts in communities for example, by developing emergency kits and plans; by remaining informed and assisting families, schools, workplaces and communities in developing emergency plans and checklists; by reporting suspicious activity, or working with local councils of the Citizen Corps or community-based organizations; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Congressional leadership authorize the formation of Homeland Security authorizing committees to facilitate the Homeland Security budgeting process.

Resolution No. 439: The Citizen Corps
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, The American Legion is composed of grassroots Posts across the Country which have had experience in community civil preparedness; and

WHEREAS, In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, which is an effort to foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility through volunteerism; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps, a component of USA Freedom Corps, is a locally-driven initiative to have every American become an active participant in preventing, preparing for, and responding to crime, natural disasters and other emergencies; and

WHEREAS, The Citizen Corps Affiliate Program expands the resources and materials available to states and local communities by partnering with Programs and Organizations that offer resources for public education, outreach, and training; represent volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer; or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Program Affiliates support Citizen Corps Council activities by helping to establish training and information delivery systems for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and by helping with family preparedness and crime prevention
initiatives in a community or across a region; and

WHEREAS, The programs of Citizen Corps are jointly managed by the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice and Department of Health and Human Services; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Corps Councils help drive local citizen participation by coordinating Citizen Corps programs, developing community action plans, assessing possible threats and identifying local resources; and

WHEREAS, The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and disaster medical operations. Using their training; and

WHEREAS, The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Program strengthens communities by helping medical, public health and other volunteers offer their expertise throughout the year as well as during local emergencies and other times of community need; and

WHEREAS, An expanded Neighborhood Watch Program (NWP) Program incorporates terrorism awareness education into its existing crime prevention mission, while also serving as a way to bring residents together to focus on emergency preparedness and emergency response training; and

WHEREAS, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) Program works to enhance the capacity of state and local law enforcement to utilize volunteers; and

WHEREAS, Fire Corps Program has the goal of providing support and supplementing resource-constrained fire departments through the use of civilian volunteers for non-fire suppression related activities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That all Departments and Posts of The American Legion are encouraged to become involved in their local Citizen Corps activities, and establish their own programs under an affiliation with Citizen Corps; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion become a Citizen Corps affiliate and the President and Congress be urged to support and fully fund all components of Citizen Corps.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 24 (MT): The Coast Guard In Maritime and Port Security

Resolution No. 128 (MA): Support of Blood Banks

Resolution No. 207 (GA): Authorizing American Legion Homeland Security Committees

SUBCOM CHRM WILLIAMS: Mr. Chairman that concludes the Report of the Homeland Security and Civil Defense Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Law and Order Committee, Chairman George W. Wehrli.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Wehrli reads the following:

Law and Order Committee
George W. Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 165: Combating Crime in America
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, One of the major principles contained in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion is "...to maintain law and order"; and

WHEREAS, Although the United States in its history has endured previous periods of high crime rates. Americans in recent years have been experiencing crime waves characterized by escalating and senseless violence and perversion which have permeated all communities and affected all age categories and walks of life; and

WHEREAS, Statistics show that four out of every five Americans will become a victim of violent crime at least once in their lives, and a violent crime occurred once every 22 seconds in 1993; and

WHEREAS, Violent offenders serve on the average only 37 percent of their sentences, so that at any given time approximately 75 percent of convicted criminals are either on probation or parole; and

WHEREAS, The link between federal funding and state performance is vital as 95 percent of all violent crime is covered by state, not federal statutes; and the "war on crime," with a hope of victory, will require a get-tough federal-state partnership to apprehend criminals, put them in prison, and keep them there; and

WHEREAS, The deterrent effect of the current judicial system of punishment and reprisal from society have become less intimidating to would-be criminals, and the elevation of the rights of criminals has surpassed the rights of their victims and survivors; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that the time has come for the Federal and State Governments to implement stiffer and more consistent penalties that are as tough and distasteful as the crimes inflicted upon innocent victims; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion recommends that the following measures be considered by municipal, state and federal authorities for application to repeat youthful offenders:

1. **More frequent charging of juveniles as adults.**
2. **Separate prison facilities for chronic, violent juvenile offenders.**
3. **Mandatory sentences for gang-related crimes and for violent crimes committed with firearms.**
4. **More jail time for certain first-time offenders.**
5. **Holding parents responsible for fines imposed on youthful offenders, as appropriate.**
6. **Establishing more boot camps for youthful offenders; and, be it further**

RESOLVED, That The American Legion further recommends that the current system of paroles and probations be drastically revised; that parole for first degree murder be abolished; that the system of endless appeals and delays for executions be more realistically curtailed; that "good time" and community service paroles be eliminated for violent felony convictions; that more drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs be established in adult and juvenile prison systems; and that the criminal

justice system work faster and more effectively, and that convicted criminals be required to make monetary restitution to their victims or to surviving family members, as appropriate; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion firmly believes that these types of penalties can impact on reducing repeated criminal activity; and in the final analysis, we are convinced that the most effective deterrent to crime is the strong influence of families and family-oriented programs that foster, strengthen and transmit family and societal values to young adults.

Resolution No. 166: Support for the Second Amendment
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms of his or her choice; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that over 60 million individuals, representing over half of the households in America, have chosen to exercise that right by owning one or more firearms; and

WHEREAS, Gun bans, registration, and licensing of firearms and their owners of has had little or no effect in such urban areas such as New York City, California and Washington D.C. and has not prevented violent criminals from obtaining firearms illegally and committing crimes; and

WHEREAS, The restriction of firearms purchases by law-abiding citizens will create a black market in illegal firearms and incur further governmental costs to enforce such restriction; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion reaffirms its recognition that the Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States guarantees each law-abiding American citizen the right to keep and bear arms; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the membership of The American Legion urges our Nation's lawmakers to recognize, as part of their oaths of office, that the Second Amendment guarantees law-abiding citizens the right to keep and bear the arms of their choice, as do the millions of American veterans who have fought, and continue to fight, to preserve those rights, hereby advise the Congress of the United States and the Executive Department to cease and desist any and all efforts to restrict these rights by any legislation or order.

Resolution No. 167: Department Fire Fighter of the Year Awards
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion includes as one of the objectives "...to maintain Law and Order" and fire fighting as well as law enforcement contributes to America's internal security; and

WHEREAS, Over 200 New York City fire fighters perished during their attempt to rescue the victims of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center; and

WHEREAS, The National Executive Committee at the Spring 1970 meetings adopted Resolution No 13, "Certificate of Commendation for Law Enforcement Officers and Fire fighters," authorized the issuance of suitable Certificates of Commendation to

outstanding fire fighters by Posts and Departments; and

WHEREAS, According to National Security Commission surveys of Departments conducted after September 11, 2001, fifteen of the responding Departments have programs at Department and Post levels and have a Department Fire Fighter of the Year Award Program; and

WHEREAS, According to The American Legion's 2002-2003 Consolidated Post Report, which represent nearly 56 percent of all reporting Post Reports, over 1,717 Posts have fire prevention programs; and

WHEREAS, The presentation of Department Fire Fighter of the Year Awards reflects great credit on fire fighters, communities and states and on The American Legion; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge all Departments to establish an annual Department Fire Fighter of the Year Award which may be presented at Department Conventions or other American Legion meetings as deemed appropriate; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That as Department Fire Fighter of the Year Award programs continue to grow, The American Legion will consider establishing a National Fire Fighter of the Year Award.

Rejected

Resolution No. 100 (IN): National Fire Fighter of the Year Award

SUBCOM CHRM WEHRLI: Mr. Chairman that concludes the Report of the Law and Order Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Merchant Marine. Chairman, Charles Moreland.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Moreland reads the following:

Merchant Marine Committee
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 172: Support for the Jones Maritime Act and Related Cabotage Laws
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always stressed that maintaining a viable U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and its supporting infrastructure is essential to the economic, national, and environmental security of this nation; and

WHEREAS, The maritime policy of the United States, as articulated in the 1936 Merchant Marine Act, states that "it is necessary for the national defense and development of its foreign and domestic commerce that the United States shall have a Merchant Marine"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is concerned about the continued decline of the U.S.-Flag Merchant Marine and the shortage of trained American mariners; and

WHEREAS, At the beginning of 1998, the privately owned ocean-going U.S.-flag fleet consisted of only 259 active ships, which includes 119 ships in domestic trade and

36 other engaged exclusively in U.S. government work; thus, only 104 U.S.-Flag ships are operating in international trade in support of the Nation's economic and national security interests; and

WHEREAS, The United States is the world's largest trading nation, but only three percent of U.S. imports and exports are carried in U.S.-flag ships which is economically unwise and militarily imprudent; and

WHEREAS, The Jones Act which is critical to United States national security and to America's economic well-being should be reaffirmed as should the continuation of the annual appropriations needed to fund the Maritime Security Act of 1996; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support the Jones Act and related Maritime cabotage laws critical to America's maritime infrastructure, and therefore, to the U.S. national defense.

Resolution No. 173: Commercial Shipbuilding for Defense
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States emerged as the worlds foremost economic power and trading nation after the Cold war, and America's policymakers have neglected to use these advantages to sustain the nation's naval and maritime power; and

WHEREAS, Less than 3 percent of America's import and export tonnage is carried in U.S. Flag ships, and American ships represent less than 1 percent of world commercial tonnage, compared to 9 percent 20 years ago; and

WHEREAS, The 600-ship navy envisioned by President Reagan would have kept the ship yards busy; today, with a Navy only one-third as large and declining further, America's shipyards are in trouble; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, only 6 U.S. shipyards had contracts to build large ocean-going ships, down from 11 in 1993, and the industry, as a whole, has seen its work force decline by 30 percent since 1991; this undermines the ability of the United States to rebuild and expand its naval and maritime forces; and

WHEREAS, China has been expanding its shipbuilding and now accounts for 7 percent of the world total, but short of their 10 percent target for 2000; Beijing is restructuring the industry into two regional corporations answerable to the government; and

WHEREAS, There are only about 260 U.S. Flagged merchant ships, and by comparison, the Chinese-Flagged merchant fleet numbers over 1,500 ships; more than 400 of these ships, carrying 30 percent of China's trade, are operated by the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), a state-owned conglomerate with close ties to Beijing's military and routinely provides shipping support to Chinese military and naval exercises; and

WHEREAS, U.S. commercial build rates are also not large enough to provide the strategic sealift needed in an emergency, or to support a shipbuilding industry large enough to meet future U.S. naval needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the Congress to vigorously act to stop the further erosion of our vital maritime capability; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the President and Congress to

boost naval budgets, promote commercial shipbuilding, expand the use of U.S. flagships in world commerce, and resist foreign actions that would further damage America's defense industrial base.

Received and Recorded

Resolution No. 84 (NE): The Merchant Marine Flag

SUBCOM CHRM MORELAND: That concludes the Report of the Merchant Marine Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report on Military Affairs, Clayborn Lofton, Chairman.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Lofton reads the following:

Military Affairs Committee
Clayborn Lofton, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 10: Awarding the Cold War Victory Medal
Origin: District of Columbia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Armed Forces engaged the forces of international Communism continuously from the end of World War II until the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

WHEREAS, The United States, during this extended period, relied for its manpower source on a national service Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps made up of citizens performing their obligated duty to serve and defend the United States; and

WHEREAS, The defeat of the former Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies constituted the greatest success of American Armed Forces since the end of World War II; and

WHEREAS, Many American citizens served the nation in assigned duties without receiving tangible recognition for that service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004,That The American Legion urge the Congress to authorize and provide funding for the award of a Cold War Victory Medal to all Armed Forces members who served on extended active duty during the period 2 September 1945 through 26 December 1991, thereby commemorating service in the Cold War to eliminate the threat of a determined enemy to overpower the freely elected democracies of the world.

Resolution No. 116: Wearing the United States Flag Patch
Origin: Virginia
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion was founded by the veterans of World War I on March 19, 1919; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has long been recognized as a protector of and a focus for respect for the Flag of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion is one of the founding supporters for the Flag Code of the United States and the Citizen's Flag Alliance; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army was the first armed service to carry the Flag of the United States of America into battle during the American Revolution; and

WHEREAS, Many of the customs and laws incorporated into the Flag Code of the United States are based upon practices and customs evolved by soldiers of the Union Army during the American Civil War; and

WHEREAS, The Flag Code of the United States states: "No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations"; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army Uniform Regulations directed on February 11, 2004 that each soldier in the United States Army wear the Flag of the United States of America on the right uniform sleeve of their uniform; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army Uniform Regulations directed that each soldier, if authorized a combat patch, to wear that patch above the Flag of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, The Flag Code of the United States states: "No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy"; and

WHEREAS, The above passage is interpreted to mean that no object is to be displayed above the Flag of the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, By publishing the above change to the United States Army Uniform Regulations, the U.S. Army condones the disrespectful public display of the Flag of the United States of America; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Secretary of the Army and Chief of Staff of the Army direct that the U.S. Army Uniform Regulations be amended to reflect the proper display of the Flag of the United States of America when worn on the uniform of members of the United States Army; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the United States Army Uniform Regulations be amended to direct that the Flag of the United States of America shall be worn on top of the right sleeve, one-half inch below the shoulder seam, the Union of the Flag facing forward, and that each combat patch, when authorized, be worn immediately 1/8 inch BENEATH the Flag of the United States of America on the U.S. Army uniform; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That this action, at the behest of veterans of The American Legion, will illustrate respect for the Flag of the United States of America in accordance with the Flag Code of the United States by members of the armed service that has borne the Flag in battle and has sworn to defend it.

Resolution No. 171: Support for State Defense Forces
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion as an organization of war veterans supports efforts to meet National and civilian defense needs in peacetime and wartime; and

WHEREAS, The National Guard of the various states have duel federal and state missions in peacetime which become nearly exclusively federal missions in wartime; and

WHEREAS, The Congress of the United States (32 U.S. C. 109) has recognized the need for states to organize and maintain State Defense Forces in addition to the National Guard in peacetime to maintain public safety and order, to protect essential resources and facilities. to combat terrorism, and to perform those state missions independently when the National Guard is federalized or mobilized and not available to the state; and

WHEREAS, Currently 24 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico maintain State Defense Forces under the command and control of the various state Adjutants General but these states are limited in their ability to properly train and support these patriotic volunteers because of an inability to obtain federal support; and

WHEREAS, Legislation has been introduced in the Congress of the United States to provide federal support for the states to organize, equip, train and maintain State Defense Forces at little or not cost to the federal government; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion shall support legislation before the Congress of the United States to provide federal support for the State Defense Forces so that they can fully support Homeland Security and assist in the War on Terrorism.

Resolution No. 174: Department of Defense Healthcare for Military Beneficiaries
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The promise of free health care for life in exchange for 20 or more years of creditable military service was contained in recruiting and retention and was recognized as such by active duty personnel, Reservists and military retirees and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The passage of TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy Programs for Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents has essentially fulfilled the promise of lifetime military healthcare; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion has had a number of concerns with TRICARE healthcare programs to include, for example, TRICARE business practices and benefit portability need to be improved; claims processing reform is direly needed; and reimbursement rates to providers need to be increased; and

WHEREAS, That The American Legion recommends that the following guidelines be incorporated as part of the Department of Defense healthcare package for military retirees, dependents and military survivors:

1. Administrative barriers to an effective TRICARE system to include raising TRICARE provider reimbursements; program portability between TRICARE regions; reducing delays in claim payments; and increasing electronic claims processing need to be removed. Improve TRICARE enrollment procedures, beneficiary education, decrease administrative burdens, eliminate non-availability requirements and eliminate unnecessary reporting requirements.
2. That the TRICARE programs to include the TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy programs which are used by 1.3 million Medicare-eligible military retirees and their dependents be fully funded annually.
3. Restore TRICARE reimbursement policy to pay up to what TRICARE would have paid had there been no other health insurance as was the policy before 1993.

4. That dual eligible disabled retirees continue to receive health care from both military treatment facilities and VA medical centers. TRICARE Prime Remote should be included for military retirees, dependents and military survivors.
5. That all military beneficiaries be authorized to receive dental and visual care at military treatment facilities.
6. That retired Reservists and their dependents be eligible for TRICARE coverage when they become eligible to receive retirement pay. The American Legion urges that all discharging servicemembers, active and Reservists be required to have discharge and retirement physical examinations, physicals should not be optional or abbreviated.
7. That adequate military medical personnel, to include graduates of the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and members of the Commissioned Officer Corps of the Public Health Service, should be retained on active duty to provide health care for active duty and retired military personnel and their dependents.
8. That the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP) be authorized as an alternative to TRICARE for those military retirees and dependents who can afford such premiums; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges Congress to fully fund military and VA healthcare programs for beneficiaries as well as a permanent TRICARE program for Guardsmen and Reservists.

Resolution No. 175: Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) was adopted by Congress in 1982 in order to protect divorced spouses of military members particularly in those states which had no provisions for alimony; and

WHEREAS, Prior to passage of this law, military spouses always had the full range of remedies in divorce courts as any other spouse in America; and

WHEREAS, Since the passage of the law (P.L. 97-252), divorce courts have been awarding up to 50 percent of disposable military retirement pay to former spouses based on the guidelines in the Federal Law; and among the many inequities in the law are the continuance of lifetime annuities to former spouses whether they remarry or not, and military retirees are the only federal retirees to whom this provision applies; and

WHEREAS, The provisions of the USFSPA were made retroactive so as to be effective one day before the supreme court ruling (McCarthy vs. McCarthy) which reaffirmed that military pay could not be divided as property. As a result of this action, divorces settled over 25 years ago were reopened by former spouses; and

WHEREAS, Since the USFSPA was enacted, Congress has enacted 23 amendments to that law virtually all of which were adopted without hearings and 18 of which favored former spouses; and

WHEREAS, The USFSPA has threatened grave harm to the goals of the Military Retirement System which serves as the major incentive to the long-term maintenance of a competent and professional military force; and

WHEREAS, Military members must have at least 20 years of creditable service before being eligible to receive retired pay, and the spouse of a military member now

qualifies for a share of military retired pay immediately upon marriage; and

WHEREAS, As well-intentioned as it was meant to be, the law has created an even larger class of victims than the former spouses it was designed to assist, namely, the remarried active duty service member and military retiree and his or her new family; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges Congressional hearings on the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act and supports the principle that spouses of military personnel have the right to adequate support, that military pay should only be included in judicial determinations of appropriate support on a case-by-case basis; and that the Federal Law (P.L. 97-252) to distribute military retired pay as property between service members or military retirees and former spouses as a minimum should be modified as follows:

1. **Military retired pay should be treated as income, rather than property, and state divorce courts should apportion retired pay as alimony and child support in accordance with state domestic laws and regulations rather than federal law.**
2. **Currently, former military spouses receive payments for life, even when they remarry. This practice should be discontinued prospectively, not retroactively. Lifetime division of retired pay should be allowed only for marriages that lasted 20 or more years. However, if a service marriage lasted for 18 years and retired pay had been shared already for 12 years, only six years of payments would be made.**
3. **Payments made to former military spouses should be based on the pay grade of the military member at the time of divorce, not at the time of retirement.**
4. **The period of time following separation or divorce should be limited to two years within which an ex-spouse can assert claims for a portion of military retired pay for alimony or child support.**
5. **Currently, military retired pay which is waived in order to receive disability compensation may be reapportioned in divorce cases. That section of the USFSPA which makes disability pay unavailable for apportionment should be reinforced. This would require amending 42 United States Code Section 669 to eliminate the inconsistency between that Code and 10 USC 1408 (USFSPA).**

Resolution No. 176: The American Legion's Position on the Department of Defense's Force Health Protection Program

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, After the 1991 Gulf War, returning military personnel began to report suffering from unexplained multi-symptom illnesses, commonly referred to as Gulf War veterans' illnesses; and

WHEREAS, Although thirteen years have passed and over 200 hundred government-funded research projects are in various stages of completion, costing more than $200 million; many questions regarding the possible causes of Gulf War veterans' illnesses remain unanswered; and

WHEREAS, Numerous examples of lost or destroyed medical records have been

identified, vaccination records were often unclear or incomplete, pre and post deployment examinations were not comprehensive and information regarding troop movements/locations and possible environmental hazard exposures was severely lacking; and

WHEREAS, The lack of such baseline data and other information is commonly recognized as a major limitation in the evaluation and understanding of potential causes of Gulf War veterans' illnesses; and

WHEREAS, To avoid the procedural problems encountered both during and after the 1991 Gulf War, "lessons learned" precipitated the enactment of legislation and policies designed to create a concept of Force Health Protection; and

WHEREAS, Although these policies appeared to correct previously identified problems in theory, reports by the Institute of Medicine and the United States General Accounting Office identified several deficiencies in the implementation of Force Health Protection laws and policies; and

WHEREAS, Controversial vaccines and pre-treatment drugs, such as smallpox, anthrax, and the anti-malaria tablet Lariam, are part of the Department of Defense's overall Force Health Protection plan; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that pyridostigmine bromide, an investigational new drug used as a pre-treatment for the nerve agent soman during the 1991 Gulf War, has not been definitively ruled out as a possible cause of Gulf War veterans' illnesses, the Food and Drug Administration granted full approval just prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, clearing the way for the Department of Defense to use the drug without restriction under the umbrella of its Force Health Protection program; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continue to actively monitor the Department of Defense's implementation of Force Health Protection policies and urge continual congressional oversight to ensure that all Force Health Protection laws and policies, including thorough pre and post deployment physical examinations, are being properly implemented in a consistent manner by all military branches; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge the Department of Defense to actively track and follow-up, with proper medical care, adverse reactions to vaccinations as well as any and all health-related complaints associated with the ingestion of controversial drugs such as pyridostigmine bromide and Lariam.

Resolution No. 177: The Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, There are more than ten countries that have or are suspected of developing biological warfare agents; and

WHEREAS, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the anthrax vaccination in 1970; and

WHEREAS, Anthrax is considered to be one of the major biological warfare threats to U.S. Forces because it is lethal, easily produced and weaponized; and

WHEREAS, There are no other means of protection available, at this time other than the anthrax vaccination from contacting the disease anthrax if encountered; and

WHEREAS, Over 525,000 servicemembers have received at least one anthrax vaccination shot and the Department of Defense's (DoD) Anthrax Vaccine Immunization

Program (AVIP) had initially planned to vaccinate all 2.4 million active duty and reservists as a part of its Force Health Protection program; and

WHEREAS, Studies on efficacy of the licensed anthrax vaccine and long term health effects are currently being conducted; and

WHEREAS, The sole manufacturer, BioPort Corporation, has had numerous problems with financial insecurity, building violations, and repeated failures to pass FDA inspections; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned problems with the manufacturer and its facility caused a shortage of FDA approved vaccine, necessitating DoD to institute a slowdown of AVIP in July 2000, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas; and

WHEREAS, Despite the fact that BioPort finally received FDA approval in early 2002, AVIP and BioPort continue to be plagued by controversy and skepticism; and

WHEREAS, Even with recent FDA approval of BioPort, vaccine shortage remains a problem necessitating continued slowdown of AVIP, limiting vaccination to personnel deploying to high threat areas for more than 15 days; and

WHEREAS, Numerous adverse reaction reports have been filed, and some servicemembers are refusing to take the vaccine, thus ending military careers as well as adversely impacting overall morale and an unknown number have seriously questioned the implementation of this program; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and General Accounting Office have noted the passive surveillance reporting that DoD has employed is flawed as a tracking device for reaction rates; and

WHEREAS, The DoD has failed to adequately follow-up on vaccine reaction rates and track pertinent data for entry into individual medical records; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion continue to closely monitor the progress of the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program, urge comprehensive congressional oversight and conduct outreach to servicemembers, veterans and their families; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the DoD to seek production of a newer vaccine proven for efficacy, safety and with a shorter inoculation regiment than the current six inoculations, all in accordance with FDA regulations; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion recommend that the Department of Defense expeditiously develop a second manufacturer of anthrax vaccine, and in the quantities necessary, which surpass the funding, credibility and FDA inspection issues which are currently under criticism; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense to re-evaluate the Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program and maintain individual medical records with the greatest of accuracy; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to provide timely medical assistance and health care to those participants who experience vaccination reactions.

Resolution No. 178: The American Legion Policy of the Use of Depleted Uranium
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The military services have come to depend on depleted uranium, a

toxic and radioactive heavy metal as a kinetic energy penetrator fired from tank and aircraft cannons against enemy armor; and

WHEREAS, Depleted uranium burns after hitting a target, releasing aerosolized uranium particles into the air, exposing troops who come in contact with the target; and

WHEREAS, The scientific community and the Armed Forces do not have adequate medical or exposure information to determine the exact health effects caused by exposure to aerosolized depleted uranium particles; and

WHEREAS, Depleted uranium munitions were fired at, and destroyed, thousands of Iraqi tanks and vehicles during the Gulf War, scattering tons of depleted uranium throughout the theater of operations; and

WHEREAS, A 1993 United States General Accounting Office report found that most American ground troops were inadequately informed about the use and danger of depleted uranium munitions, and as a result, entered destroyed Iraqi tanks and vehicles and were exposed to depleted uranium particles; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That the Department of Defense require commanders to institute proper protective measures for personnel working with or around depleted uranium munitions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense ensure that Commanders adequately inform their personnel about the dangers of approaching targets that have been destroyed by depleted uranium munitions; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the Department of Defense immediately conduct peer-reviewed scientific studies to determine the extent of fallout near targets struck by depleted uranium munitions.

Resolution No. 179: Support for the Selective Service System Registration Program
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion has given long-standing support to universal military training; and despite the success of the All-Volunteer Force, Selective Service registration continues to serve as our defense manpower insurance policy; and

WHEREAS, Despite the end of the Cold War, American servicemen and women are deployed world-wide to include their participation in peace enforcement missions in Bosnia and Kosovo and engaging in the war on terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, and homeland security; the unpredictability and volatility of worldwide tensions urge us to think in terms of continued preparedness; and

WHEREAS, The current reality of small Active Forces only reinforces the need for combat-ready National Guard and Reserve units and for the capability to reconstitute our forces in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, World War I and II began long before our country became involved, allowing the United States the benefit of abundant time to accomplish registration before troops were actually committed, a luxury that we cannot expect to enjoy in today's unpredictable environment; and

WHEREAS, The Selective Service Registration Program has enjoyed remarkable success as more that 90 percent of our 18-25 year olds have registered and there is virtually no resistance to the Program; and

WHEREAS, Registration is one of the few remaining obligations our nation requires of its young men and removing this "rite of passage" for all men would reduce each man's level of consciousness about military service and the obligation to defend our

nation; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the retention of the Selective Service Registration Program as being in the best interests of all Americans, and its maintenance is a proven cost-effective, essential, and rapid means of reconstituting the required forces to protect our national security interests.

Resolution No. 180: TRICARE Eligibility for Members of the Reserve Components and Their Dependents

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

(Consolidated with Resolution No. 152 (WA))

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense (DoD) created TRICARE to augment its Military Medical System; and

WHEREAS, TRICARE largely consists of regional Federally-contracted, for-profit health care providers; and

WHEREAS, DoD's utilization of Reserve Components in the performance of traditionally active duty missions continues globally; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components, when activated to perform full-time duties, can no longer afford their civilian health care coverage for themselves and their dependents. Also, numerous activated Reservists have been non-deployable due to health or dental problems; and

WHEREAS, Many members of the Reserve Components are among the 40 million Americans with no health care coverage for themselves and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, The Reserve Components continue to experience recruiting and retention challenges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to authorize and fund the Department of Defense (DoD) in providing permanent TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components and their dependents.

Resolution No. 181: Reforming the Military Absentee Voting System

Origin: Maryland

Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The 1986 Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (Public Law 99-410) streamlined the procedures for overseas absentee voting; authorized a back-up write-in overseas ballot if the voter did not receive one requested from the state; Postal Service was to ensure that balloting materials were "carried expeditiously and free of postage;" and the overall intent was to ensure "maximum access to the polls" by both uniformed and civilian overseas voters; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 General Elections demonstrated numerous problems exist not only in Florida, but nationally as well, concerning uniformed and overseas citizens absentee balloting procedures; and

WHEREAS, Although a Presidential Election is held on the same date across the United States, it is composed of 50 separate state elections; and the Constitution of the United States grants the responsibility for the conduct of elections to the states; and

WHEREAS, Many states have difficulty printing and mailing ballots to overseas military voters in a timely manner, thus, posing a real challenge for military members

and their family members to vote and return ballots within deadlines; and other states will not accept ballots received 30 days before general elections making it difficult, particularly, for military personnel deployed overseas; and

WHEREAS, Absentee ballots from forward deployed military members entitled to free postage in locales like the Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia often are not postmarked at mailing but, many times, are postmarked enroute resulting in late postmarking in CONUS; and

WHEREAS, Military voters should be protected from disenfranchisement based on technicalities that are beyond their control such as postmark discrepancies, missing notarized signatures and confusion on residency requirements; and

WHEREAS, States are not solely to blame due to complacency on the part of military units which also compounds military absentee voting: voting assistance in the military is often an additional duty relegated to the most junior officers; and special vigilance is often not given to handling election mail; and

WHEREAS, A worldwide Internet voting pilot was recently tested by a Department of Defense contractor using digital signatures and ballot encryption, however, it was rejected for security reasons; and

WHEREAS, Forty-six states now allow the fax transmission of absentee voting materials; and

WHEREAS, Despite progress made after more than a decade by the Department of Defense cooperatively working with the states, on the average, some 30 percent of all military absentee ballots are still not counted in Federal elections; and

WHEREAS, National defense is uniquely a constitutional mandate that gives the Federal government the authority and responsibility to ensure that military personnel and their families are not disenfranchised by the circumstances of their service and, thereby, necessitating Federal legislation as the states have not resolved the problem for nearly half a century, and a more adequate uniform and consistent system, not 50 unique systems, is needed; and

WHEREAS, The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws promotes drafts of uniform and model acts, and it could offer uniform formats for the states to follow on military absentee voting; and

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion ensure that satisfactorily drafted uniform acts and/or regulations, developed with the assistance of the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, are made available to all appropriate state and local election entities; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges that appropriate laws and guidelines be developed at Federal, state and local levels with the intent that all military absentee voters and their families will have their votes counted in every election; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion take an advocate role on this vital issue at National, state and local levels.

Resolution No. 183: Military Commissaries
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has evaluated options to downsize or privatize the Military Commissary System by seeking reduced federal funding, reducing

the number of operating military commissaries, and evaluating the privatizing of military commissaries; and

WHEREAS, The value of commissaries in the quality of life equation for junior enlisted families and military retirees and others is indisputable: Military commissary usage has ranked second only to medical health care in the non-pay compensation package according to surveys conducted among active duty and retired beneficiaries as commissaries save patrons on the order of 26 percent in food costs; and

WHEREAS, The nearly $1 billion in subsidized congressional appropriations permits commissaries to sell items virtually at cost, and the removal of this funding would drastically raise food costs which would effectively cause commissaries to close; and

WHEREAS, Contrary to popular belief, military commissaries are not competitive with civilian grocery chain stores as commissary sales represent only 1.7 percent of total U.S. grocery sales; and

WHEREAS, Without commissary savings, pay compensation for active duty and military retirees would have to rise and retired as well as drilling Reservists and National Guardsmen are now authorized to use the Commissaries; and

WHEREAS, With the downsizing of the military to include reductions in force and military benefits, any effort to reduce or dismantle the integrity of the military commissary system would be seen as a serious breach of faith with a benefit system that currently serves as a mainstay for the active and reserve components, military retirees and military survivors, military personnel involuntarily discharged or released from active duty, and 100 percent service-connected disabled veterans and others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Department of Defense and the Congress to continue full federal funding of the military commissary system and to retain this vital non-pay compensation benefit system which is essential to the morale and readiness of the dedicated men and women who have served, and continue to serve, the national security interests of the United States; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion oppose any efforts to institute "variable pricing" or to privatize the military commissary system or to dismantle or downsize the Defense Commissary Agency.

SUBCOM CHRM LOFTON: I would now like to call on Marty Rhyne from the Department of Virginia to give the balance of this report.

...At this time Subcommittee Secretary Rhyne reads the following:

Resolution No. 184: Burial Eligibility for Arlington National Cemetery
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, Arlington National Cemetery is our Nation's most sacred shrine representing an embodiment of the sacrifices that were made to uphold our country's ideals and freedoms; and

WHEREAS, More than 250,000 veterans and their dependents are buried here on 612 acres of land; and

WHEREAS, Arlington is one of more than 100 National Cemeteries but, unlike the others, Arlington Cemetery is administered by the Department of the Army; and

WHEREAS, In spite of restrictive regulations (Title 32, CFR), there have been numerous waivers in recent years, falsification of military records to gain interment at Arlington and even an unprecedented Presidential requested waiver and reservation; and

WHEREAS, Eligibility criteria for burials at Arlington need to be codified in order to assure compliance and fairness and to assure that the remaining space at Arlington is judiciously used; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, The American Legion urges the Congress to codify eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery and that such burial be restricted to servicemembers who die on Active duty; to our most decorated veterans to include recipients of the Purple Heart; former members of the armed forces separated from the military with a physical disability of 30 percent or more before October 1, 1949; and to veterans who spent full careers in uniform, and to their spouses and eligible children; to former prisoners of war; and for the President or former Presidents as Commanders in Chief of the Armed Forces; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion believes there should be no waivers for unqualified persons except under unique and compelling circumstances which comport with codified non-partisan waiver procedures as established by the Congress; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That eligibility for interment of cremated remains of honorably discharged veterans in the Columbarium at Arlington should also be codified.

Resolution No. 185: Service of Women in the Armed Forces
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, That The American Legion has long recognized the invaluable service and contribution of women in the Armed Forces and has supported their service in non-combatant assignments; and

WHEREAS, American military women currently comprise about 12 percent of the 1.6 million servicemembers in the Armed Forces, and more than 40,000 female servicemembers served their Country in the Persian Gulf War with courage, honor and distinction; and

WHEREAS, Due to the fluid and mobile nature of modern warfare, combat support and combat service support units have often been as exposed to hostile fire as front-line combat units: In the Persian Gulf War five female soldiers were killed in action and two were taken as prisoners of war while serving in non-combatant specialties in support units; and

WHEREAS, The key to military readiness is that all servicemembers, male and female, will deploy with their units: Pregnancy rates at the onset of the Persian Gulf War significantly affected the deployability of some units, and non-deployability rates for female soldiers were three times greater than men, largely due to pregnancies; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to open more specialties and assignments to military women, then-Secretary of Defense Aspin in April 1993 directed the Services to permit women to compete for aviation assignments, including aircraft engaged in combat missions, and with Congressional approval, to repeal the combat exclusion law permitting the assignment of women to Navy warships, including aircraft carriers and excluding submarines and special operations units; and

WHEREAS, In early 1994, the Department of Defense announced it intended to

rescind the 1988 "Risk Rule" which barred women from assignments to combat support and combat service support units and would continue to bar women from ground combat units that "...engaged the enemy on the ground with weapons, that are exposed to hostile fire, and have a high probability of direct physical contact with the enemy"; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Defense has approved allowing military women to serve in the headquarters of air defense artillery, field artillery and combat engineer units as well in air cavalry units and in special operations aviation; and

WHEREAS, In 1992, of 900 servicewomen surveyed, only 12 percent of enlisted women and 10 percent of the female non-commissioned officers said they would consider serving in combat units; and

WHEREAS, Roper polls have revealed that of the American people polled 58 percent said that women should not be assigned to Army infantry units, and 52 percent were against women in Marine Corps infantry. The Roper military poll of military members surveyed indicated that 74 percent did not think women should serve in the infantry, 59 percent opposed women in tank crews, and 54 percent did not want women in field artillery units; and

WHEREAS, Historically, those nations that have permitted women to serve in close combat situations (the Soviet Union, Germany and Israel) have done so only because of grave threats to their national survival; and

WHEREAS, Any proposal to lifting direct ground combat exclusion policies pertaining to military women may undermine the justification used by the Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of the all-male draft registration and conscription system; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion supports the invaluable roles of women in the Armed Forces but supports the exclusion of military women from serving in direct combat specialties including special operations units as well as permanent assignment on submarines.

Resolution No. 186: Provisions of Status of Forces Agreements
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 259 (MX))

WHEREAS, A portion of the compensated benefits of military retirees is considered to be the use of military facilities, such as PX, BX, Post Exchange, Commissary, healthcare, recreational facilities, mail, and other U.S. military facilities worldwide; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of the Status of Forces Agreements between the U.S. Government and host countries many of these benefits are usually denied to retired military members and their families/dependents residing or visiting U.S. military facilities located outside the U.S.; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That all future Status of Forces Agreements negotiated, renegotiated, or revised with host countries should allow for the unimpeded use of all U.S. military facilities by retired U.S. military members and their dependents.

Resolution No. 187: Total Force Policy and Viable National Guard and Reserve Forces
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The National Guard of this Country has served as the bedrock for our defense and its service predates the Nation's founding; and

WHEREAS, Under the Total Force Policy, National Guard and Reserve units have been easily integrated into Active Force structures, however, as we are seeing, there have been numerous problems involving pay, supply and equipment and timely healthcare problems that indicate their integration is not seamless; and

WHEREAS, The reality of smaller Active Forces strengthens the imperative for fully manned and combat ready National Guard and Reserve Forces which are completely integrated into the Total Force; and

WHEREAS, During the present War on Terror, activated National Guard and Reserve personnel comprise 40 percent of deployed United States forces, thereby, representing both the first and second line of America's defense capabilities; and

WHEREAS, The National Guard, besides serving our national interests in Federal capacities, also performs invaluable State missions to include natural disaster assistance, civil disturbance and law and order missions, participating in drug interdiction, and numerous community service programs; and

WHEREAS, Our National Military Strategy is primarily oriented toward regional conflicts of short duration. Extended conflicts however, have required the full employment of the National Guard and Reserves, and even the reinstatement of conscription may be considered to meet manpower needs; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges that the National Guard and Reserves be realistically manned, structured, equipped, trained, fully deployable and maintained at high readiness levels in order to accomplish the missions and roles indispensable to our national defense; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the full range of retention bonuses and recruiting incentives, to include an improved Reserve Montgomery GI Bill, be available to the National Guard and Reserve.

Resolution No. 188: Age 55 Military Retirement for Reservists
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 151 (WA))

WHEREAS, The American Reserve and National Guard forces are an integral part of the defense posture of our Country; and

WHEREAS, With reduction in the manpower our Active Component forces, service in the Reserve and National Guard forces is no longer a part-time commitment; and

WHEREAS, There are presently more than 220,000 Reserve/Guard forces on active duty in support of Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, The continued usage of the Reserve and National Guard in support of peacekeeping missions and the war against terrorism demonstrates that members of these components are truly a vital part in our National Defense; and

WHEREAS, Reserve/Guard soldiers who have served at least 20 years and are eligible for retirement must wait until they reach a minimum of sixty years of age to

draw their retirement; and

WHEREAS, Congressmen Jim Saxton of New Jersey has introduced legislation to amend Title 10, United States Code, to reduce the age for receipt of military retired pay for non-regular service from 60 to 55; and

WHEREAS, Joann Davis, Virgil Goode, Bob Goodlatte and Tom Davis from Virginia along with over 70 cosponsors have signed on in support of this legislation; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion support legislation which reduces the age requirement from age 60 to 55 in order to receive Reserve retirement pay.

Resolution No. 238: DD214s for Activated Guardsmen and Reservists
Origin: Wyoming
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The Veterans Health Administration has issued VHA Directive 2002-049 which "establishes policies and procedures for offering hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care to recent combat veterans for a 2-year period beginning on the date of the veteran's discharge for any illness, notwithstanding insufficient medical evidence to conclude that their illness is attributable to their military service"; and

WHEREAS, VHA Directive 2002-049 includes the men and women of the National Guard and Reserves that have been mobilized to Active Federal Service for operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and other conflicts; and

WHEREAS, Upon their demobilization the National Guard and Reserve Personnel are experiencing delays in receiving their discharge (DD214); and

WHEREAS, The DD214 is essential to the finalization of disability claims, hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care and other benefits; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion strongly urges the Department of Defense to expeditiously issue DD214s to activated National Guardsmen and Reservist personnel upon their demobilization.

Resolution No. 438: Relevant and Ready—The United States Army
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The United States Army is serving a Nation at war and as America's strategic and decisive land and expeditionary combat force is a proud member of the Joint Force providing combatant commanders with relevant and ready campaign power; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Army provides necessary forces and capabilities in support of the National Security and Defense Strategies (NSDS); and this fundamental requirement entails ensuring a force of high-quality soldiers and leaders with modern equipment trained to successfully meet the full spectrum of military operations, to include the Global War On Terrorism (GWOT) and the defeat of terrorist transnational organizations with fanatical commitment, asymmetric capabilities and adaptabilities; and

WHEREAS, The nature of this force enables the Army to provide critical capabilities; shaping the international environment, responding to crises, and preparing for the future; and

WHEREAS, The Army is not only crucial to America's NSDS; it is also a principal instrument for sustaining land dominance and conducting military engagements to influence the capabilities, policies and actions of other nations; and

WHEREAS, The spectrum of 21st Century operations demands land forces in joint, combined and multinational formations for a variety of missions; Transformation of the Army requires adapting our forces to meet the challenges of the GWOT with a capabilities based, modular, flexible and rapidly employable Joint-Army team, capable of dominating any adversary and controlling any situation across the full range of military operations and maintaining our current warfighting capabilities while developing new capabilities for the future; and

WHEREAS, The Army must provide an array of deployable, flexible, versatile, lethal, survivable and sustainable forces balanced to operate decisively in an uncertain environment against an unpredictable threat that will make every attempt to avoid our strengths; and

WHEREAS, Appropriations must adequately fund operations, modernization and recapitalization; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Congress to provide full funding for the Army to maintain the full spectrum of necessary capabilities with which to provide the Nation with a full array of options to meet the threats of the 21st Century.

Resolution No. 437: Quality of Life Features
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 91 (ND))

WHEREAS, The American Legion has always supported quality of life features for members of the Armed Forces and their dependents as well as military retirees, as people are the foundation of our Nation's fighting forces; and

WHEREAS, Without highly qualified, dedicated men and women, even the most sophisticated weaponry will not provide the deterrent force necessary for this Nation to remain at peace; and

WHEREAS, The United States Government has the inherent and moral responsibility for providing for the well-being of members of the active and reserve components and their dependents and military retirees and their dependents; and

WHEREAS, Military pay must be reasonably comparable to compensation in the private sector if the Armed Forces aspire to compete for quality volunteers and retain an experienced military force for the long term; and

WHEREAS, Military compensation is only one factor in the quality of life equation as to whether a good service member and his family remain in the service: Other major factors include fair treatment, career stability and regular promotions, adequate quarters, adequate health care and commissaries, and day care facilities, all of which ease the numerous sacrifices that are demanded of service members and their families; and

WHEREAS, Over 30,000 Reservists had been activated for homeland security and the war on terrorism and with Reservists performing active duty missions for longer periods of time, their benefits need to be significantly expanded and improved; and

WHEREAS, Our military retirees and their dependents and military survivors are deserving and rightfully entitled to adequate health care treatment, concurrent receipt and regular cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to military retirement pay and survivor

benefit plans; and

WHEREAS, That The American Legion urges the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund such quality of life features including but not limited to, the following:

1. Military pay comparability for the Armed Forces and regular increases in the Basic Allowances for Quarters; renovation and construction of military quarters and increased funding for child day care centers are direly needed. Pay raises must be competitive with the private sector; 2. Adequate medical, mental and dental health services; morale, welfare and recreational facilities; and non-privatized exchanges and commissary facilities. The Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and its functions should be retained and not relegated to the military services; 3. Preserving an attractive retirement system for the active and reserve components and annual cost of living adjustments (COLAs) paid at the same rate and concurrently with other Federal retiree COLAs; oppose any changes to the military retirement system, whether prospective or retroactive, that would violate contracts made with military retirees and would undermine morale and readiness; 4. Requiring that the Services perform mandatory physical examinations, without waivers, for all separating veterans; 5. Fully funding the concurrent receipt of military retirement pay, military separation pays, and VA disability compensation as well as Special Compensation pays for disabled military retirees; 6. Amending Public Law 99-145 as to eliminate the automatic age 62 offset of Survivors' Benefits Plan benefits with Social Security benefits and the offset of Survivors' Benefits with DIC benefits, particularly for those survivors who have earned Social Security benefits in their own right. Also, SBP premiums should be paid up after payment for 30 years or until age 70 whichever comes first; 7. TRICARE for Life and the TRICARE Senior Pharmacy program for Medicare-eligible military retirees, their dependents and military survivors, should be adequately funded; and regular cost-of-living adjustments to military retirement pay and survivor benefit plans should be paid; 8. For the active duty military, increasing danger pay and family separation pay, deployment pay, capital gains tax exclusions, tax-free and increased death gratuity payments, and combat zone tax exclusions for service in South Korea; 9. Congressional re-enactment of Impact Aid to fund the local public school education of military dependents; 10. Adequately protecting the American public and the Armed Forces from the actual or potentially harmful effects of friendly and hostile chemical, biological and nuclear agents or munitions; 11. Urging the Congress to extend and improve additional quality of life benefits, allowances and privileges to the National Guard and Reserves involved in Homeland Security and other missions so as to more closely approximate those of the active force. Military retirement pay and TRICARE healthcare for members of the Reserve Components should be authorized at age 55. Hazardous duty and incentive pays for Reservists should be the same as active duty; tax credits to private businesses that pay the difference between military and civilian salaries to mobilized Reservists and restore travel exemptions for Reserve and Guard members for expenses associated with attending drills; 12. Military health care should also be provided to members of the Reserve Components and their dependents, who become injured while on active duty status regardless of the number of days served on active duty, to the same degree as active duty members under the same circumstances; 13. Whenever a Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is conducted, The American Legion will urge that certain base facilities such as base medical facilities, commissaries, exchanges and other facilities be preserved for use by active duty and Reservist personnel and military retired veterans and their families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urge the Congress and the Department of Defense to support and fund quality of life features for Active Duty; National Guard and Reservists as well as military retiree veterans and their dependents and military survivors.

Resolution No. 436: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired and Severance Pay and VA Disability Compensation for Disabled Retirees and Servicemembers
Origin: Convention Committee on National Security
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 108 (CO); Resolution No. 222 (NY); Resolution No. 258 (MX); and Resolution No. 333 (IL))

WHEREAS, Title 38, United States Code, Sections 5304 and 5305, has prohibited the concurrent receipt of both military retirement pay for longevity from the Department of Defense and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Disabled military retirees have been entitled to receive disability compensation only by "wavering that portion of retired pay as is equal in amount to such compensation," so that disabled military retirees essentially fund their own disability compensation which is not subject to taxation; and

WHEREAS, Federal civil service employees, as well as other Federal government workers, may concurrently receive retirement pay for longevity and disability payments; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes that it is inequitable and unfair to authorize one group to receive federal retirement pay and disability payments while prohibiting disabled military retirees from receiving both; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Defense, the rationale for this disparity is that "VA disability compensation is (meant) for disabled veterans who have left the service before completing a career and before qualifying for retired pay...disabled military retirees did not experience a reduction in earning potential during their military career"; and

WHEREAS, Such rationale, which continues to this day, defies both logic and the facts: There are approximately 640,000 disabled active duty and reservist military retirees (rated 0%-100%), who were retired for longevity and who qualified for military retirement yet, during their military careers, sustained non-career-ending injuries, combat wounds and other ailments; and

WHEREAS, There are also over 100,000 non-careerist military disability retirees who were retired for severely disabling injuries, wounds or ailments who are awarded military retirement disability pay as a percentage of their base pay (30% and above) and who are not authorized to concurrently draw VA disability compensation: In order to draw VA disability compensation, they must waive their military retirement disability pay, which is inequitable for those disabled warriors who were unable to complete military careers; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2003 National Defense Authorization Act authorized a Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) for those disabled military retirees for longevity whose VA-rated disabilities totaled 60 percent and higher due to combat, combat-related training, hazardous duty or the instrumentalities of war; and

WHEREAS, The Fiscal Year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act authorized the concurrent receipt of taxable military retirement pay and VA disability compensation for disabled retirees rated at 50 percent or higher, to include disabled retired Reservists

with at least 20 years of service who were drawing retirement pay, as well as veterans who retired under Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA); and

WHEREAS, The FY 2004 NDAA also expanded CRSC for disabled retirees with 20 years of qualifying service who have a combined, combat-related disability of 10 percent or more; this Enhanced CRSC, which is tax-exempt, did not include TERA retirees nor non-careerist military disability retirees; and

WHEREAS, Eligible retirees may not receive both concurrent receipt and CRSC but may choose between the two options during an annual "open season"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion expresses its gratitude to the Congress for the authorization of both Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) and partial concurrent receipt for over 200,000 disabled military retirees but urges the Congress to authorize and fund full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees to include those rated at 40 percent and below; to authorize and fund CRSC for Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) retirees, as well as the concurrent receipt of military disability retiree pay and VA disability compensation for those disabled military retirees; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urge Congress to eliminate the phase-in of provisions in PL 108-136 so as to accelerate restored retired pay in fewer than 10 years; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That The American Legion also urges the Congress to authorize the concurrent receipt of military severance pay for less than 30 percent disabled servicemembers and VA disability compensation.

Referred to the Standing Commission on National Security

Resolution No. 182 (MD): Military Funeral Honors
Resolution No. 208 (TN): Purple Hearts for Friendly Fire Incidents
Resolution No. 228 (MN): The Federal Election Assistance Commission

Rejected

Resolution No. 14 (AZ): Purple Hearts for the Berlin Occupation
Resolution No. 17 (PR): Retaining Fort Buchanan
Resolution No. 102 (UT): The Ultimate Sacrifice Medal and Certificate
Resolution No. 189 (MD): Concurrent Receipt Of Military Retired and Severance Pays And Disability Compensation For Disabled Retirees

SUBCOM SEC RHYNE: Mr. Chairman, that concludes the Report of the Military Affairs Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the Report of the Naval Affairs Committee, Gerard W. Cheffer, Chairman.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Cheffer reads the following:

Naval Affairs Committee
Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman

Approved

Resolution No. 190: Fully Funding the United States Navy and Marine Corps
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(Consolidated with Resolution No. 3 (AK))

WHEREAS, Our national security depends to a large extent on the ability of the United States to maintain sea superiority as well as strategic combat capabilities of the United States Navy and Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, The Navy and Marine Corps have continually shown the ability of the United States to maintain a forward posture, projecting U.S. power overseas, when and where needed around the world to uphold our national security; and

WHEREAS, To maintain force readiness, the Navy and Marine Corps must balance priorities of manpower, current and future readiness, quality of service and alignment; and

WHEREAS, Balancing critical combat readiness with future navy requirements is essential to U.S. Naval superiority; and

WHEREAS, A 21st century Navy requires rapid technological advancements in the areas of command and control, which will require judicious upgrades of its systems; and

WHEREAS, The programs that will be the core of Navy and Marine Corps forces in the 21st century require substantial investments; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges the Administration and the Congress to fully resource the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps to provide credible combat power from the sea.

Resolution No. 204: The USS American Legion
Origin: Maryland
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security

WHEREAS, The American Legion is an organization of war veterans, who have dedicated themselves to the service of the community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, American veterans from all branches of the Armed Forces have served or been transported on ships of the United States Navy; and

WHEREAS, There was a United States Navy ship named the AMERICAN LEGION (APA-17) during World War II which has been decommissioned; and

WHEREAS, The naming of naval ships is recognized as a method of bestowing honor to persons, places, or events; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee on August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion urges that a ship once again be named for the world's largest veterans organization by the Department of the Navy at its earliest convenience and that it be called the USS AMERICAN LEGION.

Resolution No. 317: The Medal of Honor for Dorie Miller, USN
Origin: Illinois
Submitted by: Convention Committee on National Security
(As amended)

WHEREAS, Resolution #21 requesting the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to Dorie Miller was adopted at the Department Convention on July 17-20, 1996 in Springfield, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, Resolution #8, resubmitting this request was approved at the Department Convention on July 11-15, 2001 in Peoria, IL; and

WHEREAS, Resolution #122 recommending that the same action be submitted to the U.S. Congress was adopted on August 28-30, 2001 at the National Convention, San Antonio, Texas; and

WHEREAS, The awarding of the medal was denied due to the current award time restrictions in the current regulations; and

WHEREAS, House Resolution HR 44451H has been introduced and, if adopted, would exempt these time limitations for Dorie Miller, Cook 3rd Class; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Nashville, Tennessee, August 31, September 1, 2, 2004, That The American Legion, due to extensive research during the past decade revealing new and relevant material, support the adoption of legislation creating a Congressionally-mandated Navy board to review the complete record of Dorie Miller, USN, for the purpose of posthumously awarding him the Medal of Honor.

SUBCOM CHRM CHEFFER: That concludes the Report of the Naval Affairs Committee.

COMM CHRM TITUS: I now call for the announcement of the National Donor Awards.

...At this time Subcommittee Chairman Cheffer reads the following:

Awards

SUB COM CHRM CHAFFER: I am pleased to announce the winners of the National Blood Donor Awards for this past year.

Category I—Departments with 100,000 or more members
Post participation—Department of Minnesota
Individual Participation—Department of Ohio
Category II—70,000 to 99,999 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Wisconsin
Category III—40,000 to 69,999 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Nebraska
Category IV—25,000 to 39,999 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Oregon
Category V—10,000 to 24,999 members
Post Participation—Department of Idaho
Individual Participation—Department of New Hampshire
Category VI—less than 10,000 members
Post and Individual participation—Department of Hawaii

The results of the competition for the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are as follows:

Most of the fifty Departments participated in the ROTC Awards Program this year. A total of over 14,000 Medals were awarded to deserving cadets in Senior ROTC and Junior ROTC Units. The winning Departments for 2003-2004 are the Departments of Alaska, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana and Virginia, which speaks well for these Departments and The American Legion in their recognition of the youth of America enrolled in ROTC programs.

COMM CHRM TITUS: Commander Brieden, this concludes the reports of the Convention Committees. As a Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Indiana, I move the adoption of this report.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion from the Chairman and I think I heard a second. Any discussion? All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Motion carries. The Report of National Security is adopted.

Final Remarks: John A. Brieden, III
National Commander, Texas

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Let me introduce the folks who are on the stage here because they're important people to me. I want you to know them.

First, I'm going to start with my wife, Terry. Next the man you've heard stories about my dad, John Brieden, Jr. This is family, believe me. All this year, I've run a business and we do this by laptop and cell phone, but that means that somebody's back home working really hard. Becky Bosney is my office manager there and has been with me for more than 23 years. She and the other girls in the office have made this possible.

Terry and I have four children. Because of a number things, including a new baby and a changed job and etc, we only have one who's here with us today, Terry's son, Derrick and his fiancee Pam Parker.

Then we have siblings. My sister Judy and her husband, Russell Hellman. My sister Janice and her husband, Lt. Colonel Ron Poole. By the way, their son was a lieutenant with them last year. He is over in the Middle East at this time.

You've all heard the story that my mother died of cancer and then dad remarried. I all of a sudden assumed three step brothers. Of course, all the kids are grown, so you know it's not like growing up together. We all have a great relationship, but there's one that because of a lot of common bond with military service and all, we've become close, my brother Ken Bizar and his wife Judy.

I had folks that ask if I was going to come down in the audience today. And I said, "Well, I've done it so probably not. They said that I needed to do it. So, okay.

I know that Tennessee is way back here, and I want to acknowledge those folks because this has been a great Convention. I know that they've worked hard.

Thank you all for a great Convention. I am indebted to you. And I know that there's still a handful of folks from Florida here. A lot have gone home, right? You know we've got Hurricane Francis coming and it looks ugly.

Yesterday, you gave $78,000 or something like that additional to NEF. It looks like we could pay out a whole lot. And we're hoping that's not the case, but our prayers are with you all. Hopefully it will be okay.

At one of the first interviews that I did as Commander, I got shoved a mic in my face and someone said, "I bet when you joined The American Legion you said one day I'm going to be National Commander." I kind of laughed and said, no I thought if I worked real hard, kept my nose clean, some day I might be Post Commander.

This has been an interesting journey. I think it takes really three things for a person to be National Commander. First of all is family support because the family sacrifices just as much as the person who's serving.

The second thing is you've got to be knowledgeable. I think a lot of people just take that for granted but believe me, you shouldn't take it for granted. It is not easy. As I started my Legion career, I enrolled in the Legion Extension Institute and learned a lot about what is going on. I also actually take these resolutions home and read them, and things of that sort. I remember very distinctly last year, after elections, one of the first things we did a couple of weeks later is testify in front of Congress. I'll never forget the fact that having been there before, I know what it's like. You do your testimony, a couple

of them actually stay around, and there's a few questions and that's it.

Well, this has been a different year. We did our testimony, they all stayed around. An hour and 20 minutes of question and answer. I'll never forget when somebody came up and said, "How did you do that? I could not have done that." Well, one thing that we did was on the Sunday when we came in before the meeting started, I spent 10 hours in the hotel room going over resolutions, going over point papers, making sure that I had everything right there. Now does that make me smarter than someone else? No. It makes me prepared. Anybody can do it, if you're willing to put in the work.

When I talked to my kids, I said that normally you see the spectacular performance but you forget about all of the unspectacular preparation that happens. That's what needs to happen with somebody who wants to be a leader in our American Legion. You need to prepare. If you prepare and you are knowledgeable, the opportunities will come.

I'm going to quote Shakespeare. Does that shock you just a little bit? Shakespeare said, "Ignorance is a curse of God. Knowledge the wings where with we fly to heaven," and we need to make sure that we prepare ourselves and be knowledgeable.

The other thing in dealing with knowledge that's most important is the mentors that you have. I have been so fortunate to have great mentors at the Post level. In fact, I don't know if our Texas delegation is back from being with the Auxiliary, but John Richter from my Post is somebody that has been a great mentor. Someone who's not with us anymore, Bill Tuckhorn, signed me up in The American Legion and was a mentor. And there's been a number of other ones who have been important. On the Department level, I can name Joe Matthews, Past National Commander, and Harvey Holcomb, Past National Vice Commander and Jim Lindley, a Past National Adjutant. There's so many others that I could name but those are special to me, two of which are no longer with us and Joe Matthews is ill and couldn't come to this Convention.

On the National level, I remember at the first San Antonio Convention in '87, here I am a District Commander, driving a car in the transportation division, picking up guys and shuttling them around and happened to shuttle around and meet John Geiger. I had the opportunity to visit and talk about The American Legion and all. He has been so helpful and he's followed me and made sure that we had the opportunity to develop. We really appreciate that.

The third thing for a National Commander is to be passionate. We had Founders who didn't have anything to sell. They didn't say they wrote the GI Bill or that they had this or they done that. They just had an idea. But they were passionate and they did it, didn't they? If we will be passionate, we can do it, too. I think that's something that should be a requirement. Have that support from the family, be knowledgeable, and be passionate.

What an experience this has been, what a great year, capped off by a great Convention. For a little old country boy from Texas, what an experience we've experienced. We've met cabinet members and sat and talked with them, been in front of Congress. We've met heads of state.

When we were in Taiwan we had a chance to visit with President Chin of the Republic of China. The Taiwanese were here and they presented that medal. When I was actually in Taiwan, they gave the medal. It had the crest of the Veterans Affairs Commission and a little citation that said you're a friend of the veterans and that type of thing. This they presented to me a couple of days ago. It was their Cloud and Banner. It's for high ranking people. They never give it to anybody but four star generals in the past. It is serial numbered. I was blown away, to be perfectly honest. When back stage, they explained it to me.

Having presidential candidates here was really interesting, and visiting with them

was really interesting as well. The President went down and worked the rope line and then went back up, I was there right before he walked out completely. He turned and shook my hand and said, "John, you've done a good job this year." That's pretty neat. How many people has the President say something like that to?

What I found interesting was Senator Kerry yesterday gave his talk and worked the line. We went back and had the family all together. We were having a photo with him. He comes in after the photos and says, "Now I want to talk to you. It was real important that I be...—I realize there's lots of Republicans *[I notice he's looking at me],* lots of Republicans here. But I needed to get my message across because I wanted to talk about what we're going to do. I promise you if I'm elected president that I'll do every bit of that." I looked at him and said, "If you're elected president, I'll hold you to it, too!" (Laughter and applause.)

It's been a great year. But I am not naïve about this because I realize the National Commander can stand here and take the credit. But it's not me who does the work, it's folks out here in communities and Posts all across this nation who have done the work. And I say thank you.

Where are my guys from Texas? All right. I'm coming home, guys. I'm coming home.

...Standing applause.

...At this time an audio was played.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Next what I would like is to have my officers who served with me this year, those who were appointed. Please join me up here, Chaplain and Historian. And then [the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, and the National Judge Advocate.] The reason I do this is because these three folks are permanent staff members., actually appointed year to year. I don't know how that works. But anyway, they're there year in and year out. I wanted to talk to them because I want them to take the message back to all 277 staff members that we have in Washington and in Indianapolis and at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis.

We have great people. They are passionate about their jobs. That's why so much happens that looks so smooth and makes it look like somebody like me knows what we're doing. It's because we've got great staff. And I want to say thank you for a great year. Appreciate you all very much.

I have other folks that served with us this year. I think that it's appropriate that we acknowledge them, but we also are going to give them a lapel pin with a diamond in it as a Past National Sergeant-at-Arms. Ray Wildman did a great job. Thank you.

Historian Fae Casper was wonderful; enjoyed working with you. Our Chaplain, Bill Doubek, who, I think, some people heard say at the memorial service, "Commander, I'm going to pray for you because you need it." I appreciate it.

And then there is the Commander's aide. I'm going to add some comments here if you don't mind. I want you to stand right there and blush. I talk about the commitment. There's a lot of travel. And it's grueling. There's a lot of things that have to be done and to be perfectly honest, one person can't do it very well. There has to be someone picking up all the details, making sure things are happening. I can tell you that if you have a good aide, it will make you look good. Well, I had a real good aide. In fact, I told him that over the past years, I've seen some good aides and I've seen some that didn't quite measure up. I wanted him to talk to a few of these folks that I thought did an outstanding job and learn some things that would be helpful. I can tell you that 10 years from now people will probably say for 2003-2004, I don't remember who in the heck that Commander was that used to walk through the audience, but he had a heck of an aide.

Now I want the Vice Commanders come up and line up in order. For those who

don't know the story behind that, early on in our orientation, somehow they were talking and they numbered themselves off. You can tell it's not by height. I think it's by age, isn't it?

Now I want to present each of them with their Past National Vice Commander tack with diamond and allow them to make a couple of comments. And so we'll start off with Number 1, Clint Thompson from North Carolina.

NATL VICE COMDR THOMPSON: Commander Brieden, it has been an extreme pleasure to have served with you. You will be an inspiration for Commanders who come for many years. To the staff, both in Indianapolis and Washington, your support was more than super. Anything we asked, you did and you made our job easy. To the Departments of the Southeast Region, the comradery, the friendships that have been developed over this year will last for many, many years. I salute you.

By the way, for those of you throughout this nation who did not know that there were three Departments that were 100 percent on traditional membership, two of them were in the southeast, and they were Delaware and Puerto Rico. To the friends that I have developed over this nation and worldwide Legionnaires, I salute you and your friendship is respected and appreciated very much. To my home Department of North Carolina, your support throughout the years in my Legion career is very much appreciated. To my NECman, Jerry Hedrick, your friendship and trust over these years have meant so much to me that I cannot say enough good about you. To all of you, this has been a fantastic year for me and I appreciate and salute you.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Number 2 is Dick Denbow of Iowa.

NATL VICE COMDR DENBOW: It has been an honor, a pleasure and a humbling experience to greet the great Legionnaires in the Central Division which includes Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, my home State of Iowa, and France.

National Commander Brieden has always said that he had a reputation of getting things done and that he could make a difference. He wanted us to believe that we could make a difference, too. What a great team we had this year. I do believe we worked to make The American Legion a stronger presence in our nation, our state and our communities.

As I think back on a great year I've had working for The American Legion, I look out over this delegation and wonder how many of you I would have known and met if I had not gotten involved in this great organization. What a great group of people we are, all bound together by a veteran in our lives.

Commander, it's been an honor for me to service with you this year. You truly made me believe that I can make a difference. The only other thing I can say is, wow! What a ride.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: National Vice Commander, Todd White from Wyoming.

NATL VICE COMDR WHITE: It's been such a pleasure to be able to serve this year as a National Vice Commander representing the Western Region of these United States.

It is a very, very humbling experience to be up here, to understand that you, as delegates, do make a difference. We've watched it in the resolution process today and it's been great to be into that system.

To the Departments of the Western Region, I want to thank you for all your hospitality. Those are the Departments of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, the Department of Mexico, the Department of the Philippines and, of course, my home Department of Wyoming.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this, to have the opportunity to work for The American Legion for another year in this position.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Number 4 Vice Commander is Fang Wong from New York.

NATL VICE COMDR WONG: It's with great privilege and honor to serve National Commander John Brieden as his National Vice Commander. He's such an outstanding Legionnaire with a great vision for service, caring and growth of the Legion family.

Commander Brieden told us right from the beginning that by working together we could truly make a difference. And I believe because of his leadership and his sincerity that actually forced us, the five of us so quickly in such a way that we not only work well together, believe it or not, we actually have fun doing it.

Traveling throughout the Northeast Region during the past year, I was most impressed by the devotion and enthusiasm of hundred of Legionnaires that I encountered. Their unyielding commitments to serve our veterans, their total support of our heroes deployed all over the world, their concern for our children and youth, and their tireless energy to seek improvement for their community gave me such inspiration and an appreciation that I was never more prouder to be a member of this greatest of veterans organizations.

Highlight of the year was the dedication of the World War II Memorial. It was such an honor to be in the presence of those greatest generation to pay our respect and tribute to their contribution and legacy to the world. I will never forget this event.

I must take the time to thank the National Staff for their wonderful support throughout the year. To the Commanders, Adjutants, NEC's and Alternate NECs of the Northeast Region I thank you for your hard work and your hospitality. And most of all I thank you for your friendship. A special congratulation to the Department of Vermont for making 100 percent without the DMS.

To all the Legionnaires here, I thank you for the opportunity to serve. It has been a wonderful year, one I shall always cherish. New York, I am, too, coming home.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Number 5, Mike Helm from Nebraska.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: It has been a great honor to serve as the National Vice Commander of the Midwest Region this year. I believe that National Commander John Brieden has truly made a difference in America this year. I have been proud to serve alongside the Commander and the other National Officers. I would like to thank the National Staff for all of their help.

The Midwest Region, consisting of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska,
North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin, has led the way from start to finish in membership. My nine Departments were just as dedicated to veterans' health care along with all Americanism and Children & Youth programs. The Midwest is truly for God and Country country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each Department Commander, National Executive Committeemen and Adjutant for their efforts this past year. My hat is off to the many District Commanders for their outstanding efforts on behalf of all Legion programs. They have served the blue cap veterans above and beyond the call of duty. The blue cap Legionnaires in the Midwest have served their communities to that same high level.

While it has been a humbling experience to serve such a great organization among so many great American veterans, it has also restored my faith and belief that America is truly a wonderful and blessed nation.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: For those who missed it, the Helm clan is right down on the front row. Mike was just checking to see that they were there. Thank you.

I know the next order of business I have to do is turn the gavel and the Chair over to Number 5. You'll go from here, Mike? Well, I'll go stand in the corner and be quiet.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: Commander, our time is short. The magic that has been our year is about to come to an end. Several years ago, I stood with you as we graduated from Ranger School and received our coveted Ranger patch. The leadership skills that you learned then have served you well in this year. It has been a great year. I, along with the other four National Vice Commanders, want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for letting us be a part of your year as you made a difference not only for The American Legion family, but for all America.

We want to give you something as a remembrance. We had some difficulty coming up with a suitable gift. I noted to the other four National Vice Commanders that during our year there had been many references to the National Commander's chair in the National Executive Committee room in Indianapolis. I had this great idea. What better gift than that chair!

So, at the end of the Spring Meeting, if you look at your monitors *[audience views some slides]*, after everyone else was gone, we picked up the coveted chair and were on our way out. Well, we ran into a slight problem. The National Adjutant—*(Laughter)* caught us and told us what to do with the chair. Commander, he takes his responsibility for the organization's property pretty serious. Well, Commander, after that I pretty much lost control and Todd took over, so I'll turn this over to him.

NATL VICE COMDR WHITE: Thank you, Michael. Commander John, your National Vice Commanders wish to present you with this limited edition sculpture by Daryl Peterson of Burlington, Wyoming, and commissioned by the Winchester Arms Company. The base is special. It is surrounded by leather indicating our strength and flexibility. The six American Legion emblems represent the six elected officers of this National Organization. The galloping horse represents the speed with which we pursue our goals over rough terrain. The rider, of course, is a ranger. The rifle is indicative of our utilization of accuracy in pursuit of securing those earned entitlements for our veterans and their families.

Thank you for your vision, your friendship and your leadership of The American Legion by making a difference in all our lives during this past year.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I want you to know that I will cherish that and will have it in a place of prominence, and every time I look at it I will think of you fondly.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: I now recognize Bob Spanogle for the purpose of a gift.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: I'd like Dan Wheeler and John Sommer to join me.

I have the honor and the privilege of being your National Adjutant this past year, and with me today are Dan Wheeler—the big guy, the bigger one of the two—our Executive Director in Indianapolis, and John Sommer, who is our Executive Director in Washington, D.C. We have one person missing and that's Ron Brooks, who is the Executive Director of our Marketing Services Group, who had to return to Rogersville, Tennessee, his hometown. His brother, Jimmy, died unexpectedly. Jimmy was a member of The American Legion and also a Vietnam veteran.

But we have a gift to give to National Commander Brieden. We have learned over this past year with National Commander Brieden and President Katherine Morris how to say "howdy." And Commander, you have made a great difference. Hundreds of thousands of miles of travel with your leadership, never tiring. But you know that difference that I look at is about the difference you've made in the lives of veterans and

their families, countless veterans and their families, and the men and women serving in our Armed Forces. We were privileged at this Convention out here in the front rows to have men and women from the
101st Airborne over at Fort Campbell and members of the 5th Group Special Forces. We thank you for a great Convention and an outstanding list of speakers.

So we want to present you with a gift. I'll ask the two Executive Directors to do it. We bought you a computer. We found that you had a couple of hobbies; your family, your business, and the business of America. This gift is a laptop computer fully loaded with software so you can stay in contact with us and all your many friends in The American Legion Family, and to keep those politicians honest as you have done all year long.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: And in typical Wheeler form, he said there's an instruction book in there in case you need it.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: After serving this past year as your National Vice Commander, I'm honored to represent all members of The American Legion presiding over the next order of business. This is a time when we present to our National Commander, John Brieden of Texas a plaque and the Colors of his year in office.

I now call on Past National Commander John Geiger of Illinois to present the plaque to our outgoing National Commander.

Presentation: Plaque and Colors to Outgoing National Commander
John H. Geiger, Past National Commander (Plaque)
Daniel A. Ludwig, Past National Commander (Colors)

PNC GEIGER: National Commander John A. Brieden, III, you're entering the final hours of your term as our National Commander. This 2004 Convention now pauses to honor you for the strong personal commitment and leadership skills that you have exhibited.

I'm honored today to be speaking for your loyal Texas team, and particularly for our old friend, Past National Commander Joe Matthews, who has been your faithful sponsor and mentor for many years. Joe was determined to be here today, but his doctors counseled him to stick near home. We must also reflect on your father's challenge to you on your lifetime endeavor to always try to make a difference. John your objective minded leadership style perfected at Texas A&M and reinforced by your many years of American Legion experiences, has truly strengthened our organization. The American public has been alerted to our concerns for the care of our war veterans, a strong national defense, and the love of our nation. The American Legion family has been energized to protect our Nation's flag, preserve the Constitution and to proclaim our faith in God.

Would you rise please. Past National Commander John A. Brieden, III, the delegates and guests of this 86th National Convention rise to join in a sincere salute to you for your service, loyalty and earned comradeship. Our best wishes go to Terry and you for every good health, good works and many years of comfort and successes. John, this beautiful bronze plaque is presented to you for display in your home or office in lasting tribute for the distinguished service you have rendered to The American Legion.

Let me read from the plaque as you receive it, please.

"National Commander John A. Brieden, III. Elected by the National Convention to serve the high office of National Commander of The American Legion for the year 2003-2004. In appreciation of his dedicated leadership, in recognition of his devoted service to God and country and in token of the high esteem of his fellow Legionnaires. This citation is presented to him by the authority of the National Executive Committee. It's given on

the second day of September, 2004, before the delegates assembled at the 86th National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee."

It's our honor, John, to have this presented to you on behalf of all you colleagues.

NATL VICE COMDR HELM: Now, I call on Past National Commander Daniel A. Ludwig of Minnesota to present the Colors.

PNC LUDWIG: John, I appreciate the high privilege you gave me to present your Colors to you. We have been friends for a long time. You know we had the privilege just a few years ago to serve together, and at that time you were a magnificent Commander for the Department of Texas, and here you are today now. Isn't that something?!

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Not bad for a little country boy.

PNC LUDWIG: Ladies and gentlemen, I call on the National Champion Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86, the Department of Maryland, to present the Colors to our National Commander. Hand salute. Two.

Commander John, this beautiful Colors, the Flag of the United States and the bright crimson banner of the National Commander symbolize your term of leadership of The American Legion. You have served us and our cause with conviction, courage and distinction. Your record of accomplishments is the source of well-earned pride for you and for your family. I know that your father here today is proud to know that you have made a difference. You've inspired all of us to make a difference, and together we surely have.

On behalf of the entire American Legion Family, I'm proud to present these Colors, your Colors, to you with deep gratitude and appreciation for your commitment to The American Legion, for your service to our troops, for our children and our veterans in need, and for your love and loyalty to God and country. My friend, may God always bless you and Terry and your family. Commander John, your Colors.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Color Guard, retire my Colors. Hand salute. Two!

Special Order of Business: Election of National Officers
National Commander

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Well, I've stalled this as long as I can. (Laughter.) It's now time for a special order of business, the election of the National Officers. I now call on the National Judge Advocate Phil Onderdonk of Maryland who will read the Rules of the Convention governing the nomination and election of officers.

NATL JUD ONDERDONK: Rules of election for National Officers. Rule 15, second sentence Election of National Officers shall be by roll call.

Rule 17. Prior to the election of National Officers the National Commander shall appoint, subject to approval of the Convention, a Judge of Election and such number of tellers as he deems necessary provided that the total tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election, each candidate going to the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of his choice.

Rule 18. Nominations for National Officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the departments alphabetically arranged. Each department may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19. Nominating speeches for National Officers shall be limited to five minutes each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20. When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the Convention.

except in the election of National Vice Commanders.

Rule 21. In a contested election for National Vice Commanders, balloting shall continue until A, majorities, and B, pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions. If on any ballot taken less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected. A new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled. The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified, except should two candidates remain to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22. The Convention will nominate and elect a National Commander and five National Commanders in this order.

Rule 23. At the conclusion of balloting on National Vice Commanders, each department delegation chairman shall deliver a written ballot to the tellers. Such ballots shall be in the hands of the tellers before communication is made to the National Commander for announcement of the results.

Mr. Commander, that completes the reading of the rules pertaining to the election of National Commander and Vice Commanders.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: As Chairman of this Convention I now appoint as judge of the election Mike Palmquist, Adjutant of Texas, as tellers of the election, Pat Lafferty, Adjutant of the Department of Michigan; Pat Smith, Adjutant Department of Colorado; and Bill West, Adjutant Department of Wisconsin. Will the Judge and Tellers of the election please come forward.

National Adjutant Robert Spanogle will now call the roll of departments. The purpose of the roll call is to receive nominations for National Commander of The American Legion.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Alabama.

DEPT COMDR WHITE (AL): Byron White, Commander of wonderful, welcoming and warm Alabama, home of the perennial champion or runner-up or contender for the championship gymnastics. We hereby yield to the Department of Michigan for the purpose of nominating a commander.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Michigan.

MR. HOLZGEN (MI): I ask permission for Ronald H. Mastie to approach the podium for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Permission is granted.

MR. MASTIE (MI): I'm truly honored to come before you today to present Thomas P. Cadmus. First, let me say that I'm not a politician, and I don't have any political ambitions. So, I'd like you to set back, relax and momentarily take your hands off your wallets. (Laughter.)

I'm also not an accomplished speaker. However, I've known Tom and his family for the past 48 years, and I consider myself very close to them. Out of respect and admiration to Tom and his family, I gladly accepted this opportunity to speak on behalf of my life long friend and comrade.

I knew Tom's mother and father, Percy and Lyla. I knew his departed brother and sister, John and Elaine. I know his older brothers, Dick and Russ and his sisters, Eleanor and Char. I know his lovely daughter Nicki; his son Brian, and his nephew Mark. They're all here with their spouses today supporting their brother, father and uncle. There's something special about large families that were raised on the farm. They grew up realizing that the basic American values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness did not come easy. It took hard work and a lot of time sacrificing to survive and make ends meet. Even then the daily rigors of life would test the best of us. Nevertheless, there

was always food on the table, good conversation and, of course, that patriotic spirit. Their family's work ethic would do well for many of us today to emulate.

Tom and I first met in 1956 when my father and mother moved to that small community of 600 people in Britton, Michigan. As 5th graders, we quickly became lifelong friends and confidants. Over the years, we shared time with each other's families, rode many a mile on Tom's Cushman motor scooter, learned how to shave, smoke cigarettes and spend long weekends in Prudenville, camping at Higgins Lake, and dances at the Music Box. We played football, double dated in his red Chevy, and played basketball in his father's barn. What a time we had growing up in an environment where life was simple, friends were abundant and the future was tomorrow.

Imagine, home cooked meals every night; May baskets in the spring; Friday night dances at the school; and the only pizza that was available was in a box called Appian Way. A restaurant was a word that was not in our vocabulary. Did you know that you were supposed to eat soup with a fork? Tom's sister Char has patented the process and keeps a large collection of her soup forks on display to this day.

Grange dances began in the fall of every year. Tom always made it a point to invite me. It made my weekend something special. Square dancing was fun, and drinking Nehi Big Oranges during intermission was also a treat.

I also found the meaning of what a cold winter's morning was while staying at Tom's house one night in early January. Living in a large two story farm house heated by coal in those days, Tom's father did not heat the entire house. When you awoke in the morning and put your feet on a frosted floor, you could set sprint records going down the stairs and into the kitchen where the smell of eggs and bacon was overwhelming. If it were an Olympic sport, Tom would have won gold Did I mention that he also had to shovel the coal into the furnace just before bed to ensure the rest of the house was warm and comfortable?

In the spring of 1964 we graduated from high school and began a search for our life's work. Tom and his family, however, knew the meaning of work. They lived on a farm raising cattle, tomatoes and cash crops. Tom learned his work ethic early in life and it began early every morning; it was called chores. Tom's mother also taught school and was most
probably responsible for his good looks, charm and education. His father had a sharp wit and a quick mind.

I'd like to relay the story that his father once told us while sitting on their front porch. While farming one day just northwest of the family farm, Tom's dad had stopped the tractor to take his lunch under a large oak tree. While eating, an elderly gentlemen walked up behind him and began a conversation that lasted for almost an hour. This was not an unusual event for farmers, so Tom's dad thought nothing of it. They talked about farming, politics and automobiles.

When six men came running across the field in their direction, the elderly gentleman stood up and said, "They've found me. I've got to leave now." The elderly gentleman was none other that Henry Ford himself Mr. Ford owned large farms in the area and valued the opinion of his neighbors. Whenever he could, he would sneak away from his bodyguards and walk the fields in search of conversation. Tom's dad believed it was his way of determining if his advisors knew what they were talking about. It was a memory that Tom's dad cherished deeply. Just maybe our farmers are the salt of the earth.

Tom joined the Glen H. Staken Post No. 155 of The American Legion in our hometown of Britton, Michigan in 1967. He begins a 37-year journey that brings us to Nashville today. In the '70s Tom bought his first house not far from the family farm.

Tom and I were also able to begin deer hunting trips to Michigan's upper peninsula in his brand new Ford Ranchero. As the Visa commercial goes: priceless.

In the '80s Nicole and Brian arrived, and Tom's schedule is busier than ever. Work, family, and a strong desire to serve The American Legion are a delicate balance. Tom somehow finds time to add an addition to the house and build a pole barn. Tom, I don't know how that hoist lift got installed. It's still a mystery to me.

After exceeding membership goals in the Second District for two years running, the Second Zone needs a commander and Tom, as always, is willing to meet the challenge. He begins attending The American Legion National Conventions in 1983, and in 1985 he is awarded a life membership by his home Post. In 1989 he's selected State Commander for the Department of Michigan, and Ford Motor Company awards him the use of a new car for the year and, I believe, Brian is still driving it.

The '90s are busier than ever. The kids are growing up fast and family time is at a premium. Tom finds time to serve as National Vice Commander in 1991. Tom is also a member of the Past Commander's Club, ANAVICUS, Citizens Flag Alliance, News, Voyager 997 of Lenawee County 40&8, and is also a member of the Elks, Moose and Eagles.

In a new millennium after nearly 40 years with Ford Motor Company, Tom elects to serve The American Legion full time and retires from Ford. And by the way, Tom just told me that we have friends and neighbors program papers available, so anyone considering a purchase of a new Ford, see us after the ceremonies. (Laughter.)

Tom left behind many a friend and coworkers at Ford, and not to mention a huge daily responsibility. However, he's secure in the fact that he has yet another large challenge ahead. He begins a whirlwind schedule that rivals that of our presidential hopefuls by visiting American Legion Posts in every state in this great nation. There's little time to enjoy that cabin in the woods, the boat at Ford Lake, or family and personal moments. Someone once said, he did it the old fashioned way. He earned it.

In a brief summary I'd like to highlight the following: strong family background; personal integrity; tireless energy; dedication; self-sacrifice; experienced; and success at every turn, are just a few of the qualities that define Tom Cadmus. He has self-confidence and a firm, unwavering drive to succeed, with a clear vision of what needs to be accomplished. If you knew Tom as I do, you'd realize that what he says, he will do. And what he promises will be done. And you can take that to the bank.

Mr. Commander, as a duly elected Delegate to this Convention from the Department of Michigan, I would like to place a strong and resounding nomination for Thomas P. Cadmus to the office of National Commander of The American Legion.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We place in nomination the name of Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

The Adjutant will continue the roll call.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Alaska.

DELEGATION CHRM VAN HORN (AK): James Van Horn, Delegate Chairman of the Department of Alaska. The Department of Alaska yields to the Department of Iowa for the reason of a second.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Iowa.

DELEGATION CHRM ROSS (IA): John Ross, Chairman of the Delegation from Iowa. At this time I would request that the Chair recognize duly elected Delegate, Mr. Dave Rehbein for the purpose of a seconding speech.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Dave Rehbein is recognized.

DAVE REHBEIN (IA): It is my privilege and my honor to stand here and second the nomination of a great Legionnaire, Tom Cadmus for National Commander. I've been

privileged to know Tom for several years and have quickly come to understand the outstanding talent that lies within Tom. But I also understand that that talent is coupled with the drive and the work ethic to use that talent well.

If you are aware of Tom's life, you know his working career began in 1963 with Ford Motor Company and ended on his retirement from that company just a short time ago. That seems a simple statement, but there is much more behind it. Think about your car as you sat behind the wheel in 1963, and compare that to your vehicle today. What changes, what improvements have been made. That epitomizes the things that Tom Cadmus brings to us as our next National Commander. He not only worked in a system where you build on success and continually change and evolve to achieve improvement, he prospered in that system. It is a long, long journey from production line carburetor assembly to scheduling and manager of material handling for an entire production facility. Tom made that journey.

That journey requires an individual with drive and determination, but it also requires an individual with the ability to grow and adapt and learn. On that journey not only must you do today's job to the best of your ability, but continually learn the things necessary to do tomorrow's job. That's Tom Cadmus, taking satisfaction from today's job done well, but readying himself to accept the challenges to do tomorrow's job equally well

He is ready to accept tomorrow's job as National Commander. He is ready to lead us and to show us how to grow and adapt as we move further into the 21st century as we keep this organization vibrant and strong for our comrades as they come home and join us.

Mr. Commander, I hereby second the nomination of Tom Cadmus from Michigan for National Commander of The American Legion for the year 2004-2005, and consider it a great honor to do so.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Adjutant will continue the roll call.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Arizona.

DELEGATION CHRM UPCHURCH (AZ): Roger Upchurch, Past Department Commander and Delegate Chairman of the Grand Canyon Department of Arizona. We yield to the Department of Florida for the purpose of a second.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Florida.

ACTING DELEGATION CHRM PROCTOR (FL): Bob Proctor, Acting Delegation Chairman. First, we would like to thank the many Departments that have helped us out with the donations to the devastation that Charley caused us. That's veterans helping veterans. We pray to God that Francis spares us.

At this time, I'd ask the Chair to please recognize Past Department Commander, Clarence Hill, for the purpose of a seconding nomination.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We make that recognition.

PAST DEPT COMDR HILL (FL): I'm extremely honored to second the nomination of Tom Cadmus, a dedicated 37-year Legionnaire. He joined Britton American Legion Post in 1967. He has held many offices in his Post, including 11 years in the all-important position as adjutant and one year as the commander. In 1977, he began a steady progression of ever increasing responsibilities by serving two years as the Lenawee County Commander followed by one year as a Second District Alternate Committeeman, then the Second District Committeeman, and then the Second Zone Commander In 1985 when he was awarded his honorary life membership in the Post, he served that year as Chairman of the Zone Commanders. In 1988 and 1989, he served as Michigan's Department Commander, and Commander of the Commander's Group. He then served as National Vice Commander in 1991-92.

Throughout his American Legion career, he's been involved in the programs of The American Legion at every level. He served as a Post Chairman of Boys State, Student Troopers school awards, Americanism and National Security and Foreign Relations. At the District level, he chaired the Distinguished Guests and Membership and New Post Committees. At the Department level, he chaired the Internal Affairs and Time and Place Committees and served as a member of the Commander's Advisory Committee.

At the National level, he has served on the Policy Coordination and Action Group, the Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee, and the Commander's Advisory Committee. He also served five years as Vice Chairman of the National Security Council, and as Chairman of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

As you can see, this dedicated Legionnaire is well rounded in every aspect of The American Legion and I, Clarence Hill, am proud and honored, a duly registered Delegate to this Convention from the State of Florida, proudly second the nomination for National Commander of Tom Cadmus from Michigan.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Adjutant will continue the roll call. Unless there's a band that wants to demonstrate.

...At this time a demonstration in support of National Commander-elect Cadmus, ensued.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Adjutant will continue the roll call. The Convention will come to order. The Adjutant has said if they'd play the Michigan State fight song they could go on; otherwise, times up. (Laughter.)

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: *[The National Adjutant calls each Department in turn.]*

DEPT COMDR WENTWORTH (AR): From the great State of Arkansas, I'm Charlie Wentworth, the Commander. I'm honored to place and second Tom Cadmus for the office of our great country in The American Legion, Commander Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM WALTON (CA): Department Commander Fred Walton, Chairman of the California Delegation. The beautiful Golden State of California proudly seconds the nomination of an outstanding Legionnaire, Tom Cadmus for National Commander, 2004-2005.

DELEGATION CHRM WINTER (CO): Doug Winter, past Commander, former United States Marine, duly elected Delegate Chairman of the Department of Colorado, seconds the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM DUFFANY (CT): Larry Duffany, the duly appointed Chairman of the Connecticut Delegation. The home of the NCAA Division One basketball men and women's champions, the UCONN Huskies, proudly cast their ballots for Thomas Cadmus.

NECman BURNS (DE): Tom Burns, National Executive Committeeman from the State of Delaware, casts the votes for Tom Cadmus, a good friend.

ACTING DELEGATION CHRM KURRE (DC): Dennis Kurre, NEC, Acting Delegation Chair for the District of Columbia. Our delegation is pleased to cast a second for Thomas Cadmus for the position of National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM HAGGAN (FR): Doug Haggan, Department of France, birthplace of The American Legion, and duly elected delegate to this Convention, proudly supports and submits all its delegate strength in the name of Tom Cadmus.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (GA): It's an honor for the State of Georgia to second the motion for Thomas Cadmus as National Commander, and we pledge to work with him in every way on membership and all the programs.

DELEGATION CHRM MCCLOSKEY (HI): Michael McCloskey, Delegate Chairman and NEC for the Aloha State and host of next year's National Convention, seconds the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus.

DEPT COMDR PIERCE (ID): Lloyd Pierce, Department Commander. I want to second the nomination of my next Commander, Thomas P. Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM CAREY (IL): Elvin Carey, the duly elected Delegation Chairman, seconds the motion for Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM FIRKINS (IN): Bill Firkins, Indiana Department Chairman Delegation. Indiana proudly seconds Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATE WARNKEN (KS): The Department of Kansas, the Sunflower State where the deer and the antelope play and the skies are not cloudy all day, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

DEPT COMDR STALEY (KY): Fred Staley, Department Commander, Department of Kentucky, home of the 1977, 1988 and seven time National NCAA Championship Kentucky Wildcats, proudly endorses Thomas P. Cadmus for our next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM HENDRICK (LA): Roy Hendrick, Delegate Chairman from the great State of Louisiana, the home of the LSU Fighting Tigers, 2003 National Football Champions, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus.

NECman OWEN (ME): Mr. Chairman, Robert Owen, NEC from the Department of Maine. Home of Past National Commander William Rogers, Past National Commander Anthony Jordan, and more recent, the World Champion American Legion World Series Baseball team from Portland, Maine, proudly casts its 34 delegate votes for the Commander, Thomas Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM WHITE (MD): Elbert White, Department Chairman from the great State of Maryland, and the home of the 2004-2005 Auxiliary National President, Sandy Dutton, proudly cast our vote for Thomas Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM LASHES (MA): Milton Lashes, Delegated Chairman from the Bay State, home of three champions. Our Past National Vice Commander John P. J. Comer, The American Legion Junior ROTC drill color guard National Champions 2004, and the 2004 National Football League Champions, the New England Patriots, proudly cast our 68 delegates for Thomas P. Cadmus from the great State of Michigan.

DEPT COMDR KING (MX): Al King, Commander, Department of Mexico. The land of burros, tequila and beautiful senoritas, proudly seconds the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus from the Department of Michigan as National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM NEUBARTH (MN): As a duly Delegate Chairman for the great State of Minnesota, the Land of 10,000 Lakes, I, Michael D. Neubarth proudly second the nomination for Thomas P. Cadmus for National Commander of The American Legion.

NECman LANGLEY (MS): Charles Langley, NEC Mississippi, proudly seconds the nomination for Tom Cadmus of Michigan for our National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM HEIGERT (MO): Rich Heigert, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Missouri the Show Me State. The home of Harry S. Truman, President of the United States, the Kansas City Royals and the Major League leading St. Louis Cardinals, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

ACTING DELEGATION CHRM PELLEGRINI (MT): John Pellegrini, Acting Delegate Chairman and a duly elected delegate to this Convention from the Big Sky Country of Montana and the last best place in this universe, proudly casts its 18 delegate votes for Thomas Cadmus for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM BOLDT (NE): Doug Boldt, Delegation Chairman from Nebraska, where the west coast finally meets the Cornhusker football team, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM TETZ (NV): Tim Tetz, Delegation Chair for the

Department of Nevada, proudly seconds the nomination for Tom Cadmus as National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM PATNODE (NH): Roland Patnode, outgoing Department Commander and Delegation Chairman of the great State and Department of New Hampshire. Home of Cliff, formerly known as the Old Man of the Mountain, proudly endorses the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus as our National Commander of this great veterans organization, The American Legion.

DELEGATION CHRM BEHR (NJ): Jerry Behr, Chairman of the Delegation of New Jersey. Eighty delegates proudly seconds the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus for the position of National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM BROWN (NM): Virgil Brown, Delegation Chairman for the State of New Mexico casts its 19 votes for Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM HERSCHLAG (NY): New York, Chuck Herschlag. Delegate. We proudly are working hard for The American Legion, seconding the nomination for Tom.

DELEGATE HUNSUCKER (NC): Coley Hunsucker, a duly elected Delegate from the State of North Carolina, deletes all minutia and historical facts and proudly casts our delegate votes for our next Commander, Thomas Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRMN HALL (ND): The Department of North Dakota with the highest percentage of eligible veterans who belong to The American Legion, cast the unanimous ballot for Mr. Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM VRABEL (OH): Joe Vrabel, Delegation Chairman from the great State of Ohio. Home of the Ohio State Buckeyes, Woody Hayes, and Jim Tresses. proudly presents our votes for Mr. Tom Cadmus, borderline Buckeye. (Laughter.)

DELEGATE GREGG (OK): Chuck Gregg, Department Commander of the State of Oklahoma and newly delegate, cast our votes for Commander Tom Cadmus, and the great Oklahoma Sooners and the Oklahoma State Cowboys. Semper Fi.

DELEGATION CHRM MCLAUGHLIN (OR): Rich McLaughlin, Delegate Chairman from the great State of Oregon, casts a unanimous ballot for Tom Cadmus, our next National Commander for the greatest veterans organization in the world, The American Legion.

DELEGATE JOSEPH REIMEL (PA): Vice Commander for the Department of Pennsylvania. The largest Legion Family in the National Organization, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM KELLY (PH): Bill Kelly, Department Commander and Delegation Chairman for the Department of the Philippines, proudly casts the Department's seven delegate votes for our next National Commander, Tom Cadmus.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE (PR): Puerto Rico. Land of the most beautiful women in the world. (Laughter.) And the most beautiful island in the whole Caribbean We cast the 15 delegates for Thomas P. Cadmus.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Rhode Island. Rhode Island. Rhode Island. South Carolina.

DEPT COMDR WALKER (SC): I'm Norma Walker, Commander of the great State of South Carolina. Home of smiling faces and beautiful places, and the National Boys State President Riley Harvell. Vote all our votes for Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATE BAYTHRIP (SC): I'm Gunter Baythrip, duly authorized Delegate from the State of South Dakota, the birth place of American Legion Baseball, and also a great vacation site, the Black Hills of South Dakota; site of Mount Rushmore, is proud to cast and second Thomas Cadmus for Commander of the great American Legion.

DELEGATION CHRM DUBOIS (TN): David Dubois, the Department Commander

and Delegation Chairman representing the Volunteer State and your honored host for our 86th National Convention. We proudly cast all of our delegate votes to Thomas Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM WALLS (TX): Bob Walls, Delegate Chairman from the State of Texas, proud to second the nomination and cast 95 votes for Thomas Cadmus the next Commander of The American Legion.

DELEGATE SEC KNIGHT (UT): Randy Knight the Delegate Secretary from Utah, cast our entire delegate strength to Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM HOLLAND (VT): Elwin Holland, Delegate Chair from the Green Mountain State of Vermont, the home of Silas Calb, good Legionnaires as Bob Vinsolett, Jim Brulett, Doc Simon, and our soon to be one of our National Vice Commander, Miss Linda Thayer. Vermont gives all 23 votes to our incoming Commander, Tom Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM HANNON (VA): Bob Hannon, Delegation Chairman Commonwealth of Virginia. Home of Past National Commander Butch Miller, proudly seconds the nomination of Mr. Tom Cadmus for National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM MYER (WA): Lanny Myer, Delegate Convention Chairman for the State of Washington, gladly, proudly seconds the nomination for Thomas P. Cadmus.

DELEGATION CHRM GRAHAME (WV): The Delegation Chairman and Commander of the great State of West Virginia, with three Past National Commanders, proudly seconds the nomination of Tom Cadmus for National Commander of The American Legion.

DEPT COMDR RICHARDS (WI): Al Richards, the Department Commander. We had a minor problem. We left our thinking caps home. I know many of you think those are just cheese heads, but as always, the Legionnaire cap came through to us and I am proud to cast our 81 delegate votes to second Tom Cadmus as our next National Commander.

DELEGATION CHRM EASTRIDGE (WY): Barbara Eastridge, Delegate Chairman for the State of Wyoming, the state of high altitude and low multitudes and great attitudes, seconds the nomination of Thomas P. Cadmus for National Commander, 2004-2005.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Mr. Commander, that completes the roll call.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Do I see someone at Microphone No. 3 back there?

DELEGATION CHRM TETZ (NV): Tim Tetz, Delegation Chairman for the Department of Nevada, the host of The American Legion National Convention in 2007. In view of the fact that there is but one candidate for National Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention, close nominations, and that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that Thomas Cadmus be elected National Commander by acclamation.

I will now make the first motion. Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders which rules shall be reinstated at the conclusion of the election for the National Vice Commanders.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: There's a motion before us to suspend the rules of this Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and the election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election for the National Vice Commanders. The motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote.

All those in favor of the motion say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' The motion carries.

Microphone No. 4.

DELEGATE BERG (OH): Mr. Commander, Richard Berg, Delegate of the Department of Ohio. I move that nominations for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion to close the nominations. Do I have a second?

...Second from the floor.

The motion to close nominations is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote.

All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Motion carries.

Microphone No. 3.

Election of the National Commander of The American Legion

DELEGATE SEC RUST (WY): Julie Rust from the State of Wyoming. As a Delegate to this Convention, I move that the National Adjutant be instructed to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this 86th Convention, and that Thomas P. Cadmus be elected National Commander by acclamation.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Is there a second to that motion?

...Second from the floor.

The motion that is before us is that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention, and that Tom Cadmus of Michigan be elected National Commander by acclamation. All those in favor of the motion say 'aye.' Those opposed say 'no.' Motion carries.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Mr. Adjutant.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant, I cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Thomas P. Cadmus of Michigan as the National Commander of The American Legion.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: With that vote, I now declare Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan, elected as National Commander of The American Legion. Will the Sergeant-at-Arms assist the new National Commander of The American Legion to the dias?

...Standing applause.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Mr. Commander, I'm going to ask that your son, Brian, please put on the red cap of the National Commander. And we ask that your daughter, Nicole, put on the lapel pin of the National Commander.

The Chair recognizes Past National Commander Sparkey Gierke for the purpose of administering the oath of office to our new National Commander of The American Legion.

Administering the Oath of Office to the National Commander

PNC GIERKE: I have known Tom Cadmus for a long time. He's been a valued friend. In 1988-1989, he served as a part of my team Three Million as the Department Commander from Michigan. He's the third member of that team. He's had the privilege of going on to serve as National Commander. He has, of course, served The American Legion very well as a National Vice Commander in 1991 and has held many other leadership positions.

Indeed, as he goes on now to represent this great organization and lead this great organization for God and country, we certainly wish him and his family God speed as they travel with that mission, and I know that he'll do an outstanding job.

It indeed is an honor and a privilege for me to now administer to him the Oath of Office. Raise your right hand, please.

...National Commander-elect Thomas P. Cadmus repeated the Oath of Office following the lead of Past National Commander Gierke.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Past National Commander Alan Lance is to be presenting Colors to our National Commander.

Presentation: Colors To Newly Elected National Commander

PNC LANCE: The National Color Guard from Henderson-Smith-Edmonds Post 86 of Rockville, Maryland presents the Colors of the newly elected National Commander.

By the numbers. Hand salute. Two!

...The delegation stood and rendered a salute to the Colors.

Commander Tom, you've been a great friend for over 16 years when you and I served together as Department Commanders under our National Commander Sparkey Gierke.

It is my privilege and honor to share this moment and occasion with you. Our National Colors, with the best wishes of all Legionnaires, will be with you this coming year as you visit many of the 15,000 American Legion Posts, 1,700 Districts and 55 Departments of this great organization. These Posts, Districts, Departments and Legionnaires are what one of our speakers at this Convention referred to, as a line of honor across this great nation.

As our leader, we know that you will serve our American Legion Family well. You will make a difference. And when we gather at Convention a year from now in Hawaii, we will be there with you to say thank you, Commander Tom, job well done. You've made us proud to be members of this great organization.

Color Guard, please retire the Colors of our National Commander. Two!

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Thank you Past National Commander Lance and Past National Commander Gierke. Y'all have done a great job and we appreciate that.

I want to present to this delegation your National Commander, Tom Cadmus.

...Standing applause.

Acceptance Speech: Newly Elected National Commander
Thomas P. Cadmus, Michigan

How is everybody doing out there?

...Response from the delegation.

By the way, Mr. Spanogle, I accept. (Laughter.) It's been a two-year program.

National Commander John Brieden, I want to extend to you an appreciation of not myself, but of all The American Legion in a job well done. Thank you for all your assistance to me to get through the process to get to where I am today. John, you've become a friend and I thank you.

I would like to start by thanking the Department of Tennessee for hosting this National Convention. The Volunteer State did a job well done.

I'm a new kid on the block, but I've seen the way our National Staff has gone to work and they're doing an excellent job of making everything happen. Also, I thank, through Bob Spanogle, your entire staff in assisting in getting this done.

A special thanks to Ron Mastie for making my nominating speech. I'll tell you more about him in a few minutes. A special thanks to Dave Rehbein from the Department of Iowa for making my seconding speech. Thanks to Clarence Hill from the Department of Florida for making my second seconding speech. These are two outstanding Legionnaires.

Thank you to Sparky Gierke for giving me the oath of office. Sparky was my National Commander when I was the Department Commander of Michigan. I have a deep admiration for the Honorable Judge H. F. Sparky Gierke. Thank you also to the Honorable Alan G. Lance for presenting my Colors. Al was the Department Commander of Idaho when I was the Department Commander of Michigan, and he has become a very close friend.

You know I wouldn't be standing here today without support from everyone in the Department of Michigan, and not just the Legionnaires but the Auxiliary and the SAL. I thank my Second District and above all, to Glen H. Deacon Post Number 155 in Britton, Michigan. Michigan as a whole, thank you for everything and I will be home in probably about a year.

I have a deep love of family and my family's here; I'm very proud of them. I will start out with my oldest brother, Dick. He is a World War II veteran and a member of The American Legion Post Number 176 in Clinton, Michigan. Next is my sister, Eleanor, and her husband Don Muller. Don is a member of my Post, Number 155 in Britton, Michigan.

Then probably the sweetest lady in the whole world just happens to be my sister. She never says much, always kind of grinning; just a real nice lady. Then is my sister Char and her husband Jack Patterson. There's a fellow who is kind of the mainstay of our family. He's always there and he was always the farmer. Some of us went to town! I'd now introduce my brother Russ and his wife Yuvonne, who still live today on the Cadmus Centennial Farm.

I'm also fortunate to have my nephew Mark. He's a member of the Blissfield SAL in Blissfield, Michigan. And of course, there's a special lady that most of you have met. She's kind of dear to me. She always smiles, keeps her dad straight and that's Nicole.

This fellow you haven't seen much. He's really a good kid and my son, but for him to get dressed up is a brand new pair of Levis. (Laughter.) So he really doesn't like to put suits on. I know he wants to get this over with so he can get out of it, but anyway, my son Brian.

Now, I'd like to introduce a Past National Commander and his wife from Michigan. They are like family to me. They worked with me all through my two years of campaigning and even before that. Would you please give a warm welcome to Past National Commander Jack Carey and his lovely wife Millie.

We had another National Commander that is not with us; he just died a little while ago, but I'd just still like to recognize him and that's J. Addington Wagner, Past National Commander from Michigan.

Now I want to reflect back on the fellow who made my nominating speech, an old friend of mine. As you heard, we met in the fifth grade. But what you don't know about this man is that he's a two-tour Vietnam helicopter pilot with a Silver Star and a Bronze Star, and a few other awards. He's my oldest friend, Ronald H. Mastie and his lovely wife, Judy. By the way, the three of us graduated from high school together.

There's some people in the Michigan Delegation I would like to thank for all the help. Been some tough times and these two people have listened to me when I get really frustrated, and normally, I'm pretty passive. But every once in a while I lose my temper. They've been able to overcome that. I'd like to give a special thanks to Roger and Pic Webster, who were my Campaign Chairmen. I couldn't find anybody else to do what they have done.

Looking back at the State of Michigan, I wouldn't be here without the cooperation of the Past Department Commanders. Us Past Department Commanders in Michigan had some rocky roads, some rough rows to hoe; some hard feelings and some good feelings,

but I can't say enough for those Past Department Commanders to rallying around me and coming back together and supporting me. I know for a fact that I wouldn't be here if those Past Department Commanders hadn't got behind me. So, I thank my fellow colleagues and especially Past Department Commander Al Ford.

I have other people in the audience. It's hard to believe, but I have my high school superintendent Russ Spalding is here. Also here is my best friend Vern Eggleston and his wife. Judy and from my hometown Jerry and Barb Dix. The big fellow that helped escort me up here is Tom Coleman. And I also have a very dear friend, George Hawkins. Also, here are my neighbors and friends, Sue and Leonard Minor, and Sue's mother and dad, Steve and Carol Gotshaw and a friend of all of ours, Frank Fuller, who just flew down here to see this happen today. By the way, Russ, Vern, Frank, Jerry, Tom and George are all members of the Glen H. Deacon Post Number 155.

There are two people that have been called to the Post Everlasting that played a major part in my Legion career. They are no longer with us, but I think of them often. I would just like to mention their names. And that's Cal Grounds and LaVern Lee.

John's had a great year and he has made a difference. As you know, as we go forward, it's time that we change the hammer over and start anew. Next year I'd like to call my motto "Service Equals Membership." I want to start in the service area with our Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation group.

At the close of World War II our founding fathers knew they needed to take care of their fellow soldiers, their widows and their dependents. And that's why they started The American Legion. The American Legion has always supported the Veterans Administration and the formulation of groups to assist our men and women and their dependents who have gone off to protect this great country of ours. Topping our priority list this year is pulling out all stops to energize Congress to pass legislation that will make the VA health care funding mandatory, not discretionary.

Every year, Congress works out a budget to assist our veterans. If we had mandatory funding, our VA Medical Centers, our Veterans Benefits Administration and so on would be able to provide the service to all veterans in all categories as required by law. Last year. The American Legion joined the VFW and the DAV in issuing the mantra that this we believe because it is the right thing to do. Today, nine major veteran service organizations are with us in this important crusade. This is what service is all about. I urge you to make this your top priority this coming year, and make sure your entire congressional delegation is totally on board and working to resolve this crisis in veterans health care.

I want to move into Americanism. This thing we do to promote a sense of Americanism in our country is in our sponsorship of baseball, Boys State, Oratorical, Junior Shooting and Boy Scouts. It is in all the Americanism things we do.

I'd like now turn into the flag. We are at a critical point this month. We expect the full U.S. Senate to vote on the Flag Protection Amendment very soon before the election. There are a number of Senators who have not yet voted on this issue. We need just a few votes for passage. When you get home, call your family, your neighbor, your friends. Tell them the urgency of this matter and have them contact their Senators with the passage. Pass the Amendment. Send it back to the states and let the people decide.

And throughout the year, rest assured that The American Legion will continue to fight to make sure that our children will be able to recite the Pledge of Allegiance with reference to God and allow prayer in school.

In the realm of Children and Youth, we give help for our children and the youth of our country in their time of need. We have great programs to assistance these needy children. We have support for children with our American Legion Endowment Fund, The

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, the National Emergency Fund, The American Legion Legacy Scholarship. Children are our future.

I want to move into the realm of National Security and Foreign Relations. The American Legion, ever since the beginning, has always supported a strong national defense and a prominent position in the area of foreign relations. Because of the action that took place on 9/11 our country has been at war on terrorism.

Along with many of you, I was ready to celebrate my birthday in Washington, D.C. by joining our National Commander Rick Santos for his testimony, before Congress on that fateful day in September, 2001. I shall never forget those horrifying explosions, the screaming fighter jets giving air cover over the Pentagon attack, the hundreds of sirens of first response and elected officials being whisked out of town. It was the beginning of America's latest war, one that continues to take a deadly toll on our nation. Thanks to those magnificent men and women who followed in our footsteps, we are winning the war on terrorism. I hope by their action the world becomes a safer place for all of us to live. We must do all we can to support our troops.

We have two full programs that do just that. The Reconnect Program and the Family Support Network. I ask you to put both of those together along with the promotion of the Blue Star Service Banner in a campaign next spring that raises funds for The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, and inspire the entire community to thank their hometown active duty National Guard and Reserve members an their families.

I ask each and every Legionnaire and member of The American Legion family to hold a home town Blue Star Salute and Armed Forces Day Celebration next May. To help you to do it, your national organization will be sending a complete Blue Star Salute event planning guide to help Posts. And the mailing will begin tomorrow. We will provide certificates and awards to not only military members, but also their families and businessmen and individuals in town who have given over and above in supporting the troops. Be the catalyst in your community. make May 21st a national day of thanks for those who go in harms way on our behalf The Blue Star Salute is in keeping with the pillars of The American Legion family and the right thing to do for our comrades and our families.

Now review all these things that we do. When I was a State Commander with Sparky Gierke, we were Team Three Million. I went on to become National Vice Commander with Dominic DiFrancesco and we rose to a point of 3.125 million members. Our membership has dropped below three million, and I guess I'm membership poor. I believe in service to our groups and we ought to be getting our membership. That's why we are a great organization and we really do wonderful things for God and country.

When I was Department Commander, and National Vice Commander, that was Three Million, with all the good things we do. It's time for us to increase the numbers of members in The American Legion. I believe that The American Legion should have Three Million members on any given day. I hope you will help me in this endeavor.

Now I want to look at The American Legion Family. To my fellow Legionnaires, I also believe that the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion are an asset to The American Legion. You have seen this demonstrated by last year with Commander John Brieden, President Katherine Morris and SAL Commander Neil Warnken. If your Post doesn't have an Auxiliary unit, get one! If your Post doesn't have a Sons of The American Legion Squadron, get one! This can only help the Legion family and it can increase membership in all three of our organizations.

Now through this Convention, you have heard that The American Legion must be important. Otherwise why would President Bush come, why would Senator Kerry come,

and why would General Myers come. You, if I can use the Commander's words, make a difference. This is an election year. We all have our political beliefs and I'm not going to dwell on that. But what I am going to ask is for you go home and vote. Vote your conviction. Please vote.

I'd just like to do one last thing. Of course, you've seen my Michigan Delegation and you heard from the Father Ryan High School Band in Nashville, Tennessee play my favorite song. But I'd also if I could, on behalf of the Ohio Delegation, I believe I have Woody Hayes up here. You can't say that Ohio and Michigan don't work together. Thank you for being here Woody. Ohio and Michigan, we have a lot of fun. I am so honored to be standing here as your National Commander. This is the greatest thing that will ever happen in my life.

I promise I will do the best of my ability. I am looking forward to working with all of you, with the National Auxiliary President Sandi Dutton, and the Commander of the Sons of The American Legion, Mike Deacon, and our respective organizations. Together, I hope we can safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy, to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

...Standing applause.

Election of National Officers

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I recognize Betty Vaughan, Microphone No. 1.

DELEGATE VAUGHAN (SD): My name is Betty Vaughan, official delegate from South Dakota. Mr. Commander, since the rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion on the floor. Do I have a second?

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Motion carries.

We will now entertain nominations for the offices of National Vice Commander from the floor.

I recognize John Aldecoa.

DEPT ADJ ALDECOA (AZ): Marco A. "Tony" Valenzuela was born in Patagonia, Arizona on December 31, 1930. Patagonia is a small mining town in the cattle ranching country near the Mexican border. He attended high school in Patagonia and later moved to Tempe, Arizona where he attended Arizona State University graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. Prior to completion of his degree, the Korean War started in 1950, and Tony enlisted in the Air Force serving for four years, including one year in Korea.

Upon his return from Korea he completed his degree at Arizona State University. Then Tony joined The American Legion at Tony Arosa Martina Post 41in Phoenix, where he has been a member for 51 years. The post awarded him an honorary life membership in 1982.

Tony was employed by the U.S. Department of Labor for 37 years, serving as the state director for the Veterans Employment and Training Service for the last 25 years before retirement. Tony has served in many volunteer and elected positions including Post, District and Area Vice Commander. He was elected Department Commander in 1991. Tony also served four years as Alternate NEC and has just completed four years as National Executive Committeeman for the Department of Arizona.

Tony has received many citations and awards while serving his community. In 2002

he was nominated and selected by the Governor to serve in the induction into the Veterans Hall of Fame. It is with great honor that members of The American Legion Family in Arizona endorse and nominate Tony A. Marco Valenzuela to the office of National Vice Commander for the year 2004-2005.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Recognize Microphone No. 1.

DELEGATION CHRM HAYES (GA): I'm Leonard Hayes, Delegate Chairman for the Department of Georgia. I ask the Chair to recognize our National Executive Committeeman, Mr. Ray Hendrix, for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We recognize Ray Hendrix.

NECman HENDRIX (GA): I'm happy to be here this morning to be able to place in nomination a fellow veteran from the great State of Georgia by the name of Charles W. 'Charlie' Barrett. Charlie has been a member of The American Legion for the past 34 years. He served in everything in the Post of 160 in Smyrna, every office as well as the Fifth District. He served the Department of Georgia as Senior Vice Commander, Treasurer, Junior Vice Commander for three years. He also served in many other capacities on committees and what have you. Last year—this June completed his year as Department Commander of Georgia, which he had an outstanding year with a membership of 104 plus percent.

Charlie is married to Ms. Kitty. They have one daughter, Ashley. Kitty Barrett also serves as the Secretary of the Georgia American Legion Auxiliary Department. Charlie is a veteran of the United States Air Force having served from 1954 to 1963, where that entire duration was served as an air traffic controller. Charlie is a dedicated businessman. He's a public accountant where he's the senior partner in the firm of Barrett & McCloud. He did extra jobs while in the United States Air Force. He taught technicalese for National Aviation Assistance.

He got his education from Rhinehart College where he graduated with a degree in business administration. Charlie's been around The American Legion for the past 34 years and has always took a hold and done a real good job. So I'm happy to place his name in nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander for The American Legion from the Department of Georgia.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We have the name of Charlie Barrett in nomination. I was told that I failed to place the name of Marco A. "Tony" Valenzuela in nomination a while ago.

Microphone No. 4.

DELEGATION CHRM GRABLE (OHIO: Joe Grable, Delegation Chairman of Ohio. I'm requesting that you recognize NEC Carl Swisher for purposes of a nomination.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We will recognize Carl Swisher.

ALT NECman SWISHER (OH): I am honored to place the name in the nomination of Samuel Barney of Ohio for the office of National Vice Commander. Sam Barney has served The American Legion with distinction at all levels of this great organization. As Department First Vice Commander in charge of membership, Sam led the Department of Ohio to an All-Time high year for the first time in 47 years. As the Department Commander, Ohio again reached an all-time high in membership under Sam's leadership. And he also raised $144,000 in donations for the Ohio Cancer Society, a record which still stands today.

Sam served as National Sergeant-at-Arms in 1992-1993 under Roger Munson. Sam was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame in 1997. He currently serves as National Vice Chairman of *The American Legion Magazine* Commission. As a three-war veteran, Sam was decorated many times. Sam has continued to serve his country, community, state and nation. His leadership ability and dedication to The American

Legion qualifies Sam to hold the office of National Vice Commander.

I again nominate Sam Barney of Ohio for the National Office of Vice Commander 2004-2005.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I place in nomination the name of Sam Barney for National Vice Commander.

Microphone No. 3.

DEPT ADJ HAWK (SC): I'm Jim Hawk, Department Adjutant, Delegation Secretary from the Department of South Carolina. I ask you to yield the mic back to the podium for the purpose of a nomination by Delegation Chairman and Past Department Commander, Bobby Gibbons.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I will recognize Bobby Gibbons for the purpose of a nomination.

PAST DEPT COMDR GIBBONS (SC): I would like to nominate Wayne B. Richey of South Carolina as Vice Commander. He is married to Juanita Reynolds. They have two children that are grown, a daughter and a son. The Richey family has military service as a great part of their family life. Their son, Michael, is currently a Major in the U.S. Army deployed in Germany after a tour of duty in Iraq. Their daughter Sharon is married to a U.S. Army Chaplain stationed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Wayne served his country in the U.S. Army for 20 years and retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel. Before entering the military, he earned his B.S. degree from Clemson University in 1955, and his MS degree while still serving on active duty from the University of Tennessee in 1976.

Upon leaving the military, Richey became the senior army instructor, Army JROTC at Greenwood High School. He retired from the public school system in 1988. Wayne has served his community in various capacities, from past president and board member of the Greenwood Lions Club to past president and board member of Post F. Travelers Protective Association. He represents Clemson University in area one, and is a past president of Greenwood County Clemson IPTAY Club.

His American Legion experience includes serving as Greenwood Post 20's Vice Commander and as Post Commander in 1979 and 1980. In the Department of South Carolina, Wayne has served as District 5 Commander, Zone 1 Commander, Department Membership Chairman, Department Commander's Aide and Department Commander in 1989 to 1990. On the National level, Wayne serves on the Membership and Post Activities Committee from 1985 to present, and as Vice Chairman from 1991 to present. He is a member of ANAVICUS.

Wayne Richey is a southern gentleman, and an outstanding individual who has many qualifications for this position. It is indeed an honor and with great pride that The American Legion Department of South Carolina presents Wayne B. Richey for the high position of National Vice Commander.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I place the name of Wayne Richey in nomination for National Vice Commander.

Microphone No. 2.

DEPT COMDR BROWN (VT): As a duly elected Delegate, Commander of the Department of Vermont, I request the recognition of Terrance Griffin, Past Post Commander and Delegate of the Department of Vermont for the purpose of a nomination.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I'll recognize Terrance Griffin.

DELEGATE GRIFFIN (VT): My name is Terrance Griffin, the duly elected Delegate to the 86th Convention of The American Legion and the bearer of good news. I rise today to share that good news by nominating a truly phenomenal Legionnaire for the

high office of National Vice Commander Northeast Region. I refer to good news because the election of truly dedicated individuals to key offices is good for The American Legion and its mission.

Linda Thayer is that rare Legionnaire whose attitude of upward mobility belies her youth, but is tempered by her respect for all who led before and the traditions of our great organization. A life member of Pierce Lawton Post 37 in Bellow Falls, Vermont, Linda gained her eligibility for The American Legion by serving in the medical field with the U.S. Army for 13 years during Grenada, Panama and Desert Storm. While serving at six stateside military institutions and one overseas duty station, she furthered her medical education, attending the University of Vermont and graduated from Southern Vermont College with a nursing degree in 1992. She is now a registered nurse in endoscopy day surgery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock in Keene, New Hampshire and is the single mother of an 18 year old son, Kevin.

Linda's membership in The American Legion family did not begin after military service. She was a Junior Auxiliary President at age 15 and is a dual member who served her Post as both Commander and Unit President. Her Post Chairmanships have helped vault Post 37 to a leadership role in the Department of Vermont, and she is still active on post committees and activities.

While busy at our Post, Linda moved into Department offices and committees with equal dedication and success, having three years as County Commander, District Commander, Southern Area Commander, Senior Vice Commander, and culminating with her election as Department Commander of Vermont in 2001. This, by the way, was a 100 percent membership year under her command.

During the past 10 years, Linda served on various Department committees, such as the scholarship committee for five years and one as Chair. On the Children and Youth she had four years, all as Chair and two years as Revitalization Chair. She had two years as the Chair with the Reconnect Program with our National Guard and Reserves Chair, and Membership Chair 2003-2004, where Vermont placed second in the nation in membership.

Some of the other Department committees she has been active on and chaired most are Boys State, Fifth District Oratorical, American Legion Baseball, Advisory Board, Constitution and By-Laws, as well as Awards and Trophies. This kind of dedication and results have been well-noted by the National organization. Linda has graduated from The American Legion College in 1999 and has twice since been a facilitator at the college.

She has been membership instructor at the National Leadership Information Conference, and co-chaired the Distinguished Guest Committee for both of these learning events. She has been a member of both ANAVICUS and the Past Department Commander's Club since 2001.

A woman of endless energy and curiosity, it is no coincidence that she earns her daily bread in the field of health and healing. Linda Thayer has given credence and strong testimony to a belief we all hold dear, that service to the community, state and nation does not end when we take off the uniform of the armed services.

And so, my fellow delegates, embrace the good news. I am proud to bring you in the form of this truly dedicated Legionnaire and join the Department of Vermont in support of the candidacy of Linda Thayer for National Vice Commander and wish her God speed with the challenges she faces in the future.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I place in nomination as Vice Commander the name of Linda Thayer of Vermont.

Microphone No. 3.

DELEGATE ROSCOE (IL): Jeffrey Roscoe, duly elected Delegate of the

Department of Illinois move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be closed.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion and a second. It's a non-debatable motion. All those in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' It carries.

Microphone No. 2.

DELEGATE DILLINGER (VA): Dan Dillinger, duly elected Delegate, Department of Virginia. I move the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote for the entire Delegate strength of this Convention and that Marco A. Valenzuela, Arizona; Charles W. Barrett, Georgia; Samuel Barney, Ohio; Wayne D. Richey, South Carolina; and Linda M. Thayer, Vermont, be elected National Vice Commanders by acclamation.

...Second from the floor.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I have a motion on the floor and heard a second. All in favor say 'aye.' Opposed 'no.' Motion passes. Mr. Adjutant to cast a vote.

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: As National Adjutant of The American Legion, I cast one vote representing the entire Delegate strength of this Convention for: Marco A. Valenzuela of Arizona; Charles W. Barrett of Georgia; Samuel Barney of Ohio; Wayne B. Richey of South Carolina; and Linda Thayer of Vermont for the offices of National Vice Commander of The American Legion.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: With that vote I now declare that Tony Valenzuela, Charlie Barrett, Samuel Barney, Wayne Richey and Linda Thayer have been elected National Vice Commanders of The American Legion.

...Standing applause.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The newly elected Vice Commanders come forward?

...Music by Peter Ole.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: We are pinning lapel pins on to officially show that they're Vice Commanders. Now for the photographs.

...The National Vice Commanders are introduced to the audience in turn.

Presentation: Newly Elected National President
The American Legion Auxiliary, Sandi Dutton, Maryland

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: This is always an exciting time at any National Convention. We've elected a new leader and the team that will work with him, and we look forward to a time of growth and community and veterans involvement. The American Legion Auxiliary also has elected a new president and the American Legion Auxiliary is a very important part of The American Legion family.

The women chosen to lead the American Legion Auxiliary has worked for many years for veterans and for their families. She joined Greenbelt, Maryland Unit 136 as a junior and her leadership abilities quickly became apparent. She served as President of her local Junior group and then continued to lead through the offices of District, Department and National levels. From Beltville, Maryland, a senior account executive with Plymouth Marketing, welcome the new National President of The American Legion Auxiliary, Sandi Dutton.

...Applause.

Response: Newly Elected National President
The American Legion Auxiliary, Sandi Dutton, Maryland

This is the first time I've addressed a group and it's very exciting that it would be

The American Legion. I wanted to thank you for the wonderful man that you have given to me as your National Commander. Several years ago when we thought this might be a reality, we made the effort to get to know each other. I know his wonderful family and we love you all very much. We're glad to be a part of your extended family.

I want to pledge to The American Legion our full support on all programs, all activities that we have in the coming year. I also wanted the opportunity to present to you our newly elected National Vice President from the great State of Nebraska, Carol VanKirk.

And the day wouldn't be complete if I didn't recognize and thank and give my love to the great Department of Maryland. God bless you guys. Thanks for everything and I'll see you in about a year at home. Tom and I look forward to visiting with all of you and please come up and be sure that you introduce yourselves to me because that's the most special part to me. I like to meet the members.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The team for next year, Commander Tom Cadmus and President Sandi Dutton.

...Standing applause.

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

Announcements

NATL ADJ SPANOGLE: Pursuant to the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, which requires a Post National Executive Committee meeting within 24-hours following the adjournment of the National Convention, that Post National Executive Committee meeting will follow the adjournment of this 86th Annual Convention. It will be held in the Governor's South Ballroom, Sections C and D on level 2.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: Is there any other business to come before this convention?

If not, I do have to make one sad announcement. I was just was notified that Past National Commander Preston J. Moore of Oklahoma, who was National Commander 1958-1959, passed away this morning. We'll do a eulogy ceremony for him at the October meetings, but please remember him and his family in your prayers.

At this time will you please uncover and I'll recognize one last time our National Chaplain Bill Doubek for the benediction.

Benediction

Rev. William J.P. Doubek, Missouri,
National Chaplain

We do take a moment of silence in the memory of Past National Commander Preston Moore.

Heavenly Father, we thank You that when Preston closed his eyes and he opened them up again You were there waiting for him. We ask, Lord, that You bless his family, that You comfort them with their loss.

Our Heavenly Father, bestow Your gracious blessings upon us Your people, and let Your wisdom guide us as we leave this place to go our respective ways. Give us, Lord, a divine understanding from You with which we can meet the misunderstandings of a troubled world. Give us love of our fellow man, that this love may at last gain for us the

greater more abundant love of our Creator.

Teach us we pray how to live, that by our lives we may be an example to others. Be with us in our sorrows and afflictions, our problems and our perplexities, our victories and our defeats. Be with us always now and forever. Amen.

Retirement of Colors

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: The Color Guard will retire the Flag of the United States of America.

Will the Delegates please salute on my command.

Hand, Salute.

...At this time the Delegation stood and rendered a hand-saluted the Colors.

The time is 1:36. I want to thank you for an outstanding year.

...Chorus of thank you from the Delegation.

...Standing applause.

NATL COMDR BRIEDEN: I now declare the 86th Annual Convention of The American Legion adjourned, *sine die*.

...At 1:36 p.m., the 86th Annual National Convention of The American Legion adjourned.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ANNUAL RECIPIENT(S)

National American Legion Distinguished Service Medal Award: Awarded annually for outstanding service to the nation and to the programs of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: None Awarded for 2004

American Legion Baseball Graduate of The Year Award: Presented to the major league baseball player who played American Legion Baseball as a teenager and best exemplifies the principles and purposes of the program in sportsmanship, citizenship, general good conduct, integrity, and playing ability.
RECIPIENT: Darin Erstad, Anaheim Angels

Bob Feller Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player recording the greatest number of strikeouts during the regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT(s): Ryan Reid, Nova Seafood (Outside Sponsor), Portland, Maine

Commissioner of Baseball Trophy: Awarded annually at the Major League World Series to that baseball team which becomes the National Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Portland, Maine - Outside Sponsor

Dr. Irvin L. 'Click' Cowger Memorial R.B.I. Award: Awarded annually to The American Legion Baseball player who is credited with the most runs batted in by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT(s): Troy Peterson, Eden Prairie Post 580, Eden Prairie, Minnesota

Ford C. Frick Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having within its jurisdiction the runner-up team in the National Finals of The American Legion Baseball program.
RECIPIENT: Washington

The Frank N. Belgrano, Jr. Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department which has rendered the most outstanding service during the year to the program of the Boy Scouts of America.
RECIPIENT: Department of Florida

George W. Rulon Baseball Player of the Year: A Plaque is presented to recipient by appropriate official upon conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series. Citation is presented to recipient at a special Hall of Fame ceremony at Cooperstown, NY, the following summer.
RECIPIENT: Nolan Gallagher, American Legion Post 4, Red Lodge, Montana

The Howard P. Savage Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department having the baseball team which becomes the Champion as a result of playing in The American Legion World Series.
RECIPIENT: Maine

Jack Williams Memorial Leadership Award: Awarded annually to the manager and coach of the national championship team, as representative of the adult leadership Jack

Williams stressed during his lifetime.
RECIPIENT(s): Mike D'Andrea, Daniel MacDuffie, Chris Grant, Nova Seafood (OS), Portland, ME

James F. Daniel, Jr. Memorial Sportsmanship Award: Awarded to The American Legion Baseball player participating in the World Series that represents the principle of good sportsmanship emphasized by the program.
RECIPIENT: Ryan Reid, Portland, Maine

Junior Shooting Sports Trophy: Awarded annually in four categories to the top performing Individual and Team in the Sporter and Precision categories competing in the annual USA Shooting National Junior Olympic Air Rifle Championship who are members of clubs and teams affiliated with The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program.
RECIPIENTS: Precision Team: Wolf Creek Young Shooters (GA); Jeremy Drennan, Jonathan Hall, Joseph Hall and Phillip Huckaby
Precision Individual: Joseph Hall, Wolf Creek Young Shooters (GA)
Sporter Team: Homestead 4-H Shooting Club (NE); Sarah Broeker, Jace Bures, Micaela Jochum, and Clint Sejkora
Sporter Individual: Jace Bures. Homestead 4-H Shooting Club (NE)

Louisville Slugger Trophy: Plaque is presented to recipient, or designated representative, by appropriate official upon the conclusion of The American Legion Baseball World Series.
RECIPIENT: Tommy Cauley, Deland Post 6, Deland, Florida

The Ralph T. O'Neil Education Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department within the continental limits in the United States showing the greatest Americanism activity in use of The American Legion School Medal Awards.
RECIPIENT: Department of Florida

Rawlings 'Big Stick' Award: Awarded annually to that American Legion Baseball player having the highest total number of bases as determined by the official score keepers of the respective regional tournaments and World Series of American Legion Baseball.
RECIPIENT: Steve Marquardt, Kennewick Post 34, Kennewick, Washington

Spafford National Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department of The American Legion having within its jurisdiction the winner of the National High School Oratorical Contest.
RECIPIENT: Department of Georgia

William Randolph Hearst Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department attaining the greatest number of percentage points compiled from information contained in the Consolidated Post Reports, and supporting Department narrative.
RECIPIENT: Department of Virginia

Canadian Friendship Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of authentic veterans'

organization in Canada. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans' affairs and in the development and perpetuation of the spirit of international good will and comradeship between the United States and Canada and between their veterans' organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): Ackerman, Steve; Albers, Charles; Aldridge, Shirley; Barron, Leo; Beaulieu, George; Bond, Ruth; Briscoe, Norman; Chabot, Roger; Emerick, Edward; Flight, Keith; Francofur, Rheal; Henderson, John; Hooper, Paul; Jarvis, George; Jones, Robert; MacDonald, John H. Sr.; Maxwell, Beverly Keith; McCallum, Eldon; Olsen, Earl; Phoenix, Brian; Smith, Colin; Thomas, William; White, Don; Young, Shirley; Young, Syd

Department Award for 100% Post Children & Youth Reporting: Awarded annually to those Departments which achieve 100% of Posts indicating Children & Youth activity on Consolidated Post reports.
RECIPIENT(s): Department of Montana
Department of Virginia

Employer of the Year Award for Hiring Veterans: Awarded to an employer in recognition of outstanding achievement in the employment and retraining of veterans.
RECIPIENT(s): Category I - Wheatland Tube Company, Wheatland, Pennsylvania
Category II - Wackenhut Service, Inc., Spring Lake, North Carolina
Category III - Anderson Iron Works, Inc., Post Falls, Idaho

Employment Service Awards: Awarded in three categories: Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) of the Year; Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) of the Year; Employment Service (ES) Office of the Year.
RECIPIENT(s): LVER of the Year: Claud Miller; Anniston, Alabama
DVOP of the Year: Jim Balog, Helena, Montana
ES Office of the Year: Sarah Jackson, Office Mgr.; Pocatello Job Service Office, Pocatello, Idaho

Awards To Enhance The Lives Of Disabled Persons: The program is a joint project between the National Organization & the AETNA Company, to award those Posts that enhance the lives of disable persons by providing opportunities for their participation in community activities.
RECIPIENT(s): Pending

National DEPARTMENT History Contest Awards: Awarded annually at the Fall Meeting of the National Executive Committee to those contestants entered in the National Department History Contest having submitted the One-Year History *Narrative* or *Yearbook* of the Department which best meets the standards established for that particular competition.
RECIPIENT(s): Department of South Dakota - (One-Year Narrative History)
Department of Washington - (One-Year Yearbook History)

National POST History Contest Awards: Awarded annually to those contestants entered in the National Post History Contest deemed by a duly authorized panel of judges to have submitted the One-Year History of the Post which best meets the standards established for the competitions.

RECIPIENT(s): Chattahoochee Post 251, Duluth, GA - (One-Year Narrative History)
Hutchinson Post 96, Hutchinson, MN - (One-Year Yearbook History)

International Amity Award: Awarded by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the National Executive Committee at such times and places as may be consistent and appropriate. It shall be awarded to specific individuals who shall be war veterans within the accepted meaning of the term and members of an authentic veteran organization established in the territory of any of the nations associated as war-time allies of the United States of America. It shall be awarded to such individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the field of veterans affairs and for service and contributions made in the development of international good will and comradeship between their organization and The American Legion.

RECIPIENT(s): Estrada, Rafael (Philippines)
Lee, Jon Bong (South Korea)

The Distinguished Public Service Award: Awarded annually by the National Commander with the advice and consent of the Commander's Advisory Committee at the time of the annual Washington Conference. It may be awarded to one or more person(s) of the United States Congress.

RECIPIENT(s): Representative Christopher H. Smith (New Jersey)

The Arthur D. Houghton Sons of The American Legion Trophy: Awarded annually to that Detachment of Sons of The American Legion in each of five membership categories (I – 200-1,000 members; II - 1,001-3,000 members; III - 3,001-6000 members; IV – 6001-12,000 members; V – 12,001 or more), each of said Detachments attaining the greatest percentage of increase over previous year's membership when compared with all Detachments in its category.

RECIPIENT(s): Category I — Detachment of
Category II —Detachment of
Category III —Detachment of
Category IV —Detachment of
Category V —Detachment of

Note: The Houghton awards will be known in January 2005.

General Henri Gouraud Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department in each of six categories established by the National Membership and Post Activities Committee, each of said Department having been the first in its respective category to attain or exceed its nationally assigned membership quota (effective 1986).

RECIPIENT(s): Category I—none qualified yet
Category II—none qualified yet
Category III—none qualified yet
Category IV—none qualified yet
Category V—Department of Delaware
Category VI—Department of Puerto Rico

General John J. Pershing Honor Award: Awarded annually to that Department having the greatest percentage of its posts receiving the Honor Ribbon for having 100 percent or more, of the post's previous year's membership enrolled for the coming year by December 31, and having reported such achievement to National Headquarters by not later than January 31.

RECIPIENT: Department of Tennessee

The Henry D. Lindsley Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department attaining the highest percentage of membership over its preceding year's membership by March 31.
RECIPIENT: Department of Delaware

The North Carolina Trophy: Awarded annually to the Department, not included among the several state Departments or the Department of the District of Columbia, attaining the highest percentage of membership as of March 31, over its preceding year's membership.
RECIPIENT: Department of Puerto Rico

The O. L. Bodenhamer Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department designated to lead the parade at the time of the ensuing National Convention.
RECIPIENT: Department of Delaware

The American Legion Air Force Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class at the Air Force Academy who demonstrates the highest proficiency in all academic subjects.
RECIPIENT: Cadet 2nd Lt. James M. Valpiani

The American Legion Coast Guard Academy Award: Awarded annually to that cadet of the graduating class of the United States Coast Guard Academy who is considered to have personally excelled in athletics.
RECIPIENT: Ensign James Conner

The American Legion Merchant Marine Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the Merchant Marine Academy, enrolled in the Pre-Commissioning Seminar Course, and selected by the Academy Faculty, as achieving the highest grade pertaining to a 1,000-word composition dealing with the subject of National Security.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Edward L. DiPierro

The American Legion Military Academy Award: Awarded annually to cadet of the graduating class at the United States Military Academy with the highest standing in Chemistry.
RECIPIENT: Cadet 2nd Lt. Brian Cohee

The American Legion Naval Academy Award: Awarded annually to that graduating midshipman of the United States Naval Academy who stands highest in those English, History and Government courses taken to complete a Foreign Affairs major.
RECIPIENT: Midshipman Ensign Nathan Williams

National Commander's Blood Donor Awards: Presented to departments in different sized categories for participating in The American Legion's Blood Donor Program.
RECIPIENT(s): **Category I** - Depts. with 100,000 or more members
Post Participation: Department of Minnesota
Individual Participation: Department of Ohio
Category II - Depts. with 70,000 to 99,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: Department of Wisconsin
Individual Participation: Department of Wisconsin
Category III - Depts. with 40,000 to 69,999 mbrs
Post Participation: Department of Nebraska
Individual Participation: Department of Nebraska

Category IV - Depts. with 25,000 to 39,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: Department of Oregon
Individual Participation: Department of Oregon
Category V - Depts. with 10,000 to 24,999 mbrs.
Post Participation: Department of Idaho
Individual Participation: Department of New Hampshire
Category VI - Depts. with less than 10,000 members
Post Participation: Department of Hawaii
Individual Participation: Department of Hawaii

National Law Enforcement Officer Of The Year Award: To recognize an outstanding law enforcement officer as selected from Department law enforcement officer winners for distinguished on-and off-duty service. The accomplishments for which the award is presented shall have been in accordance with, or in furtherance of, established American Legion policies or programs and it shall have contributed to the preservation of law and order as well as the American way of life.
RECIPIENT: Officer 1st Class Patrick Eckley, Howard County Department of Police (Maryland)

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Awarded annually to that Department giving the highest degree of support to the ROTC program within its jurisdiction, based on criteria drawn up by the National Security Commission.
RECIPIENT(s): Alaska, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota, Montana and Virginia

Fourth Estate Award: Awarded to press, radio, TV, or other communications media; to associations of same, to owners, executive heads or staff members; such award to be in recognition of outstanding service to community, state, or nation, which service shall have been in accordance with or the furtherance of established American Legion policies and programs.
RECIPIENT: Mark Benjamin [UPI Investigations Editor]

National Commander's Public Relations Award: Awarded to an outstanding individual and/or organization for distinguished public service in the field of communications.
RECIPIENT: Donald P. Bellisario

The Arch M. Cantrall Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Band winning first prize in competition with all other American Legion bands during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of Tonowandas, Post 264 -Tonowanda, New York

Emblem Sales Trophy: To be awarded annually to that Junior sponsored Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Junior sponsored Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2004

The Four Chaplains Trophy: Awarded annually to the winner of The American Legion Firing Squad competition at the National Convention.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2004

The Glen R. Hillis Trophy: Awarded annually to that Color Guard winning first prize in competition with all other Color Guards during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: 2nd District, Portage, Indiana

The Lemuel Bolles Trophy: Awarded annually to that band winning first prize in competition with all other bands during the annual National Convention.
RECIPIENT: American Legion Band of Tonowandas, Post 264 -Tonowanda, New York

National Adjutant's Trophy: Awarded annually to that American Legion Firing Squad winning first prize in competition with all other Firing Squads during the annual National Convention of The American Legion.
RECIPIENT: No Contest in 2004

William F. Lenker National Service Trophy: Awarded annually to that State Department of The American Legion excelling in welfare work for war veterans, providing the membership of that Department shall be no less than 80% of the membership of the preceding year.
RECIPIENT: Department of Ohio

Abbreviations

AARC	American Association of Respiratory Care
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ACDUTRA	Active Duty Training
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AFRH	Armed Forces Retirement Home
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ALS	Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
ANAVETS	Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans
ANAVICUS	Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada United States
APNs	Advanced Practice Nurses
ARM	Adjustable Rate Mortgage
ASVET	Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training
AVIP	Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program
BCMRs	Boards for Correction of Military Records
BEA	Budget Enforcement Act
BRAC	Base Closure and Realignment Commission
BVA	Board of Veterans Appeals
CARE	Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services
CAT	Computerized Axial Tomography
CBOC	Community Based Outpatient Clinic
CBP	Customs & Border Protection
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
COLA	Cost-of-Living Adjustment
COSCO	China Ocean Shipping Company
CRSC	Combat-Related Special Compensation
CWT	Compensated Work Therapy
DECA	Defense Commissary Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIC	Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
DMS	Direct Mail Solicitation
DoD	Department of Defense
DoE	Department of Energy
DoL	Department of Labor
DVA	Department of Veterans Affairs
DVOP	Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
EPs	End Products
F&A	Facilities and Administrative

FEHBP	Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FRP	Federal Response Plan
FSS	Federal Supply Schedule
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GAO	General Accounting Office
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
HR	House Resolution
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IIRIRA	Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRCA	Immigration Reform and Control Act
JPAC	Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command
LEPC	Local Emergency Planning Committee
LPNs	Licensed Practical Nurses
LTC	Long Term Care
LVER	Local Veterans Employment Representative
MGIB	Montgomery GI Bill
MHS	Military Health System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
NACA	National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NASH	National Association of State Veterans Homes
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NDMS	National Disaster Medical System
NHCU	Nursing Home Care Unit
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NPROs	Non-Profit Research Organization
NSDS	National Security and Defense Strategies
NSLI	National Service Life Insurance
NVTI	National Veterans Training Institute
NWP	Neighborhood Watch Program
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
ORD	Office of Research and Development

PL	Public Law
POW/MIA	Prisoner of War/Missing in Action
PRC	Peoples' Republic of China
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
QUERI	Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
RNs	Registered Nurses
ROK	Republic of Korea
SBA	Small Business Administration
SEI	Space Exploration Initiative
SESA	State Employment Services Agencies
SEVIS	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SDSC	Severely Disabled Compensation
SGLI	Servicemen's Group Life Insurance
SHAD	Shipboard Hazard and Defense
SJR	Senate Joint Resolution
SMC	Special Monthly Compensation
SMI	Serious Mental Illness
SMOCTA	Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act
SOM	School of Medicine
TAP	Transition Assistance Program
TCDD	Tetrachlorodibenzo-para-dioxin
TERA	Temporary Early Retirement Authority
TPS	Temporary Protected Status
USC	United States Code
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USERRA	Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
USFSPA	Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USNH	United States Naval Home
USNSCC	United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps
USPS	United States Public Health Service
USSAH	United States Soldiers' and Airmen's Home
USUHS	Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
VA	Veterans Affairs
VACO	Veteran Affairs Central Office
VERA	Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation
VETS	Veterans Employment and Training Service
VETS	Veterans Eye Treatment Safety Act

VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VGLI	Veterans Group Life Insurance
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VIPS	Volunteers in Police Service
VJTA	Veteran's Job Training Act
VISN	Veterans Integrated Service Network
VOAD	Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

FOREWORD

The American Legion continued to have a strong year under the leadership of National Commander John A. Brieden, III, Brenham, Texas. Membership was strong with 2.7 million veterans in more than 14,000 posts throughout the nation and overseas. We recorded another year of rewarding service to America, her veterans, and their families.

The American Legion National Headquarters is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. In addition to the Indianapolis facilities, offices are maintained in Washington, DC, to house those organizational functions requiring a close working relationship with the Congress and the appropriate agencies of the federal government. The editorial and advertising staffs of *The American Legion Magazine* are located at The American Legion's Indianapolis Headquarters.

The National Commander's report is published herein as a part of the National Convention proceedings. Reports of the other national officers, the national commissions, financial statement with accompanying data, and a report of the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary are included.

Throughout the year, the two organizations continued to provide vital leadership to the nation and, through our activities and programs, contributed significantly to the preservation of the American way of life. We are proud of our accomplishments and look forward to the challenges ahead in the coming year.

ROBERT W. SPANOGLE
National Adjutant

EXCERPTS FROM CONSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE II

Nature

Section 1. The American Legion is a civilian organization; membership therein does not affect nor increase liability for military or police service. Rank does not exist in the Legion; no member shall be addressed by his military or naval title in any convention or meeting of the Legion.

Section 2. The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.

ARTICLE III

Section 1. The American Legion shall be organized in Departments and these in turn in Posts. There shall be one Department in each state, in the District of Columbia, and there may be one Department in each territory and insular possession of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish Posts in the territorial and insular possessions of the United States and foreign countries, and shall designate the Department under whose jurisdiction they shall function, but this shall in no way affect the status of Departments already established.

ARTICLE IV

Eligibility

Section 1. Any person shall be eligible for membership in The American Legion who was a member of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or Air Force of the United States and assigned to active duty at some time during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917, to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941, to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950, to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961, to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982, to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989, to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 until a date established by Congress for ending the Desert Storm period; all dates inclusive, or who, being a citizen of the United States at the time of his entry therein, served on active duty in the armed forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any said periods; provided however, that such service shall have been terminated by honorable discharge or honorable separation, or continued honorably after any of said periods; provided, further, that no person shall be entitled to membership who, being in such service during any of said periods, refused on conscientious, political or other grounds to subject himself to military discipline or unqualified service.

Section 2. There shall be no form or class of membership except an active membership, and dues shall be paid annually or for life.

Section 3. No person may be a member at any time of more than one Post.

Section 4. No person, who has been expelled by a Post shall be admitted to membership in another Post, without the consent of the expelling Post except that where such consent has been asked for and denied by such Post, he may then appeal to the Executive Committee of the Department of the expelling Post for permission to be admitted to membership in another Post, and shall be ineligible for membership until such permission is granted.

ARTICLE V

Section 1. The legislative body of The American Legion shall be the National Convention, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution and By-Laws.

Section 2. The time and place of the National Conventions shall be determined by the National Executive Committee, which shall have authority to change such time and place for sufficient reasons to it appearing.

Section 3. In the National Convention each Department shall be entitled to five delegates and one additional delegate for each one thousand members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer 30 days prior to the meeting of said Convention and whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, have been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate. The delegates shall be chosen not less than 2 weeks before the National Convention at Department Conventions or in any other manner specified by the Department Constitution.

Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from his Department. Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received his credentials after his registration fee has been paid.

Section 5. A quorum shall exist at a National Convention when 60 percent of the Departments are represented as provided above.

ARTICLE VI

Section 1. The National Convention shall elect a National Commander, and five National Vice Commanders, who shall serve without seniority. No two Vice Commanders shall be chosen from the same Department. No person shall be eligible for re-election to the Office of National Commander or National Vice Commander.

Section 2. Such officers shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding National Convention following their election and thereafter until their successors are chosen. Vacancies in these offices occurring between National Conventions shall be filled by election by the National Executive Committee, and any member of The American Legion, in good standing, shall be eligible for election to such vacancy. Provided, however, that no Past National Commander or Past National Vice Commander shall be elected to fill any vacancy in these respective offices.

Section 3. The National Executive Committee at its first meeting following the National Convention shall appoint the National Adjutant, National Treasurer, National Judge Advocate, National Chaplain and National Historian, such officers to hold office at the pleasure of the appointing power. All persons having the custody of funds shall give adequate bonds, which shall be approved by the National Executive Committee.

Section 4. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Posts, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised by them with their respective Departments.

ARTICLE VII

National Executive Committee

Section 1. Between National Conventions, the administrative power shall be vested in the National Executive Committee, which shall be composed of the National Commander, the National Vice-Commanders, and one National Executive Committeeman and one alternate from each Department to be elected as such Department shall determine, the alternate to vote only in the absence of the National Executive Committeeman.

Past National Commanders

J. Addington Wagner, Michigan
Preston J. Moore, Oklahoma
William E. Galbraith, Nebraska
John H. Geiger, Illinois
Joe L. Matthews, Texas
William J. Rogers, Maine
John M. 'Jack' Carey, Michigan
Michael J. Kogutek, New York
Keith Kreul, Wisconsin
Clarence M. Bacon, Maryland
Judge James P. Dean, Mississippi
John P. Comer, Massachusetts
Hon. H.F. Gierke, North Dakota
Miles S. Epling, West Virginia
Robert S. Turner, Georgia
Dominic D. DiFrancesco, Pennsylvania
Bruce Thiesen, California
William M. Detweiler, Louisiana
Daniel A. Ludwig, Minnesota
Joseph J. Frank, Missouri
Anthony G. Jordan, Maine
Butch L. Miller, Virginia
Hon. Alan G. Lance, Sr., Idaho
Ray G. Smith, North Carolina
Richard J. Santos, Maryland
Ronald F. Conley, Pennsylvania

National Executive Committeemen

Clarence W. Jacobs, Alabama
Jimmie L. Foster, Alaska
Marco 'Tony' Valenzuela, Arizona
Claude B. Carpenter, Arkansas
William E. Wilkin, California
Joseph E. Ross, Colorado
Richard W. Anderson, Connecticut
Thomas L. Burns, Delaware
Dennis G. Kurre, D.C.
Robert J. Proctor, Florida
Merwyn M. 'Mike' Beavers, France
Ray Hendrix, Georgia
Orland H. Taylor, Hawaii
H. Melvin Napier, Idaho
William J. Flanagan, Illinois
Ron Lowe, Indiana
Ivan E. Torkelson, Iowa
U.S. 'Udie' Grant, Kansas
Randall Coffman, Kentucky
Russell J. Henry, Louisiana
Robert A. Owen, Maine
William B. Proctor, Jr., Maryland
Mark A. Avis, Massachusetts
John E. Hayes, Mexico
Norbert J. Schollett, Michigan
Robert Skallerud, Minnesota
Charles E. Langley, Mississippi
Sam Yancey, Missouri
Arthur E. Sell, Montana
Robert H. Zersen, Nebraska
Ron Gutzman, Nevada
Benjamin F. Talford, New Hampshire
Leo L. McKernan, New Jersey
Bruce Jorgensen, New Mexico
Robert F. Neville, New York
Jerry L. Hedrick, North Carolina
Curtis O. Twete, North Dakota
James C. Morris, Ohio
Donald H. Schulenberg, Oklahoma
T. Les Galloway, Oregon
Alfred Pirolli, Pennsylvania
Ernesto P. Golez, Philippines
Justo Perez-Morell, Puerto Rico
Eugene Pytka, Rhode Island
Rennie M. Singletary, Jr., South Carolina
Paul A. Evenson, South Dakota
Ralph J. Reel, Tennessee
Delbert D. Fuhrman, Texas
William E. Christoffersen, Utah
Donald T. Tetreault, Vermont
George T. Blume, Virginia
Richard D. Smith, Washington
William W. Kile, West Virginia
David A. Korth, Wisconsin
Joseph G. Sestak, Wyoming

Alternate National Executive Committeemen

F. Wayne Turner, Alabama
W. E. Gene Franks, Alaska
Julius Maklary, Arizona
Francis A. O'Brien, Arkansas
John A. O'Leary, California
Jeff Luginbuel, Colorado
K. Robert Lewis, Connecticut
Donald E. Neil, Delaware
Ernest R. Sohns, D.C.
Dennis R. Boland, Florida
William E. Marshall, France
Charles F. Wessinger, Georgia
Michael D. McCloskey, Hawaii
Richard Hanni, Idaho
Clifford Kevern, Illinois
Thomas Henderson, Indiana
Michael E. Wanser, Iowa
Damon C. Christensen, Kansas
Randall Fisher, Kentucky
Asa E. Stewart, Jr., Louisiana
Glenn P. Payne, Maine
Alfred M. Schmidt, Maryland
Lawrence A. Connors, Massachusetts
Jack D. Freitag, Mexico
Kenneth G. Dittenber, Michigan
Virgil V. Persing, Minnesota
Gayle Gorden, Mississippi
David N. Voyles, Missouri
Art Ellison, Montana
Michael J. Landkamer, Nebraska
Ernest E. McAvan, Nevada
John E. Neylon, New Hampshire
William A. Rakestraw, Jr., New Jersey
Charles G. Pappas, New Mexico

Richard C. O'Keefe, New York
Coley A. Hunsucker, North Carolina
Vernon Uselding er, North Dakota
Carl W. Swisher, Ohio
Wayne L. Pedigo, Oklahoma
Richard Clark, Oregon
Richard A. Coccimiglio, Pennsylvania
Ignacio F. Palad, Philippines
Miguel A. Rodriguez, Puerto Rico
Ernest Gerundio, Rhode Island
Billy W. Bell, South Carolina
Larry L. Price, South Dakota
J. B. Loring, Tennessee
Ronald G. Cherry, Texas
Terry D. Schow, Utah
Rodney Sherman, Vermont
Rob R. Gordon, Jr., Virginia
Bill Schrier, Washington
William E. Burkett, West Virginia
Arthur D. Herbison, Wisconsin
Irin A. Quick, Wyoming

EXCERPTS FROM BY-LAWS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION
ARTICLE I
National Executive Committee
Commission, Committee, and Employees

Section 6. The National Executive Committee, upon nomination by the National Commander, appoints the following standing commissions: National Americanism Commission, National Commission on Children and Youth, National Convention Commission, National Economic Commission, National Finance Commission, National Foreign Relations Commission, National Internal Affairs Commission, National Legislative Commission, The American Legion Magazine Commission, National Public Relations Commission, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and National Security Commission.

The National Executive Committee shall provide for the appointment and employment of such subordinate officers and employees as may be needed for the administration of The American Legion, and prescribe their duties and emoluments.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Richard G. Denbow, Iowa

It has been a humble and proud experience for me to represent The American Legion as a National Vice Commander this past year. It was a privilege to have served under the leadership of a great Legionnaire and just a great person, National Commander John Brieden. He always said that he had a reputation of getting things done, that he could make a difference he wanted us to believe that we could make a difference, too. We had a great team this year and I do believe we worked to make The American Legion a stronger presence in our nation, our states and in our communities.

As I think back on the years I have had working for The American Legion and remember the opportunities presented to me as I traveled the Central Region, I wonder how many of the Legion Family I would have known and met if I had not gotten involved with this organization. What a great group of people we are, all bound together by that special Veteran in our lives!

What great things we do as we work with our youth through sports, Boys and Girls State, scholarships, Education and Americanism programs in our schools and how we serve our veterans with our volunteer work and our continued dedication to obtain better benefits, housing and medical care for those who have served and those now serving. We must keep focused on protecting our flag, keeping 'under God' in our pledge, and to continue to

promote our programs and the projects we cherish.

The Legion Posts in our communities are an important part of every community. We would be missed if we were not there. We need to keep our Posts viable with new members and new ideas. Remember this new generation of young men and women as they return and welcome them into our ranks. The blue caps of America are the life-line of this organization and through them we will remain strong and have the necessary voice as we continue to fight for the services our veterans deserve.

A summary of my travels this past year follows:

August 2003	
21-28	National Convention in St Louis, MO, elected and installed.
September 2003	
10-13	Brainstorming Sessions & Phone Calls to District & Dept Commanders, Indianapolis
15-17	Legislative Briefings and National Commander's Testimony Washington, DC
19-20	Legion 4 NIC, Dallas, TX
October 2003	
6-9	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN
10-12	National Commander's Homecoming, Houston, TX
31-Nov. 2	Department of Missouri Fall Conference, Jefferson City
November 2003	
9-12	Dept of Kansas Membership Tour & Veterans Day Parade, Emporia
17-22	Past District Commanders Coffee Tour, Iowa
December 2003	
	No Dept visits
2-3	Iowa Veterans Home, Christmas Gift Wrap
13	IVH Christmas Open House
January 2004	
16-18	Department of Lousiana Mid-Winter Conference, Alexandria
23-25	Department of Arkansas Mid-Winter Conference, Little Rock
29-Feb. 1	Department of Texas Mid-Winter Conference, Austin
February 2004	
2-28	No Dept visits
March 2004	
7-9	2004 Washington Conference, Washington, DC
April 2004	
5	Post meeting, Mabel, MN
14	Tama County Government Day, Toledo, IA
17-18	Department of Oklahoma for visit to The American Legion Children's Home preceded by dinner at the Ponca City Post
May 2004	
3-6	NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis
7-9	Department of Missouri Truman Pilgrimage, Independence
14-16	Department Convention of Kansas, Great Bend
18	U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT
27-30	WWII Memorial Dedication, Washington, DC
June 2004	
	No Department visits
13	Dedication of Blue Star Memorial Markers along Hwy 3 in Buena Vista County, Iowa

14	Hawkeye Boys State, Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa
July 2004	
15-17	Department of Iowa Convention, Marshalltown
AUGUST 2004	
29-Sept. 2	National Convention, Nashville, TN

This past year has renewed my commitment that we are an organization of 'Veterans helping Veterans' and I pledge myself to continue and work to this end. May God bless us and may God continue to bless America.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Michael Helm, Nebraska

It has been a great honor to serve as the National Vice Commander of the Midwest Region this year. I believe that National Commander John Brieden has truly made a difference in America this year. I have been proud to serve alongside the Commander and the other National Officers. I would like to thank the National Staff for all of their help.

The Midwest Region, consisting of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin has led the way from start to finish in Membership! My nine Departments were just as dedicated to veterans' health care, along with all Americanism and Children and Youth programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each Department Commander, National Executive Committeeman and Adjutant for their efforts this past year. My hat is off to the many District Commanders for their outstanding efforts on behalf of all Legion programs. They have served the blue cap veterans and their communities above and beyond the call of duty.

I have listed below my activities over the past year.

September 2003	
10-13	Brainstorming Sessions & Phone Calls to District & Dept. Commanders
15-17	Legislative Briefings and National Commander's Testimony, Washington, DC
October 2003	
6-9	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN
10-12	National Commander's Homecoming, Houston, TX
November 2003	
1	Dept. of Michigan State-Wide Membership Rally, Howell
17-19	Dept. of North Dakota Membership Tour of Western Part of State
21-22	Dept. of Illinois-Speaker at the Egyptian Past Commander's Club in Carbondale and to Visit the Marion VA Hospital
December 2003	
2-4	Dept. of Indiana—To Visit Posts, Motivate Membership Workers & Accept Cards for National Target Date
5	Dept. of Minnesota—Pearl Harbor Membership Rally
January 2004	
9-11	Dept. of Nebraska (Home Department—My Homecoming)
15-17	Dept. of Wisconsin—Mid Winter Conference at Green Bay
18-24	Dept. of Illinois—Membership Caravan Throughout State
30-Feb. 2	Dept. of Ohio—Big Twelve Round-Up of Regional Posts
February 2004	
20-22	Dept. of North Dakota Winter Conference, Minot

March 2004	
7-9	2004 Washington Conference, Washington, DC
20	Dept. of Minnesota, for "Family Appreciation Dinner"
April 2004	
16-18	Region 6 NIC, Omaha, NE
23-24	Region 4 NIC, Springfield, IL
30-May 2	Dept. of Michigan—DEC Meeting & Spring Conference, Boyne City
May 2004	
3-6	NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis
7	Represented National Commander and National organization at Funeral of U.S. "Udie" Grant, long-time NECman of Kansas, at McPherson
27-30	WW II Memorial Dedication, Washington, DC
June 2004	
11-13	Dept. Convention of South Dakota, Pierre
18	Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, New York
19-20	Buckeye Boys State, Bowling Green, OH
24-27	Dept. Convention of Nebraska, Columbus
July 2004	
	No Dept. Visits
August 2004	
29-Sept. 2	National Convention, Nashville

While it has been a humbling experience to serve such a great organization among so many great American Veterans, it has also restored my faith and belief that America is truly a wonderful and blessed nation. Thank you for this opportunity to serve.

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Fang A. Wong, New York

It is with great privilege and honor to serve National Commander John A. Brieden, III as National Vice Commander. He is an outstanding Legionnaire with a great vision of Service, Caring, and Growth for the Legion Family. Commander Brieden told the National Vice Commanders that by working together we could truly make a difference and I believe his leadership and sincerity fostered the five of us in such a way that we not only worked well together, we actually have lots of fun doing it.

Traveling throughout the Northeast Region during the past year, I was most impressed by the devotion and enthusiasms of the hundreds of Legionnaires I encountered. Their unyielding commitments to serve our veterans, their total support of our brave men and women in harm's way, their concerns for our children and youth, and their tireless energy to seek improvement for their community gave me such inspiration and appreciation that I was never more proud to be a member of the best veterans organization.

Our organization has done well in the pursuit of veterans' issues with the Government for the past year. We make gains in the areas of CARES, Disable Veterans Tax, VA Funding ...and others. However, much hard work is still ahead to obtain Mandatory Funding of Veterans' Health Care, Medicare Reimbursement, and Veterans Benefits Administration. The American Legion must hold our government accountable for its treatment and care of all veterans and that we will continue to lead the way in getting Congress to recognize the health care crisis in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Highlight of the year was the dedication of the WWII Memorial. It was such an honor to be in the presence of those wonderful members of the 'greatest generation' to pay tribute

to their contribution and legacy to the world. I will never forget this event.

I must thank the National Staff for the wonderful support provided throughout the year. To the Commanders, Adjutants, and the NECs/ANECs of the Northeast Region, thank you for your hard work, hospitality and friendship. To all the Legionnaires, thank you for the opportunity to serve; it has been a wonderful year—one I shall always cherish.

A summary of my travels for 2003-2004 are listed below:

August 2003	
31-Sept. 1	American Legion Drum Corps Championship, Scranton, PA
September 2003	
10-13	Brainstorming Sessions & Phone Calls to District & Department Commanders, Indianapolis, IN
15-17	Legislative Briefing & National Commander's Testimony, Washington, DC
October 2003	
6-9	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN
10-12	National Commander's Homecoming, Houston, TX
18-19	Attend Baseball World Series with American Legion Champion at Yankee Stadium, New York, NY
24-26	National Commander's Visitation to Western New York (Home Department), North Tonowanda/Waterloo/Binghamton, NY
31-Nov. 2	Department of New Hampshire—Membership Roundup—Throughout State
November 2003	
5	Represented National Commander and National organization at New York City—Special Memorial Service for Madame Chiang Kai-Shek's Life-Long Devotion to Charity
11	Guest Speaker at Veterans' Day Ceremony, East Brunswick, NJ
21-22	Department of Massachusetts—DEC Meeting and Guest Speaker at Department Commander's Banquet, Worcester, MA
December 2003	
	No Department Visits
January 2004	
9-11	Department of Connecticut—Mid Winter Conference, Rocky Hill, CT
23-25	Department of New York (Home Department) Mid Winter Conference, Albany, NY
February 2004	
27-28	Department of Vermont—Tour of Department Posts and Oratorical Contest, White River Junction, VT
March 2004	
4	Attend Funeral of SPC Roger Ling (Iraq) at Arlington Cemetery, Arlington, VA
7-9	2004 Washington Conference, Washington, DC
22-23	Department of New York (Home Department) Hill Day, Albany, NY
25-26	Department of Rhode Island—To Address Issue of American Legion Priorities at Special Dinner for Department and County Chairmen
27	Attend Funeral of SPC Doron Chan (Iraq) at Highland, NY
April 2004	
14-15	National Commander Visitation to Department of New York (N. Syracuse, NY & Saratoga Springs, NY)
16-18	Region 1 NIC, Springfield, MA

24-25	Department of Pennsylvania—DEC Meeting and Guest Speaker at Department Commander's Banquet, Philadelphia, PA
May 2004	
3-6	NEC Spring Meetings, Indianapolis, IN
7	Representing National Commander at the Dedication of VA Outpatient Clinic at U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT
14-16	Region 2 NIC, Harrisburg/Hershey, PA
21-23	Attend US And Canada "Goodwill Day" Celebration at Brockville, Ontario, Canada
28	U. S. Military Academy, West Point, NY
29-30	WWII Memorial Dedication, Washington, DC
June 2004	
1	Attend New York City Fleet Week reception, New York, NY
4-5	Department Convention of Rhode Island, Warwick, RI
9-10	Department Convention of Massachusetts, Worcester, MA
11-13	Department Convention of New Jersey, Wildwood, NJ
18-19	Department Convention of Maine, Augusta, ME
July 2004	
2	Attend Graduation of Department of New York (Home Department) 2004 Boys' State, Morrisville, NY
5-10	Department Convention of New York (Home Department), Buffalo, NY
16-18	Department Convention of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, PA
August 2004	
29-Sept. 2	National Convention, Nashville, TN

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Clinton E. Thompson, North Carolina

It is with great pride and honor that I served as National Vice Commander under the leadership of National Commander, John A. Brieden, III. He truly has given additional meaning to "Still Serving America." His support for veterans issues is untiring—Mandatory Funding of the VA System, Medicare and other Insurance Reimbursements to the VA System, lobbying Congress for Concurrent Receipts for disabled military retirees (Disabled Veterans Tax), supporting constitutional amendment to give congress the authority to protect the American Flag from physical desecration, and many other issues which are so important to veterans.

I can never thank the National Staff in Indianapolis and Washington enough for their support and help in making my travels such a pleasure this past year. To the best crew anyone could serve—National Vice Commanders: Dick Denbow, Mike Helm, Todd White, and Fang Wong; National Chaplain, Bill Doubek; National Historian, Fay Casper; and National Sergeant-at-Arms, Ray Wildman. Thanks for the ride!

To the Departments in the Southeast Region, your hospitality was exceptional. As of this writing, we are third in the National Membership. Of the three 100% Departments, two are in the Southeast Region—Delaware and Puerto Rico. I thank all Departments for your efforts in Membership.

My travel schedule for 2003-2004:

September 2003	
10-13	Brainstorming Session & Phone Calls to District & Dept. Commanders, Indianapolis
15-17	Legislative Briefings & National Commander's Testimony, WDC

October 2003	
6-9	NVC Breakfast & Fall Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis, IN
10-12	National Commander's Homecoming, Houston, TX
24-26	Dept. NC Fall Conference, Greensboro
31-Nov. 1	Dept. of Virginia—Address DEC Meeting, Hampton
November 2003	
2-30 No Dept. Visits	
DECEMBER 2003	
4-6	Medal of Honor Reception, Lincolnton, NC
10-13	Dept. of Georgia-Membership Activity
January 2004	
23-24	Dept. of Tennessee, Mid-Winter Conference & Dept. Commander's Reception, Franklin
30-Feb. 1	Dept. of Maryland, Membership Promotion in Frederick, Clinton & Boonsboro Areas
February 2004	
6-7	Dept. of West Virginia, Mid-Winter Conference, Charleston
13-15	Dept. of North Carolina (Home Dept.) Mid-Winter Conf, Raleigh
March 2004	
7-9	Washington Conference, Washington, DC
19-20	Region 3 NIC, Macon, GA
26	Represented National Commander & National Organization at Special Memorial Ceremony for Captain Kimberly Nicole Hampton, First Female Pilot in U.S. History Ever Shot Down & Killed by Hostile Fire During Wartime Service, Pickens, SC
April 2004	No Dept. Visits
May 2004	
3-6	Spring Meetings of NEC, Indianapolis
7-8	Dept. of Florida, Homecoming of Dept. Commander, Jacksonville
28-30	WW II Memorial Dedication, Washington, DC
31	U. S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs
June 2004	
10-12	N.C. Dept. Convention, Raleigh, NC
24-26	Dept . Convention of Kentucky, Louisville
July 2004	
9-11	Dept. Convention of Delaware, Dover
16-17	Taught Class at N.C. Legion College
August 2004	
29-Sept. 2	National Convention, Nashville, Tennessee

REPORT OF NATIONAL VICE COMMANDER
Todd E. White, Wyoming

Having the honor to serve The American Legion as National Vice Commander with National Commander John A. Brieden III has been one of the most rewarding and exciting experiences of my life.

One of the many duties of the position was traveling to the various Departments to which I was assigned in the Western region. The Departments in the Western region include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico,

Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, as well as two foreign Departments Mexico and the Philippines. The purposes of the visits were to promote a wide range of initiatives of the national organization, such as Support the Troops program, Blue Star Banner Program, Temporary Financial Assistance, American Legacy Scholarship and Child Welfare Foundation to name a few. Additional duties were to assist Posts, Districts and Departments in the principles of The American Legion and to get acquainted with the members of the individual Departments.

Additional purposes of my visits included promoting the support of legislation for Mandatory Funding of the Veterans Administration, allowing Medicare Reimbursement at VA Medical Centers, support legislation on the Veterans Disability Tax, promote involvement by all Legionnaires in the Capitol Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) to ensure adequate and timely treatment for veterans at VA Medical Centers, urging the U.S. Senate to pass a Constitutional Amendment giving power to the Congress to protect the United States Flag from physical desecration, and to ensure the words "under God" remain in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

I found in my travels that the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion all share the same dedication to the mission of The American Legion: (1) the caring for our nation's veterans and the enhancement of their benefits; (2) being mindful of the children and youth of our country; (3) improving the quality of life of our community, state, and nation through our Americanism programs; and (4) maintaining a strong national defense.

A summary of my activities over the past year follows:

August 2003	
23-28	National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, Elected and Installed National Vice Commander
September 2003	
9-13	Brainstorming Sessions and Phone Calls to District/Department Commanders, Indianapolis, Indiana
14-17	Legislative Briefings and National Commander's Testimony, Washington, DC
18-21	Region 8 National Information Conference, Boise, Idaho
22-23	CARES Commission Testimony in Denver, Colorado
24-25	CARES Commission Testimony in Billings, Montana
26-27	Department of Wyoming Fall Membership Workshop, Buffalo
October 2003	
4-9	National Vice Commander's Breakfast and Fall Meetings of the NEC Indianapolis, Indiana
10-12	The American Legion National Commander John Brieden and the American Legion Auxiliary National President, Katherine Morris Homecoming reception, Houston, TX
16-19	Department of Oregon Fall Conference and Department Executive Committee, Baker City
20-22	Represented National organization for PBS taped interview at Washington, DC Office of The American Legion concerning VA health care to be aired at a future date on "Now With Bill Moyers" show, Washington, DC
30-Nov.2	Department of Arizona Fall Conference, Lake Havasu City
November 2003	
7-9	Department of Montana Fall Conference and Department Executive Committee, Helena

11	Veterans Day Breakfast speaker, Post #44 Worland, Wyoming
12-13	System Worth Saving Task Force meeting, Washington DC
14-16	Department of Nevada Department Executive Committee, and television interview Henderson
December 2003	
5-7	Department of Utah Department Executive Committee, Salt Lake City
14-15	Kansas City VA Medical Center, site visit, Kansas City, Missouri
16-17	John J. Pershing VA Medical Center, site visit, Poplar Bluff, Missouri
January 2004	
1-4	Department of California Area 3 Membership Conference, Sutter Creek
15-18	Department of Idaho Mid-winter Conference, Boise
23-25	Department of Colorado Mid-winter Conference, Grand Junction
29-Feb.2	Department of Washington Mid-Winter Conference, Spokane
February 2004	
5-8	Department of Alaska Southeast District Convention, Haines
9-11	Veterans Day at Wyoming Legislature session, Cheyenne
March 2004	
6-10	National Commission meetings and Legislative Conference, Washington
18-21	Department of California Department Executive Committee meeting, Long Beach
27	National Vice-Commander Homecoming, Post #44, Worland, Wyoming
April 2004	
22-25	Department of Alaska Convention, Fairbanks
May 2004	
1-6	National Commission and National Executive Committee meetings, Indianapolis, IN
7	Funeral services for National Executive Committeeman Udell S. "Udie" Grant, McPherson, KS
26-27	U.S. Naval Academy Awards Ceremony presentation—Annapolis, MD
28-30	World War II Memorial Dedication, Washington, DC
31	Memorial Day Ceremonies, keynote speaker, cemeteries in Worland, Wyoming and Tensleep, Wyoming
June 2004	
2	Vietnam Moving Wall, keynote speaker at closing ceremonies, Worland, Wyoming
10	Department of Wyoming Department Executive Committee meeting, Gillette
11	Department of Montana Convention, Billings
12-13	Department of Wyoming Convention, Gillette
July 2004	
8-11	Department of Idaho Convention, Idaho Falls
30	Wyoming Governor Freudenthal invitation to meet with him and General Peter Schoomaker, Chief of Staff, US Army, Cheyenne
August 2004	
13-14	Represented National Commander and National Organization as presenter of The American Legion Baseball Graduate of the Year Award presented to Darin Erstad of the Anaheim Angels, Anaheim, California

I wish to extend my appreciation to all the Departments for their kind hospitality and to the National Staff located in Indianapolis, Indiana and Washington, DC for their devotion and assistance during my year of service as National Vice Commander. I feel the wisdom gained while serving as National Vice Commander has broadened my scope of The American Legion and of the legislative process, which will have a positive impact on my ability to serve all veterans in the future.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CHAPLAIN
Reverend Doctor William J.P. Doubek, III, Missouri

Because I am a twenty-three year resident of the Department of Missouri, thirteen years of which I lived in the City of St. Louis, it was a great honor to be appointed as National Chaplain on the final day, August 28th, of the eighty-fifth American Legion National Convention. As it had been a considerably long time since The American Legion held a national convention in the American city of its birth, it was indeed a high privilege for a Missouri Legionnaire who had served as the 11th/12th District (the City of St. Louis) Legion Chaplain, as well as a five-time state Chaplain for the Department of Missouri, The American Legion to receive an appointment to be the National Chaplain. I am deeply indebted and extend a humble word of thanksgiving to National Commander John A. Brieden, III for this opportunity.

My theme for this year has been "Remember!" Remember the men and women who currently stand in harm's way fighting the "war on terrorism." Remember those who have lost their lives both in our nation's current conflict and in all of our previous wars. Remember the families who also sacrifice so much as their loved ones wear the uniforms of our nation's Armed Forces. Remember our comrades who have gone to be with the Commander-of-us-all since their return home. We must "remember" to tell their stories so that others will know! It is our sacred duty to "remember" so they will not be forgotten!

As did my predecessor, I began my year with the opening prayer for the National Executive Committee following the closing of the 85th National Convention. Within a couple of weeks I was requested to write a prayer for the National website. The task was completed and the prayer placed on the web.

In early October I attended The American Legion national meetings and the National Executive Committee in Indianapolis, Indiana and the National Commander's Homecoming in Houston, Texas. While attending the board and committee meetings, I performed memorial services at the Past Department Commanders' luncheon, the Americanism Committee breakfast, and for the Ye STEIVOS organization of Department Adjutants. I gave the Invocation and Benediction for the NEC meeting, as well as a memorial prayer for past NEC members who had recently died and said a prayer for others who were ill and hospitalized.

At the conclusion of the NEC, I traveled to Houston, Texas along with all of the National Vice-Commanders, the National Historian and the National-Sergeant-at-Arms. While in Houston, I led a prayer of thanksgiving to God for both our National Commander John Brieden and National Auxiliary President Katherine Morris and said the benediction following the banquet in their honor. The American Legion Auxiliary National Chaplain prayed the Invocation. The Department of Texas treated us royally and should be commended. I enjoyed accompanying the National Commander on two of the scheduled tours.

In late October I once again traveled to Indianapolis to host the Department Chaplains

Conference. I invited both the Auxiliary National Chaplain Anna Fournier and the S.A.L. National Chaplain Thomas Wigmore to co-host the conference. I had previously made arrangements with Robert Caudell and Marty Justis to line up speakers who would lead training workshops for new Department Chaplains as well as continuing education for returning Chaplains. The presentations were excellent. I hosted a banquet for the Chaplains with my two sons in attendance. It is a memory I will savor for a lifetime! Prior to leaving for home I was given the task of writing a holiday article for The American Legion Dispatch. It was a wonderful chance to encourage Legionnaires to attend their respective houses of worship giving thanks to the Creator for all the blessings we Americans experience. Assignment completed.

From March 7th thru 10th, I attended the Washington D.C. Conference of the American Legion. On March 9th, I was invited to the Ye STEIVOS breakfast praying the Invocation and Benediction. Latter in the day, I visited the Hill with other Legionnaires calling on my two state Senators. The next day, March 10th, at the request of U.S. Rep Roy Blunt, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives, invited me be the Chaplain of the Day" opening a session of the House with prayer. What an honor! I was eventually sent a video of the experience. Later that day, I said a prayer at the National Commander's Luncheon honoring the television series "JAG." We also were visited by Senator Hillary Clinton.

I attended the National Spring Conference performing chaplain duties during the NEC meeting, May 5th and 6th. National Commander Brieden invited me to attend his National Commander's Dinner and head table reception honoring the National Executive Committee. I, of course, prayed the Invocation and Benediction.

Memorial Day Weekend 2004 found me back in Washington, D.C. for the dedication of the National World War II Memorial. What an awesome experience, to be part of history! On Saturday morning, May 29th, I was privileged to host a prayer breakfast and lead a Memorial Service at the Mayflower Renaissance Hotel. I was assisted in the service by the National Chaplains of both Legion Auxiliary and the S.A.L. There were approximately 500 people present. Shortly after the conclusion of the breakfast and memorial service I accompanied all of the National Officers to the World War II Memorial site on the National Mall for the dedication. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity to participate in the historical event. It was great to hear the music, the speakers and the President, George W. Bush. I had attended the Memorial Dedication against the wishes of my doctor as I was scheduled for heart surgery. It simply was not my nature to stay away from this once-in-a-lifetime event. Our American Legion family took very, very good care of me!

The month of June found me traveling to three different hospitals with three different cardiologists enduring three surgical attempts to place stints into arteries going into my heart. The third attempt was finally successful. I spent most of July recovering.

I attended the Department of Missouri State Convention in Joplin, Missouri on July 15 though July 18. During the convention I was invited to attend the Department Commander's Honored Guests' Luncheon as an "Honored Guest." I closed the luncheon with prayer, as the Department Chaplain had opened it. During the year I attended both the Fall and Spring Department Conferences where my presence was acknowledged by my peers. I love this department and my comrades!

I attended the 86th American Legion National Convention in Nashville, TN, August 28 to September 2. There I will hosted The American Legion Chaplains Breakfast and gave the memorial address at the Patriotic Religious Service continuing my theme of "Remember!" At the convention, I brought greetings to the National Americanism Commission and the Commission on Children and Youth, was initiated into ANAVICUS at their breakfast meeting, prayed the Invocation and Benediction at the Past Department

Commanders Club luncheon, and attended the National Commander's Banquet and reception. I looked forward to Nashville with both joy and sadness. Joy over the service and comradeship we will share; sadness at the conclusion of what has been a wonderful, but exceptionally quick, year!

I have great admiration and appreciation for Marty Justis, Robert Caudell, their staff and all of the staff at our Washington, D.C. office. They really made this a wonderful year! My love and gratitude go out to all of my American Legion family, especially in the Department of Missouri who love and support me though I do not deserve it. I come from an American Legion family; I am raising an American Legion family; I am proud to be a member of The American Legion and its family. I have had a remarkably incredible year with memories so few can experience. I thank God for that and for The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of The American Legion. May God bless each and every member. May God bless and protect the President of the United States, the men and women who serve in our government, and, most especially, those who now serve in harm's way to defend our precious freedoms! May God continue to bless America! Amen!

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIAN
Fae Casper, Georgia

Thank you to John Brieden, National Commander 2004-2005, for appointing me as the National Historian. All five Vice Commanders (Fang A. Wong, NE Region; Michael Helm, Midwest Region; Todd White, Western Region; Richard Denbow; Central Region, and Clinton Thompson, SE Region), Chaplain William Doubek, Missouri; Sergeant-At-Arms Raymond Wildman, and Historian were installed in ceremonies held during the NEC meeting immediately after the closing of the National Convention on August 28, 2003. As a veteran of over 22 years military service in the Women's Army Corp and the United States Army and duty stations all over the United States, it was a proud moment for me to return to one of my former duty stations, St. Louis, for this appointment.

For me the highlight of the year was the dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC on Memorial Day. This Memorial honors the 16 million who served in all of the armed forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all those who served on the home front. An estimated 315,000 were in attendance with The American Legion supporting fundraisers to either send or accompany WWII veterans on this special trip. In Georgia the Department raised $20,000 to sponsor over 20 veterans and one town, Canton, Georgia, had a one-day fundraiser raising over $5,000 that allowed them to host a busload. Growing up I had heard of the special togetherness that all Americans exhibited during WWII and at this dedication ceremony that spirit was truly shown. So many in attendance were physically handicapped but that did not deter their spirit. Oxygen tanks, wheelchairs, canes, walkers—all were seen. Everybody making sure that everyone was taken care of seemed to be the pattern of the weekend. Negative words were not heard. Everywhere I went I felt that special feeling of caring for each other was in evidence. What a great experience! What a legacy these veterans left us!

This year has been one of many honors and also one of many responsibilities. One of the first responsibilities of the National Historian was to oversee the judging of all History books entered into the National Competition. This competition was held in October in Indianapolis 46 entries were judged by 40 judges. The winners were: One Year Department Narrative Department of South Dakota; One Year Department Yearbook/Scrapbook Department of Ohio; One Year Post Narrative Samuel G. Cooke Post 267, Columbus, Georgia; and One Year Post Yearbook/Scrapbook Harris-Dennis Post 151, Mallette, South Dakota. James Fratello was elected as President of (NADHAL) for the 2004-2005 year.

Outgoing President of the National Association of Department Historians of The American Legion (NADHAL), Nellie Debaker, hosted a banquet recognizing the National Historian and all historians in attendance for their work in making the contest a success.

As the National Historian I participated in many meetings and workshops including, but not limited to, Veteran's Day, Pearl Harbor, and POW/MIA ceremonies including many functions in my home in Georgia. Our local Cable TV did a special one-hour special for Veterans Day where I was interviewed as the featured guest. WABE-AM radio, Atlanta, also requested an interview for their "Morning Program" about veterans. I spoke at the Fall and Spring Meetings in Indianapolis and attended the 44th Annual Washington Conference in March. My theme for this year was "Histories Are Important."

An additional honor was an invitation to participate in the North Carolina Legion College as an instructor speaking about the importance of keeping histories. One important point is that a history can be pictorial, narrative or a combination and that not all histories have to be for competition. The important point is to keep some type of history of individual Posts. When addressing the National Executive Committee at the Spring Meetings a recommendation was made to include History Book training at the National Leadership Information Conferences. This recommendation was approved and a lesson plan is in the works.

National Commander John Brieden's Homecoming was held in Houston, Texas and featured trips to the Space Center and also to Commander Brieden's hometown of Denham where we had a tour of Blue Bell Ice Cream factory. Commander Brieden visited Georgia in late January 2004 and I participated as part of the Official Traveling Party.

The National Historian's luncheon will be held at the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee on Saturday, August 28th. The featured speaker is Linda Barnickel, Nashville Public Library, representing the Veterans History Project sponsored by The Library of Congress. This is a special call to all who served in the military or supported war efforts as civilians during World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars to share their personal stories and experiences. This will document the many faces of patriotism and capture the many different stories of America's veterans.

As the end of my year approaches my hope for the future is to further the word on the importance of documenting our history. It has been an honor to serve as the National Historian this year and I look forward to continuing to serve The American Legion and the veterans of the United States for many years to come, especially in an organization where Commander Brieden's theme is to "makes a difference."

NATIONAL JUDGE ADVOCATE
P. B. Onderdonk, Jr., Maryland

Contracts

The following Forty-Seven (47) contracts have been reviewed or prepared:

- Articles of Agreement by and between The American Legion and The American Legion National Convention Corporation of Nevada, covering the convocation of the 2007 Convention of The American Legion in the City of Reno, State of Nevada, has been executed.
- A Memorandum of Agreement by and between The American Legion and National Veterans Legal Services Program, whereby National Veterans Legal Services will provide consultations, informal training of Department Service Officers, BVA staff and claims/representatives, case work review, briefings on proposed changes in law and regulations and assistance in methods for prompt adjudication of veterans' appeal cases.

- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and AdoptaPlatoon (AAP), whereby a link has been established to Operation Crayon referring to AAP which provides morale-lifting mail and care package support to service members deployed overseas.
- A Service agreement by and between The American Legion and Powerware Global Services, whereby Powerware Global Services replaces and services the battery in the computer room.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Data Processing Services, Inc., whereby Data Processing Services will add 15 disc drives to the computer system and create and add drives to the computer system storage capacity.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Neighborhood E-mail, whereby Neighborhood E-mail will assist in cleaning of in-house data base and E-mail files.
- A Service Agreement by and between The American Legion and Fuller Engineering Service Corporation, whereby Fuller Engineering will provide maintenance on the Liebert Equipment in the computer room.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Dell Marketing L.P., whereby The American Legion will market the Dell Federal Member Computer Discount Purchase Program to its various associations, employees, members and affiliates.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Bally Total Fitness, whereby Bally Total Fitness will offer its services and products under The American Legion's Family Benefit Plan to its employees, members of the Organization and affiliates.
- An Agreement by and between The American Legion and Norlight Telecommunications, Inc., whereby Norlight Telecommunications, Inc. will provide a dedicated internet port and service of same for The American Legion's computer system.
- Housing contract between The American Legion and Marymount University to provide for lodging and food service for American Legion Boys Nation held on July 23-31, 2004.
- A Memorandum of Understanding by and between The American Legion and The United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), whereby The American Legion will assist the United States Army Recruiting Command to improve the recruiting environment for Army recruiters and USAREC will provide information regarding American Legion activities and special community events to local units, bulletins and newsletters.
- Eight (8) Baseball Regional Tournament Contracts and
- the Contract for The American Legion World Series.
- Two (2) List Protection Agreements by and between The
- American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass-mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

  Barton-Cotton-Famous Hospitality, Inc.

  Association Group Insurance Administrators (AGIA)
- Twenty-five (25) Subcontractor Standard List Protection Agreements by and between The American Legion and the following companies have been executed to cover the protection of magnetic tapes used for mass mailings to the general membership of The American Legion:

  Marsh Affinity Group

Sport Graphics, Inc.
Resource One
JH Marketing Services
TN Marketing
Treloar & Associates
Quincy Sun
Moore Wallace Response Marketing
G E Financial Assurance
Cole Managed Vision Care
E H Direct
Pierce & Company
LTC Associates
Aegon Direct Marketing Services, Inc.
Bankers Life & Casualty Company
Careington International
Colonial Penn Life Insurance Company
Dataquik Corporation
Mailing Services of Pittsburgh
TransContinental Direct
Webcraft LLC dba Vertis, Inc.
Regulus Integrated Solutions
Quebecor World Digest
Versatile Card Technology
CD-COM Systems Midwest, Inc.

Litigation

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF FAYETTE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

ESTATE OF LISA R. MICKENS, by and Through JoAnn Mickens and William Mickens; and WILLIAM MICKENS and JOANN MICKENS, Parents and Survivors of LISA R. MICKENS, Deceased,	)	CIVIL DIVISION
Plaintiffs,	)	No.: 1112 of 1999 GD
VAUGHN STEVENSON, an adult Individual; AMERICAN LEGION #762, A Corporation t/d/b/a AMERICAN LEGION; and ROSE FAIDLEY t/d/b/a/ THE SHOWBOAT,	)	
Defendants.	)	

This is a wrongful death case in which Plaintiff alleges Lisa Mickens attended a bar or lounge called "The Showboat" and American Legion Post No. 762 and Defendant Stevenson

entered Post No. 762 with a 9mm handgun. He was supposedly already visibly intoxicated yet was served more alcohol. Plaintiffs claim Lisa Mickens and Stevenson left the Post together and Stevenson allegedly shot Lisa Mickens. The Complaint was served on The American Legion but contains absolutely no allegations against the National Organization. Despite this defect, the case was referred to the insurance company who retained counsel. We have agreed that The American Legion will not file an answer. The case is continuing against the Post. Despite no action by plaintiff and the fact that discovery has shown no liability, plaintiff refuses to dismiss and the court has not granted summary judgment. There has been no meaningful activity in this case for two years. The insurance company has advised they are closing their file.

ANNA C. GILKEY	)	Superior Court of California
	)	County of Orange
Plaintiff	)	Central Justice Center
	)	
vs.	)	
	)	Case No. 00CC09989
	)	
CITY OF ANAHEIM;	)	
ANAHEIM IN '99	)	
CONVENTION	)	
CORPORATION; THE	)	
AMERICAN LEGION AND	)	
DOES 1 TO 50	)	

This is a personal injury case wherein the plaintiff, Anna C. Gilkey, alleges in her complaint that while attending the National Convention in Anaheim, California she slipped and fell due to water on the floor. The case is pending.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT, NINTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR
ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA
CASE NO.: CIO 99-2206

MARY KABASAKALIAN,
Plaintiff,
Vs.
ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
Defendant.

This is a slip and fall case against the Orange County Florida Convention Center because plaintiff allegedly tripped over a cord at the Orlando National Convention. The defense was tendered to The American Legion pursuant to the lease for the hall. The matter has been referred to our insurance company.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

ROBERT E. POLES, PLAINTIFF IN FORMA PAUPERIS
V.

THE AMERICAN LEGION: DOCKET NUMBER:
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS 1:01CV05963
DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
SIXTH DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA
GEORGE T. CORNISH POST 292
And for each listed above:
COMMANDER 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996
JUDGE ADVOCATE 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996
ADJUTANT 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES 2001, 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996

This case was filed by an individual who attempted to change the operation of his Post. Many letters to the effect have been exchanged over the years. Mr. Poles refused to believe that the National Organization had no jurisdiction and could not solve his problem. Eventually, disciplinary charges were brought against Mr. Poles. As far as we know, he failed to appeal to the Department claiming that the National Organization had to solve his problem. Since the National Organization has no jurisdiction, Mr. Poles was advised to appeal to his Department. He refused to do so and has now sued including every member of the Executive Committee of the Post, Department and National Organization and a number of officers. The case has been filed but to date no summons has been issued. There is no jurisdiction or venue in New York City or in the Federal Courts in New York. The District Court dismissed the case. Despite the fact there was no service, Mr. Poles appealed. His appeal was dismissed. He filed for reconsideration and it was denied by the Court. The case is closed.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO

BEVERLY EDWARDS,	:	
Plaintiff,	:	
v.	:	Case No. AO20ll06
HARTFORD LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY,et al.,	:	Judge Cartolano
Defendants.	:	

Despite the fact that the premiums of a lapsed policy weren't paid, the plaintiff contends that she was the beneficiary of a life insurance policy issued by Hartford Life Insurance Company as part of The American Legion Insurance program. The insurance company is defending The American Legion.

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE
DISTRICT OF VERMONT

LEANN HASKELL Plaintiff	)	
	)	Civil Action Docket No. 2:01-CV-324
AMERICAN LEGION, BALLARD-HOBART POST 36; AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF VERMONT, INC.; AND THE AMERICAN LEGION (NATIONAL ORGANIZATION), Defendants	)	

Plaintiff claims The American Legion, the Department of Vermont and Ballard-Hobart Post 36 failed to give her her COBRA rights under the Post's health plan and also claims a failure to pay health benefits and a violation of ERISA, the Americans with Disabilities Act, several Vermont laws and intentional infliction of emotion distress because the Post terminated her employment.

Plaintiff's attorney sent a letter asking The American Legion to waive service of process and voluntary enter the case to defend. Since the Post is independent and plaintiff did not work for The American Legion, this request was refused. Plaintiff's attorney was advised of the law, the Post's independence and that The American Legion would seek fees from the attorney for a frivolous and harassing case if The American Legion were served. This occurred in October, 2001. To date, we have not received service of process.

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COLE COUNTY, MISSOURI

SEAN WEBER, Plaintiff	)	
v.	)	Case No. 02CV324813
AMERICAN LEGION BASEBALL DEPARTMENT OF MISSOURI, INC. And AMERICAN LEGION AMERICANISM COMMISSION, Defendants.	)	

This case started at the end of July when an American Legion baseball player desired to change teams in contravention of the Rules. The player filed suit for an injunction to require The American Legion to allow him to play for the team he desired even though it was totally against the rules. He is also eligible to play for his former team in 2003.

The initial Trial Judge is up for reelection and allowed the case to proceed. After much

discussion between the plaintiff, the receiving or "illegal" team on these facts and the Department of Missouri, it was agreed the case would be dismissed. However, another judge, who is due to retire, reinstated it. We are waiting for a trial date.

C.A. No. 00-16423

IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

MICHAEL A. NEWDOW,	:	
Plaintiff-Appellant,	:	
	:	D.C. No. CIV. 00-0495
U. S. CONGRESS,	:	(E.D. Calif., Sacramento
et al.,	:	
Defendants-Appellees.	:	

On July 30, 2002, The American Legion filed a request to intervene and be heard in the en banc argument that has not yet been scheduled. Our brief was filed August 19, 2002. Copies were distributed at the National Convention.

The original panel ruled the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance violated the establishment clause of the United States Constitution. Our brief demolishes the flawed rational of the panel. Other amici include 48 state attorneys general and two territorial attorneys general. The rehearing has not been scheduled yet. The Ninth Circuit denied our motion to intervene after having us brief the merits, which is a total insult and attempt to cost us more. The Ninth Circuit then upheld its panel. The case has been appealed to the United States Supreme Court and we have joined forty-nine (49) state attorneys' general and petitioned to become an amicus curiae (the Attorney General of California represents a party to the appeal making it all fifty (50) state attorneys' general on our side). We filed a brief on the merits. The Supreme Court reversed because the plaintiff had no standing. The case is over.

Note: Now the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania has ruled that a Pennsylvania Statute providing for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance violates the United States Constitution because it unreasonably interferes with the "values and philosophies" certain schools wish to instill in their students. (Apparently, patriotism is not well thought of by this judge or the schools.) The case is being appealed. We will watch it closely to see if we need to become an amici here too.

STATE OF MINNESOTA	DISTRICT COURT
COUNTY OF GOODHUE	FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT
Marcus Robert Urban, a minor	Court File NO.
Michael Thomas Urban, a minor,	
And Brett Ryan, a minor,	
By and through their parent and	
Natural guardian, Todd Michael Urban,	
And Todd Michael Urban, Individually,	

Plaintiffs,

v.

The American Legion and its subdivisions; and
The American Legion, Department of Minnesota

This is a dram shop case, which arises out of an automobile accident that occurred in Goodhue County, Minnesota. According to the complaint, the plaintiffs claim they were riding in an automobile that was struck by another vehicle driven by Orvin Joel Rolland who allegedly was illegally operating his vehicle while under the influence of alcohol that allegedly had been sold to him by Pine Island Liquor and American Legion Post No. 184.

Counsel has been obtained and the defense is proceeding for the account of the insurance company. The plaintiffs' attorney has been misusing discovery as a club to harass and the Court allowed it. Once the Court read our discovery motions things started to change. A Motion For Summary Judgment was filed and granted. The plaintiffs' law firm is now contesting costs and will appeal.

SURROGATE'S COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NASSAU

Proceeding for Letters of Administration,
Estate of FILE NO. 328210

FRANK J. CARELLA,
Deceased

The American Legion was named as a Remainderman in a Trust created by Frank J. Carella, deceased. The decedent's will made no provisions for his widow, Pasqualina Carella. She filed a Notice of Election as a widow to take a life estate despite the trust with an Order to Show Cause with a Temporary Restraining Order and a Petition to be appointed Administratrix of the Estate.

The American Legion entered its appearance and has petitioned the Court for an order determining the effect of the purported election and determination of the full value of the property. The case is pending.

No. 2003-C1-11689

ONETA MCCLAIN, Plaintiff

IN THE DISTRICT COURT 285TH
JUDICIAL DISTRICT
BEXAR COUNTY, TEXAS

AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS,
And AMERICAN LEGION and TEXAS NATIONAL
CONVENTION CORPORATION OF THE AMERICAN
LEGION and AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT
OF TEXAS and STAGE TECH, INC., Defendants

During the convention parade at the 83rd National Convention of The American Legion held in San Antonio, Texas, the Plaintiff allegedly fell from an elevated reviewing stand and

claims she was an invitee on the reviewing stand and that the handrail or safety rail along the edge of the reviewing stand was defectively designed and constructed which caused her to fall and suffer physical injuries to her back and body in general. The case has been turned over to our insurance company and an appearance has been entered. The case is pending.

BARBARA WILFONG RIGGS & TRACEY RIGGS	:	SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY LAW DIVISION: MIDDLESEX COUNTY
Plaintiffs,	:	Docket No.:MID-l-8572-03
	:	Civil Action
v.	:	
THE AMERICAN LEGION, CREIGHTON: MAYES A.L. POST 312, INC. & JOHN DOES 1-10 (a fictitious Name for corporations or Persons presently unknown)	:	
Defendants.	:	

This case grows out of an alleged fight in Creighton Mayes American Legion Post No. 312. Barbara Wilfong Riggs, a/k/a Barbara Wilfong and/or Barbara Riggs, alleges she sustained severe and permanent injuries to her person which necessitated hospitalization, medical care, and deprived of her then employment and employment opportunities.

Plaintiff, Tracey Riggs, is the lawful husband of the plaintiff Barbara Wilfong Riggs and claims he was deprived of the services, society, comfort and consortium of his lawful wife, Barbara Wilfong Riggs.

The American Legion filed a Motion for Summary Judgment and the Court dismissed this action and all claims pleaded against The American Legion with prejudice.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
IN AND FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY

ROBIN THOMAS,		
Plaintiff,		No.03-2-05188-9
v.		
THE AMERICAN LEGION, an Organization; HACKETT-LARSEN POST 163 AMERICAN LEGION, an organization; JOHN and JANE DOE ONE; JOHN and JANE DOE TWO; JOHN and JANE DOE THREE;		
Defendants.		

This is a personal injury case wherein the plaintiff, Robin Thomas, alleges in her

complaint that after being an invitee at Hackett Larsen American Legion Post No. 163, she exited the building and slipped and fell due to the change in elevation of the sidewalk at the end of the defendants' building. The accident allegedly occurred in the early hours of January 1st or late December 31st. Filings by our attorneys caused plaintiff to drop the National Organization.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF BELMONT COUNTY, OHIO

JOHN E. WATSON and CATHERINE A. WATSON,	*	
Plaintiffs,	*	Case No. 04 CV 160
DONALD G. WEHR, THE AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS, THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF OHIO, And AMERICAN LEGION POST 168	*	

This is a dram shop case. The plaintiff John E. Watson claims he was driving a vehicle that was struck by another vehicle driven by Defendant Donald G. Wehr who allegedly was illegally operating his vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. According to the complaint, Defendant Donald G. Wehr allegedly consumed alcoholic beverages at American Legion Post 168 just prior to the accident. The plaintiff claims injuries to various parts of his body, some of which injuries are reasonably certain to be permanent in nature. Plaintiff Catherine A. Watson claims a loss of consortium with her husband. The American Legion hired its own counsel, and the insurance company hired a different lawyer. The case is pending.

Other Legal Matters

There are a number of other legal proceedings in which The American Legion has been contacted for discovery purposes, which are not part of or named in the particular cause and a number of cases are in the beginning stages but not yet filed. The National Judge Advocate has rendered 957 written opinions on questions which have been submitted by the several Departments and/or Posts of The American Legion, National Officers, staff members and individual members of our organization. These opinions involved matters legal, such as contracts, probate matters, federal tax questions, torts, insurance matters, Articles of Incorporation, civil rights statutes, retirement benefits under the law and other matters of a legal nature; problems concerning the interpretation and construction of the National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion, policy matters, many of which matters required a great deal of legal research.

In each instance, when appropriate, a copy of the opinion rendered was furnished to each of the following so that they would be acquainted with the decision affecting their Department; National Executive Committeeman, Department Commander, Department Adjutant, and the Department Judge Advocate of the Department involved.

Many oral opinions were also rendered to the National Officers, National Commission Chairmen, to Department Officers, and to staff Directors of the national organization upon subjects involving mat ers legal, financial, administrative and policy.

There were 4 written opinions rendered during the year to the National Secretary of the American Legion Auxiliary, in response to queries submitted to her for determination by me.

The National Judge Advocate has also rendered oral advice on matters legal and administrative to the National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary on many occasions during the past year.

The American Legion Magazine

The National Judge Advocate in accordance with established policy, has reviewed all manuscripts of articles destined for future publication in *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch*, for the purpose of expunging statements or materials questionable in character, contained therein which might subject The American Legion to a suit in libel. To date 300 manuscripts have been reviewed and appropriate comments in connection therewith were transmitted, when necessary, to the Publisher or Editor of *The American Legion Magazine*.

Firing Line

At the 1955 National Convention of The American Legion it was concluded that all statements made in each issue of the *Firing Line* should be documented and that the National Judge Advocate should approve each issue prior to publication in order to protect The American Legion from actions in libel. In accordance therewith all issues have been reviewed and either approved by the National Judge Advocate prior to publication, or rejected in whole or in part, with appropriate comments.

The American Legion Retirement Plan for Employees of the National Headquarters and Subordinate Groups Thereof

In accordance with the requirements of law, The American Legion has filed all necessary returns, reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2003 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Retirement Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also prepared the Summary Annual Report for The American Legion Retirement Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

Employees' Salary Savings (401(k)) Plan

In accordance with the provisions of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA) The American Legion has filed all of the necessary Annual Return Reports and allied documents for the calendar year 2003 with the Internal Revenue Service in connection with The American Legion Employees' Salary Savings 401(k) Plan. The office of the National Judge Advocate also reviewed the Summary Annual Report for the Employees' Salary Savings Plan and arranged for the distribution thereof as required by law.

Parliamentary Duties

The National Judge Advocate attended the past National Convention of The American Legion and all meetings of the National Executive Committee and has served both bodies in the capacity of National Parliamentarian.

Other Duties

The National Judge Advocate functions as Secretary for Haynes & Partners Communications, Inc. and attended all but one of the board meetings of said corporation and caused the minutes of each meeting to be prepared and distributed. The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel on matters involving to date, contracts, labor issues, real estate law, postal regulations, corporate organizations and insurance.

The National Judge Advocate also functions as counsel for and a director of The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. In that capacity, the National Judge Advocate reviews contracts

such as the trust for the flag essay scholarship fund and attends board meetings.

The Office of the National Judge Advocate files required charitable registrations and reports to allow The American Legion National Organization to solicit funds in the states with charitable solicitation registration laws. To date 25 registrations and reports have been filed. Some counties even attempt to require registrations and reports.

Meetings of the National Retirement Committee and Salary Savings Committee

The National Judge Advocate, as a member of The National Retirement Committee of National Headquarters, The American Legion, and Chairman of the Employee's Salary Savings Committee, has attended and participated in the meetings held by these committees during the past year.

I have also, in response to requests, drafted legal and other documents for the use of National Officers of The American Legion and Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

During the past year I have met with and attended numerous conferences with officials of outside corporations and the government for the purpose of representation or for the rendering of advice and guidance for and on behalf of The American Legion on matters legal and administrative. In conclusion, the National Judge Advocate wishes to thank all National Officers, Department Officials, and members of the National Executive Committee for the valuable assistance and cooperation extended to him during the past year.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, Executive Director

Three major responsibilities are assigned to the Executive Director, whose office is located in the National Headquarters, Indianapolis:

During temporary absences of the National Adjutant from The American Legion National Headquarters, he acts for him. He additionally performs such duties as may be assigned to him by the National Adjutant to assist in meeting the responsibilities of that office.

He is in charge of the Administrative Services Division, which has the following divisions under that responsibility: Human Resources, Maintenance, Library, and the E. A. Blackmore Museum.

He serves on the Personnel Committee, Publications Board, HPC Board of Directors, and the IT Committee.

The Administrative Services Division also provides all secretarial assistance to the executive officers of The American Legion. All Division Directors resident at the Indianapolis National Headquarters report to the Executive Director.

Mail
June 1, 2003 through May 31, 2004

Incoming Letters (distributed to Divisions for processing)	973,024
Incoming Parcels	8,420
Outgoing Letters/Parcels (Exclusive of National Emblem Sales)	9,836,330

Freight and Express
June 1, 2000 through May 31, 2001

Out (cartons)	2,376
Out (pounds)	159,109
UPS (in)	2,507

UPS (out) 8,043

LIBRARY and MUSEUM
Library
Joseph J. Hovish, New York, Librarian

The mission of The American Legion Library is to provide an information storage and retrieval system for The American Legion.

Indexing of documents continues. Resolutions have been indexed back to 1948. Staff have made a concerted effort to increase the number of issues in *The American Legion Magazine* and *The Dispatch*. Fourteen years of the magazine have been thoroughly indexed and a continuous run from 1989 should be completed in the next year.

Indexing of text takes on new meaning if the users within the organization have access. This should take place next year when a network version of the database is purchased.

Without our donations, our collection could not be a valuable as it is. We have one donor in particular who has stood out with his very generous contribution. Robert H. Barnes from Battle Creek, Michigan continues to contribute. He has sent his donations both financially and in the form of books and other artifacts.

A number of researchers made extensive visits to the Library. Areas of research involved the background of the development of Americanism between World War I and World War II; the history of the Boys State program; and The American Legion's influence in national security between the wars.

Significant Gifts to the National Headquarters Library

Check in the amount of $100.00 donated by NADHAL for the purchase of books.

$1,200.00 donated by William Thomas Mullinax to the Museum/Library account.

Videos and DVDs: Billy O'Reilly, *Who's Looking Out For You; W*orld War; *Cross of Iron, Stalingrd; Schindler's List; The Battle For Midway; Battle Of The Bulge; The Bunker; Patton; All Quiet On The Western Front; Tora! Tora! Tora!; and The Night Of The Generals.* Books: *Postal Service Guide to U.S. Stamps;* and *United States Air Force Yearbook* donated by Robert H. Barnes.

Ainsworth Pearl Harbor World War II donated by the author, Tracy H. Norris.

No Greater Glory donated by the author, Dan Kurzman.

WW II Draftee donated by the author, William H. Bennett.

Book of *American Legion Convention Badges* donated by the author, Peter J. Eisert.

History of Merle Reed Post 124 donated by the author, Lon Chaney.

Memory Book To The Dedication Of The Dole Institute of Politics donated by Donald D. Dalquest.

A Handsome Guy donated by the author, Phillip R. Dolan.

History of Frank B. Bartlett Post 7 donated by Dennis P. Cortes.

History of Dorsey-Liberty Post No. 14 donated by Alan C. Fisher.

The Route donated by the author, Pragmacio Rivera.

Veterans and History tapes and DVDs donated by Gerald A. Quinn.

Video: *At Home With Honor* donated by the producer, Raymond W. Gimmler.

Ballads of Honor CDs donated by Frank G. Gross.

Honoring The Service Men And Women of WWII From The Town Of Cohasset, Massachusetts donated by Thomas W. Wigmore.

Rogue Wave donated by Scott Price.

The Agusan Guerrillas Attack Of The Japanese-Held Capital Town of Butuan, Agusan, Mindanao, Philippines and *The Nasipit, Agusan Landing Mindanao, Philippines*

donated by author Ignacio F. Palad and William J. Kelly.

Correspondence Received and Files	3,506
Bulletins, Reports, etc. Received and Files	205
Periodicals Received	6,404
Books, Pamphlets and *The American Legion Magazine* cataloged	1,894
Correspondence Written by National Historian	485
Correspondence Written by the Librarian	325
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Mailed	710
Prominent Legionnaire Questionnaires Received	301
Photographs Indexed	3,016
Follow-ups of Correspondence	90
Items Microfilm Added to Stock	7,004
Email	16632

Museum
Joseph J. Hovish, Curator

The Emil A. Blackmore Museum continues to be visited by individuals and groups.

Once again, we thank our donors for their contributions to the collection. Significant objects added in the past year, with the donors' names, include the following:

United Sates Postal Service American flag book of stamps; United Kingdom Task Force Falkland Islands Postal Stamp; Concorde coin; lithograph of "Faith, Hope, and Charity" by Stan Stokes; lithograph of Spitfire 1's of No. 610 (County of Chester) Squadron 279/500 and F-100D Super Sabre 56-300, autographed by Raymond Toliver; First Day Covers of Isle and Man, Nigel Mansell and U.S. and Mexico 1998; Commemorative Postal Covers: Evacuation From Greece; Escape From Yugoslavia; First Day of Issue of Christmas Stamps, November 15, 1983; London-Victoria Air Race July 1971; Operation 'Cerberus'; 50th Anniversary of the king's Cup Air Race; No. 70 Squadron Royal Air Force; Blue Eagles; The Shelburne Line; Escape In A Heinkel 111; No. 35 Squadron Royal Air Force; No,. 203 Squadron Royal Air Force; Jersey Fairey Fox and Bahamas 75th Anniversary Royal Air Force covers; Royal Air Force patches and commemorative postal covers: Great Britain—Supersonic Flight; Jindivik, No. 7 Squadron; No. 43 Squadron; No. 70 Squadron; No. 27 Squadron; Major George Herbert Scott; Barbados; No. 111 Squadron; Jersey—Air Marshal W. A. Bishop; No. 320 Squadron; Isle of Man—The Supermarine Spitfire; St Kitts—No. 84 Squadron; United States—United States Air Force 50th Anniversary; World Championship 1977; Col. C. A. Lindbergh; First Day Cover of First Wings; First Day Covers of Flt Lt. A. W. Beauchamp Procter and No. 1(F) Squadron; Lewis & Clark print "The Corps of Discovery"; First Day Covers of 100 Squadron of Royal Air Force; Royal Visit by His Royal Highness Prince Philip The Duke of Edinburgh to the Falkland Islands, 4 March 1991; embroidered Royal Air Force Eagle Squadron Patches; First Day Covers of First Battle of Ypes; Royal Air Force Helicopter Squadron; Royal Air Force, Harland Point; The Queen's Flight, Harare; Royal Aircraft Establishment, Lilanbedr, Gwynedd; and Group Captain W.S.O. Randle, Nieuwendam, Holland; International Aircraft Silhouettes Deck of Playing Cards; U.S. Postal Stamps of Kitty Hawk; and First Day of Closure of Royal Air Force Andover and The Poachers donated by Robert H. Barnes.

A check in the amount of $4,000 donated by Robert H. Barnes to be used for the Museum.

Band uniform of The American Legion, circa 1940 donated by Thomas C. Duclos.

1938 American Legion Membership Card donated by Catherine J. Lucas.

Photograph of 1942 National Convention donated by David J. Pfennings.

Courvoisier Souvenir bottle from 1937 banquet in Paris, France donated by Robert Bowen.

One hand embroidered American Legion badge; American Legion Rivera Post No. 3 Independence Day Celebration, July 4, 1929, Palm Beach Casino Cannes; newspaper clipping of independence Day in Cannes, July 5, 1929; Thanksgiving Dinner program, Paris, France, November 22, 1945; Legion cap from Post No. 3; *Guide For Leave Troops*; and two photographs taken in Cannes donated by Robert Ragsdale.

Convention Commemorative bottles: 2 bottles from 1969—50th Anniversary; 1972—Chicago; 1973—Hawaii; 1973—Miami Beach; 1975—Minnesota; 2 bottles from 1979—Dallas; 1980—Boston; 1981—Honolulu; 1982—Chicago; 1968—Centennial BPO-Elks; 1985—New Orleans; 1978—New Orleans; 1977—Denver; and 1971—Houston donated by Robert Marr, Sr..

James N. Lynch's Certificate of Appreciation for War Service; a copy of *The Western Front;* and *The War Ration Book Four* donated by Betty Sangsuwangul.

20 pieces of various World War II material donated by Bernice E. Radakovits.

Military medals donated by Penny Carothers.

Photographs taken during the era of National Commander Preston along with photographs of Normandy donated by A. G. Terry Shaffer.

Dish exclusively designed by Tiffany & Co. for Federal Express Corp. to commemorate the World War II Memorial dedication in Washington, D.C. donated by Frederick W. Smith.

INTERNET OPERATIONS

Ronald E. Brooks, Tennessee, Executive Director

The American Legion's Internet Operations group resides in the Member Benefits Division, located at Legion Building #2 on the site of the former Fort Benjamin Harrison. The American Legion web site www.legion.org provides the organization with an efficient and effective means in which to communicate with Legionnaires, the veteran community and the general public.

The American Legion's web site provides over 5,000 web pages of information relating to the organization and is divided into easy to navigate areas. Legion.org receives over 120 thousand unique visits every month, and this number continues to grow. Some of the more popular areas include: WWII Dedication, Flag Education, Legion Baseball, *The American Legion Magazine*, and Veterans Affairs, to name a few. The Internet Operations staff is also responsible for the management and maintenance of the Citizens Flag Alliance web site, the Child Welfare Foundation site, the Legion Kids site, the National American Legion Press Association, and recently began creating web sites for Departments and Post throughout The American Legion community.

The Internet Operations staff is responsible for reading all incoming e-mail sent to the organization via the web site and forwarding them to the appropriate divisions for response. Tens of thousands of e-mails were read and distributed this year, and that number continues to grow.

As the role of the Internet and e-mail communications continues to grow in our society, The American Legion web site will continue to play a vital role in membership acquisition. Prospective members have a variety of options available to them depending on what they are most comfortable with. 1) Veterans can ask to sign up by sending a message to the Membership Division of National Headquarters to be billed to their home

address. 2) Veterans can print out the membership form found on the web site and mail the completed form back to National Headquarters. 3) Veterans can complete an online application (a secured form) and send it directly to National Headquarters with their credit card information. In the first six months of 2004 legion.org brought 6000 new members to The American Legion at NO additional cost. By comparison, to acquire that many members through direct mail would cost approximately $160,000 on average. The cost effectiveness is indisputable.

The Internet services area continues to improve the Web Site, adding features such as an archive of press releases, a coloring contest for kids, and several new sites to support specific programs, such Impact 04. Thousands of e-cards were sent via The American Legion web site to active military and veterans worldwide during the very successful Veterans Day program.

Staff assigned to this area includes an Internet Manager, a Web Content Manager and a Web Developer.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) DIVISION
Ronald E. Brooks, Tennessee, Executive Director

The Information Technology (IT) Division Staff play a key role in the selection of all software to be used by National Headquarters staff. IT also determines and procures the hardware to be used by employees of National Headquarters and is responsible for troubleshooting and maintaining the equipment. The IT Division maintains the telecommunications that inter-connect the two Indianapolis, Indiana offices with our facility in Washington, D.C.

IT is responsible for the computer system which houses The American Legion National Headquarters membership database as well as keeping this database updated with changes to the membership—whether it be adding new members, renewing existing members, changing addresses of members or changing any other membership information. Much of this work is accomplished using a high-speed optical scanner, capable of processing in excess of 100,000 responses a day.

In conjunction with the membership database capabilities, The American Legion has invested in sophisticated list processing software, which the IT Division administers. This software ensures that all mailings are done at the lowest cost by complying with U.S. Postal Service guidelines.

The IT Division also has the capability to perform high-speed personalized laser printing. Annual membership cards, membership solicitation letters, renewal notices, return address labels for the Departments' fundraising programs and mailing labels for a variety of communications pieces are all printed by the IT Division.

AMERICANISM COMMISSION
Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., New Hampshire, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

The Americanism Commission of The American Legion was created by a recommendation adopted by the National Convention of The American Legion held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1919. It read: "We recommend the establishment of a National Americanism Commission of The American Legion whose duty it shall be to endeavor to realize in the United States the basic ideal of this Legion of 100 percent Americanism through the planning, establishment and conduct of a continuous, constructive educational system."

It is the objective of the Americanism Commission to translate Americanism precepts, principles and ideals in an understanding and practical manner to Legion Posts and other groups and individuals, including young America.

While the Americanism program consists of a broad, objective, general plan that features wide-range community service, better citizenship, youth development and counter-subversive activities, the efforts of the Americanism Commission are educational in nature and embrace these specific objectives:

- Promote understanding of the principles of democratic governmental problems, and bringing more citizens to think seriously of the duties of citizenship;
- Give sound, practical service in our communities, working to make these communities better and safer places in which to live;
- Emphasize religion, encouraging its continuation in the life of every citizen;
- Encourage education in every possible manner, presenting school awards, sponsoring and conducting oratorical contests, cooperating with education and citizenship groups, promoting proper flag etiquette and display, and sponsoring objective youth development programs;
- Do important work for the youth of America, sponsoring American Legion Baseball, the National High School Oratorical Contest, Boys State, Boys Nation, Junior Shooting Sports, Boy Scout activities and many other citizenship and objective training activities;
- Work for the assimilation of immigrants through schools of citizenship and other agencies and stand for the restriction of immigration so that this assimilation may approach perfection; and
- Combat subversive and terrorist activities, all un-American groups and activities which have for their aim the downfall of democracy in America.

Additionally, the Americanism Commission has continued to be actively involved in legislative matters affecting our way of life. Among our legislative priorities are illegal entry of aliens into this country, voluntary prayer in public buildings, bilingual education alternatives and English as the official language of the United States. The current major legislative initiative of The American Legion is the continuing efforts to effect a constitutional amendment that would give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws.

This Commission has the responsibility for supervision and coordination of two standing committees the Counter-Subversive Activities Committee and the National Committee on Education.

Following is a summary of the several programs, which are the responsibility of the Americanism Commission and have been conducted during the 2003-2004 American Legion year.

American Legion Boys State/Boys Nation

The American Legion believes that if the United States is to maintain its form of government, it must have a citizenry that has a fundamental understanding and interest in its operation. This is what the Boys State program does for the young men of our Nation. It teaches the fundamentals of American government through the state level.

It was 69 years ago that Legionnaires in the state of Illinois recognized the need for a program that would help high school boys understand and appreciate the government they were learning about in the classroom. It was a time in the history of this Nation when un-American ideas seriously threatened the future of the Nation. The whole idea of Boys State, then and now, is to show young people that beyond a doubt, our form of government is good; but its preservation depends on intelligent, informed and loyal

citizens in combination with an honest and impartial administration of government activities.

Ten years after the inception of Boys State as a program of the Legion, the National Organization recognized the need for a program similar to Boys State at the National level and in 1946, established American Legion Boys Nation. This year, The American Legion celebrated its 58th anniversary session of Boys Nation.

Both Boys State and Boys Nation are unique programs that emphasize participation and personal experience in a respective model "state" and "nation" that is complete with its governing bodies and elected officials.

Each year, more than 25,000 young Americans take part in Boys State, and through 69 years, the program has graduated well over 1,750,000 young men.

Every year, each Boys State selects two outstanding graduates to represent them at American Legion Boys Nation. In 2004 the program was again held in Washington, DC, during July, and it introduced delegates first-hand to the structure and function of the federal government.

The week of government training in the Nation's Capital combines lectures and forums with visitations to federal agencies and institutions, shrines and historical points in and about Washington, DC. Actual participation in the political process is highlighted through the week to include the organization of party conventions and the nomination and election of a Boys Nation president and vice president. In addition to federal legislators and representatives of federal agencies, American Legion officials and other leaders of national distinction participate in Boys Nation. Stephen Riley Harvell (SC) was elected President of the 58th anniversary session of Boys Nation. He joined the youth champion delegation as a guest of the National Commander at the National Convention of The American Legion in Nashville, Tennessee, August 27-31, 2004.

National High School Oratorical Contest

The American Legion has awarded over two million dollars in college scholarships since 1938 to high school students participating in its annual National High School Oratorical Contest. This program, in its 67th year, was recognized by the Federal Commission for the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution as a program of "exceptional merit." Additionally, the National Association of Secondary School Principals has placed the program on the NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities for 2004-2005.

Each contestant must give a prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution, giving emphasis to the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to his government. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant, taking not less than eight nor more than ten minutes for delivery. Each contestant must also give an assigned topic presentation on a constitutional topic (not known until the time of the contest) taking not less than three nor more than five minutes for delivery.

Funds totaling $138,000 in college scholarships are available to the fifty-four National level contestants, with the winner receiving an $18,000 scholarship. Funds for these awards are provided by The American Legion Life Insurance Committee. In addition to the scholarships awarded by the National Organization, there are scholarships awarded by intermediate organizations of The American Legion to participants in local levels of competition.

The 67th annual National Finals Contest was held at Indianapolis, Indiana, in April 2004. The three finalists were: First place—Philip Bishop, Albany, Georgia; second place—Sherif Girgis, Dover, Delaware; third place—Hannah Smith, College Grove, Tennessee.

Boys Scouts of America

The American Legion charters approximately 2,500 Scout Units in communities across the country involving more than 71,000 young people. Its commitment to the principles of Scouting dates back to the Legion's first National Convention in 1919.

The American Legion selected Garrett Martin, McMinnville, Tennessee, as its 2004 Eagle Scout of the Year. Selection was based on his outstanding religious, school, community and scouting achievements. He will receive a $10,000 scholarship from The American Legion.

Three Eagle Scouts were named runners-up for the award and each will receive a $2,500 scholarship. They are Benjamin Banwart, Shakopee, Minnesota; Christopher Jackson, Lincoln Park, New Jersey; and William "Ben" Towne, Litchfield, New Hampshire.

In addition, an estimated 4,800 certificates honoring new Eagle Scout recipients are distributed annually.

Almost one hundred American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members have received The American Legion and Scouting Square Knot award to recognize their dedication and work to assist in furthering the Scouting programs of The American Legion.

Junior Shooting Sports Program

The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program is a national Americanism program administered through Post-sponsored Junior Shooting Clubs. The purpose of the program is to provide gun safety and marksmanship training for young people and to offer a wholesome recreational activity through organized competition. The Junior Shooting Sports Program has 849 active clubs with almost 15,000 young people participating.

The fourteenth annual Junior Air Rifle National Championship was conducted August 10-15, 2004, at the Olympic Training Center range in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The tournament climaxed two rounds of postal matches which began shortly after the first of the year and involved over 1,650 entrants.

The competition was divided into two categories: precision air rifle and sporter air rifle. Medals and plaques were awarded in both categories, as well as in each of the three positions of prone, kneeling and standing.

The 2004 winners were Jennifer Pason of Milford, New Jersey (Precision) and Wesley Hess of Humble, Texas (Sporter). Both received $1,000 scholarships provided by the Sons of The American Legion.

Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship Fund

The American Legion administers the Eight and Forty National Lung and Respiratory Disease Nursing Scholarship. This scholarship, established in 1957, was created to assist Registered Nurses in securing advanced preparation for those positions in supervision, administration or teaching. These prospective positions must have a direct relationship in the areas of care and prevention as it relates to lung and respiratory diseases. The Eight and Forty, for 2004-2005, awarded twenty $3,000 scholarships to recipients in ten states for one year's study to assist in furthering their education. This brings their cumulative total for the past 47 years to 823 scholarships, totaling over $1.5 million to help eliminate personnel shortages in this important area of nursing. This scholarship program will again be offered for the 2005-06 school year.

Flag Education

The American Legion is a nationally recognized authority on the proper display of the United States Flag. Each year, thousands of letters, phone calls, and electronic mail messages are routinely answered giving factual information on the display, use of and respect for the American Flag.

Additionally, over 65,000 copies of the publication *Let's Be Right on Flag Etiquette* and more than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet, *Flag of the United States —How to Display It, How to Respect It* are distributed annually to schools, organizations and individuals. This information is sent at little or no cost to all who request it.

In 1988, The American Legion published Our Country's Flag, an educational comic book for use in elementary schools. Well over one million copies have been distributed since the booklet was introduced. In May, 1995, the newest education booklet, *I Pledge Allegiance*, was published, also for use in elementary schools.

The American Legion continues its campaign to protect the U.S. Flag from physical desecration. All 50 state legislatures have passed memorializing resolutions in support of a constitutional amendment to give Congress the authority to enact flag protection laws.

Service to God and Country

A program of basic Americanism, "Service to God and Country," seeks to prevent the spiritual decay of America by charging the citizenry with a spirit of positive Americanism, respect for law, reverence for authority and awareness of our human rights and freedoms.

"Service to God" emphasizes regular public worship, daily family prayer and the religious education of children, while "Service to Country" attempts to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and Nation. These objectives are aimed at preparing young Americans to take up tomorrow's responsibilities by teaching them moral and spiritual values, renewed interest in our Country's history, self-discipline, self-reliance, ideals of loyalty and honesty.

Each year, a Conference for the Department Chaplains is held under the direction of the National Chaplain. Training and program information is provided for further dissemination to District and Post Chaplains who coordinate the program at the local level.

American Legion Baseball

American Legion Baseball marks its 79th season in 2004. Over 100,000 players on 5,400 teams participated in this American Legion Americanism youth activity during the past year. The 2003 George W. Rulon American Legion Baseball Player of the Year was Jared Willis of Logan, West Virginia.

More than seven million dollars in sponsorship fees are spent on American Legion Baseball teams by the local posts. One million dollars is appropriated by the Legion's National Organization to conduct eight Regional Tournaments and the World Series of American Legion Baseball.

Forty-six former Legion players have gone on to distinguish themselves in Major League Baseball and have been honored with election to the Hall of Fame. They include Tom Seaver, Johnny Bench, Pee Wee Reese, Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Willie Stargel, Stan Musial, Carl Yaztremski, Warren Spahn, Brooks Robinson, Frank Robinson, and Paul Molitor.

Over 52 percent of the Major League ballplayers and almost 86 percent of college players competed in American Legion Baseball as teenagers. The lessons learned on the

baseball diamond, such as leadership, teamwork and respect for the rules, are lessons that are learned for a lifetime.

COUNTER-SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
F. Rodney Loper, Pennsylvania, Chairman

The Counter-Subversive Activities Committee, since its establishment by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion on November 17, 1950, has scrutinized and continues to monitor what is transpiring in the realm of subversion and terrorism. A program of the Americanism Commission, reports of activities are made to the National Executive Committee at its Spring and Fall Meetings and at National Convention.

The Committee is responsible for furnishing background information on assigned resolutions that are considered by the National Americanism Commission for recommended action to the National Executive Committee or the National Convention.

The National Americanism Commission has long been concerned about anti-American activities and, in 1952, developed the publication Firing Line, to disseminate information on groups and organizations participating in activities of a subversive nature.

During the past year, Firing Line has reported on matters concerning illegal immigration, espionage and terrorism, both domestic and international.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Dr. Charles L. Vawter, Jr., Arizona, Chairman

The National Committee on Education, established in 1976, is comprised of members from both The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary.

The purposes of the Committee are: (1) to inform itself and The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary of developments, problems and potentials in the field of education; (2) to recommend appropriate policies and programs for The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary; and (3) to maintain contact with the education community so that there may be an interchange of thinking between The American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary, educators, students and other organizations concerned with the well-being of education throughout the Nation.

Education was one of the first major concerns of The American Legion. In 1921, the organization committed itself to a constructive support of education. During the years that followed, The American Legion developed a formal Policy on Education.

The American Legion has always supported the principle that education is a necessary prerequisite to the successful functioning of a republic. While recognizing the right of private and religious groups to maintain schools, The American Legion vigorously subscribes to the necessity for a publicly supported education system to ensure that every American child has the opportunity for an adequate education. The American Legion believes that popular self-government, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, cannot continue to exist without a continuing system of free public education. Not only does proper national defense require trained personnel, but every phase of life today demands that we have competent citizens who are qualified, willing and able to discharge their responsibilities.

The availability of educational opportunity for individuals to pursue their own development is a prerequisite to the achievement of all other social goals. Our education system must be designed to provide every person with the means to reach their potential

which will provide our Country with the high level of responsible citizens and specialized workers that it requires. In turn, we will have greater assurance of economic growth, of sound decision-making, and the knowledge necessary to promote our national security.

The American education system should produce citizens who understand and are dedicated to principles of free enterprise; to democratic principles and processes; and whose devotion to freedom and human dignity goes beyond mere lip service.

The Education Program of The American Legion consists of four basic elements: (1) recognition of local systems through observance of American Education Week; (2) dissemination of scholarship and financial aid information through the publication *Need A Lift?*; (3) participation by American Legion Posts and American Legion Auxiliary Units in a community-wide effort to enhance the programs and policies of the local schools through the guidelines provided in the handbook PACT (Post, Auxiliary, Community Together); and (4) scholarship programs.

American Education Week is an annual event co-sponsored nationally by The American Legion. The observance was originally established by The American Legion with the help of the National Education Association in 1921. The major objective of the program is to focus public attention on the needs and achievements of the Nation's schools. This year's theme has not yet been determined. The observance will be November 14-20, 2004.

The publication *Need A Lift?* is revised annually and contains 160 pages of scholarship, grant and loan information, work-study cooperative programs and sources of career information for all students. There is a section directed toward opportunities for veterans and their dependents. Another section lists scholarships and financial aid available from Departments of The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary totaling more than $685,000. Each fall, complimentary copies of *Need A Lift?* are sent to more than 28,000 high schools across the nation. In all, last year over 100,000 copies of *Need A Lift?* were distributed from the Legion's National Headquarters.

A companion to *Need A Lift?* is the pamphlet A Guide for Parents and Students which contains planning and financial aid information for high school students and their parents. Each year, distribution of more than 100,000 copies of each of these publications is done through American Legion Posts, schools, counselors and librarians, by mail and through distribution at national education conventions. Copies of these publications can also be obtained by writing The American Legion National Emblem Sales Division, P.O. Box 1050, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206. Individual copies of *Need A Lift?* are $3.00 plus shipping and handling, prepaid. A Guide for Parents and Students is available at a cost of $13.95 per 500 or $23.00 per 1,000 copies, plus shipping and handling, prepaid.

Following the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, The American Legion established the September 11th Memorial Scholarship Fund to provide educational opportunities for the children of American service men and women killed while on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. The fund will provide "American Legacy Scholarships" to the children to attend college and will be in addition to their governmental entitlements. Fund raising activities are ongoing with an initial goal of 20 million dollars established to fund this scholarship. Other scholarship programs include the National High School Oratorical Contest, Eagle Scout of the Year, American Legion Baseball Leadership Scholarship, Gatorade Sportsmanship Award Scholarship, and the Samsung American Legion Scholarship. Through these scholarship programs, The American Legion issues, on average, $450,000 annually to eligible students to further their education.

The *PACT Handbook* is the guide for American Legion Education Chairmen. It contains information on the goals and objectives of the education program, ideas and suggestions for activities, coordinating concepts and a typical calendar for a successful program. Programs covered in the handbook include: Citizenship Education, Career Education activities such as career nights, community resource files, Adopt-A-School, how to promote American Education Week, and financial aid nights.

Over 38,000 students are recipients of The American Legion School Award Medal each year. This award is designed to recognize a student for the qualities of courage, honor, leadership, patriotism, scholarship and service. The award is presented to a boy and a girl upon graduation from elementary school, junior high/middle school or high school.

The American Legion believes that the citizens of this country should be dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the entire realm of intellectual endeavor; that our people should recognize those persons who have developed their intellectual abilities to the fullest extent; that teachers should enrich their knowledge, particularly in the field in which they teach and that scholarship assistance to deserving students should be expanded.

Such an educational program will fulfill the dreams of the past, the aspirations of the present and the needs of the future. The American Legion supports such a system of education and believes that the vitality of our democratic way of life is dependent upon such schools.

Americanism Commission
Executive Section

Joseph E. Caouette, Jr., Rollingsford, New Hampshire—Chairman
Daniel J. O'Connor, New Fairfield, Connecticut—Chairman Emeritus
Larry L. Price, Redfield, South Dakota—Vice-Chairman
Roger L. Wild, Lincoln, Nebraska—Commander's Representative
Charles E. Gannon, Landover Hills, Maryland—Consultant

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Elmer Fuhrhop, Ohio, Chairman
Marty Justis, Maryland, Director

Since its beginning, The American Legion has voiced concern for the care, welfare, and education of our Nation's children and youth. As early as November 1919, Posts were asked to aid the widows and children of our deceased comrades.

Through the decades that followed, The American Legion became a strong advocate for children's rights and remained at the forefront of the child welfare movement. The early years were devoted to progressive childcare and protection programs. Through the efforts of The American Legion and its affiliated organizations—the American Legion Auxiliary, the Sons of The American Legion, and the Eight & Forty—many states and communities improved their own child welfare provisions.

The development of new and expanded public programs designed to provide economic security for children made it possible for our organization to turn its attention to other problem areas affecting young people. To date there exists no area of child welfare that has gone untouched by the collective hand of The American Legion. The very program of Children & Youth itself is unique from any agency—private or

governmental—in its ability to expand into every area of concern for child welfare and child health.

As stated in a 1924 resolution adopted by the National Executive Committee, The American Legion "has and will do everything possible to perpetuate 'A SQUARE DEAL FOR EVERY CHILD'." This remains our ultimate goal and the definite challenge for the years ahead.

To attain this goal, The American Legion, in 1925, adopted the "Whole Child" plan, which states: "every child should have a home, health, education, character and opportunity." Its foundation is based on three guiding principles:

1. To strengthen the family unit against the forces of today's complex society, recognizing that the most normal environment for children is a home with their own parents.
2. To extend support to sound organizations and facilities that provide services for children and youth, always acting in a supplementary capacity, rather than duplicating the efforts of existing agencies.
3. To maintain a well-rounded program that meets the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of today's young people. Stated certainly for future endeavors, this third principle has provided the flexibility to address all matters of child health and child welfare.

While these principles represent the heart of the "Whole Child" plan, the muscle depends on our four Guidelines for Action, working together:

1. PREVENTION—Finding solutions to obstacles before they become long-lasting problems.
2. EDUCATION—Providing information to our members and the general public on timely issues involving children and youth.
3. LEGISLATION—Maintaining a knowledge of new and existing laws, needed amendments, and the administration of laws which affect young people at the national, state and local levels.
4. MATERIAL AID—Providing direct assistance in the form of cash, clothing, food and time.

During the past eighty-five years, The American Legion's Children & Youth Program has contributed to significant advancements in the area of child welfare. While our list of achievements is extensive, it is by no means complete nor completed. The American Legion has, and will maintain a deep community-centered interest in children to find new, and perhaps presently unknown, approaches to child welfare problems. At present, there is no way of knowing what issues will face our youth tomorrow. But all of us know that our survival may well depend on the quality of care, education, and training which we, as parents and citizens, provide for all children today.

The American Legion is proud of the Legionnaires, and the members of its affiliated organizations, and their achievements on behalf of our nation's youth. Their efforts in the area of child welfare are a living testament to the ability of an organization of free men and women to adapt itself to evolving needs, while maintaining high principles and taking on increased responsibilities under those principles.

2003-2004 Program

In May of each year, The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth meets to consider what programs it wants to emphasize. When a decision is made, the National staff researches these areas of concern and publishes materials to support our volunteers.

For the program year 2003-04, the Commission voted to focus their efforts on the following quality of life issues, which directly impact our young people nationally:

1. Youth Suicide Prevention
2. Child Abuse & Neglect
3. Missing Children

Youth Suicide Prevention: According to national statistics, the suicide rate for persons under the age of 21 has tripled since 1960. Every hour, at least one American teenager or young adult commits suicide and as many as 40 others make the attempt. Research findings from around the country indicate that eight out of ten people who kill themselves give some warning of their intentions. Because of this, it is imperative for any adult who has daily contact with young people to acquaint themselves with the warning signs of suicide if we are to decrease the numbers in this tragic area. The American Legion volunteers continue their work to educate parents, schools and communities on this epidemic killer of our nation's young people. We, as parents and concerned citizens, cannot afford to let one of our greatest national resources be lost.

Child Abuse & Neglect: Growing-up in today's fast-paced society is harder than ever. As technology advances, at speeds not even imaginable only a few years ago, the strain on children to mature is great. While the rapid pace of society is likely to continue, society must take steps to ensure the safety and well being of our children. Child abuse and neglect in any form are unacceptable.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that approximately 879,000 children were victims of abuse in 2000. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines child abuse as any behavior directed toward a child by a parent, guardian, caregiver, other family member, or other adult, that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Neglect is the failure to provide for the child's basic needs.

The American Legion, utilizing our awareness materials and information conferences, is encouraging our volunteers to promote the "five R's" (Raise the issue, Reach out to children and parents within each community, Remember the risk factors, Recognize the warning signs, and Report suspected abuse or neglect), developed by Prevent Child Abuse America, to help individuals better understand the role they can play in child abuse prevention.

The American Legion continues to play a vital role in building strong communities in which families and children are valued and supported. It is in these kinds of communities that children are safest from abuse and neglect.

Missing children: According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement agencies fielded 840,279 missing person reports in 2001. Of that total, 85-90 percent were minors. The bulk of these missing children cases were runaways, followed by family custody abductions. Missing children is a problem that not only threatens the family way of life, but the very existence of children that most often are too young to help themselves.

The 2001 FBI missing children figure represents the lowest total since 1992. In addition, there has been a noticeable drop in "involuntary missings," the kidnappings and abductions. Law enforcement is responding more effectively, technology is enabling us to transmit images and information instantly, the public is paying greater attention to missing child photos, and the vast majority of America's missing children are coming home safely. Yet, 2,000 children are still reported missing every day.

To combat this growing problem, The American Legion, nationwide, is emphasizing a program of public information and precautionary steps for parents to take

to avoid the tragedy of missing children. By utilizing resources and volunteers at the local, state and national levels, we have been getting the word out.

The American Legion recognizes that fast action is necessary in dealing with missing children cases, and supported the recently enacted National AMBER Alert Network Act of 2003 that enhances the operation of a communications network in order to facilitate the recovery of abducted children. This act establishes an AMBER Alert coordinator within the Department of Justice to build a communications network for AMBER plans in the United States and establishes voluntary minimum standards for coordination between these plans.

AMBER Alerts are successful because they are issued rarely, and only when strict criteria are met. A typical AMBER Alert is only issued when a law enforcement agency confirms that a stranger abduction has occurred, the child is in imminent danger, and there is information available that, if disseminated to the public, could assist in the safe recovery of the child.

The American Legion supports the implementation of AMBER alert systems at the local, state, regional and national levels and believes that the effectiveness of the system depends on the continued judicious use of the alerts so that the public does not grow to ignore the warnings.

Continuing Programs

Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA): This is the landmark program of the Commission on Children & Youth. Begun in 1925 as a form of direct aid to veteran's children, the Temporary Financial Assistance program is still unique in the social work field today and remains a very active program. In 2003, the program aided 868 children with more than $333,625 in grants. From its beginning to present, this fund has assisted veterans' families with millions of dollars in non-repayable grants.

The fund is used to assist families in meeting the costs of shelter, food, utilities and health items when the parents are unable to do so; thereby helping to keep the child, or children, in a more stable home environment.

Through TFA, a Post may call upon the Americanism and Children & Youth Division of The American Legion for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds can be granted over a temporary period to eligible children when it has been determined by investigation that the child is in need and that no other sources are available, or those that are available are inadequate. It is important to note that while the veteran must have served honorably on active duty during a designated war period, the veteran does not have to be a member of The American Legion to receive assistance.

As sure as The American Legion is the largest veterans' organization in the world, there are veterans' families who require help. Possibly the rent is overdue or the children are hungry because a parent is sick or disabled, deceased, or has deserted the family. Whatever the reason, these children become the concern of The American Legion, and the Temporary Financial Assistance Program is the vital tool which is used to help meet the maintenance and health needs of veterans' children, thereby allowing the child to develop in the home.

Children's Hospitals: Since our beginning, the Legion has worked to increase the quality of life for all young people. Our partnership with Children's Miracle Network underscores this mission. Children's Miracle Network (CMN) raises critically needed funds for 170 children's hospitals, which treat 17 million children annually in the United States and Canada. These hospitals treat children with all types of afflictions and injuries,

rendering service based on need, not the ability to pay. They annually provide $2.5 billion in uncompensated charity care and are committed to turning no child away.

Children's Miracle Network is dedicated to ensuring that 100 percent of local donations made through CMN Champions (the continuing theme of CMN's fund-raising campaign) stay in the community in which they were raised to benefit children treated at participating hospitals.

The Commission encourages its Departments and Posts to work with and support their local CMN-affiliated children's hospitals to benefit the health and well being of our nation's children. During the 2003-2004 program year, the combined American Legion family provided more than $5 million dollars in total donations to local children's hospitals nationwide. This is due directly to the dedicated efforts of Legion family members throughout this nation who have embraced this program.

Halloween: The "Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night" program is now entering its 32nd year of National emphasis. In 1972, the Commission on Children & Youth realized Halloween was no longer the carefree, happy occasion it had once been for our nation's young people. Nationwide attention was focused on our children who were being maimed and drugged by "treats" they had gathered on Halloween. In response, the Commission established a community-oriented program on Halloween Safety.

There are many activities that can be planned at the community level to reduce the risks of children being harmed at this time of the year. A haunted house maze, carnival activities, costume parades with prizes awarded for the most imaginative and safest costume or a party for older youngsters with a Halloween theme.

The Commission on Children & Youth of The American Legion publishes a brochure that provides safety tips to aid children and parents in keeping this a fun and festive occasion. These brochures are available through department headquarters and all are encouraged to use them to help protect our children.

Child safety: The American Legion has demonstrated a strong concern for the safety of this nation's young people since the early 1920's. In 1992, the Commission on Children & Youth designated the Child Safety program as one of our annual or continuing programs. Child safety is defined as any external event that may present a significant danger to a child or young person.

Accidents are the leading cause of death and disability among our nation's youth. Annually, nearly 25,000 children under the age of 19 will die in automobile crashes, drownings, fires, and through the improper use of firearms. In homes, playgrounds and parks, the potential for serious injury is always present.

Legion volunteers regularly disseminate information to parents, children and community leaders regarding the issue of safety. Making children safety conscious, in the home and outside, is necessary to assure that they have an opportunity to play and grow into useful adults and citizens.

Alcohol, marijuana and inhalants are considered "gateway drugs" for thousands of young people throughout the United States. The great tragedy of substance abuse, which continues to infest all levels of our society, is its prevalence among elementary school age children. It is estimated that most come in contact with drugs by age seven.

Prevention education is part of the answer, but it must begin early. Children, of all ages, need to be taught drug awareness, and the physical and mental dangers involved with the use of all substances, to include the legal drugs of alcohol and tobacco. The American Legion considers a child's future to be very important. The brochure "Gateway Drugs" is designed to let young people stop and think about what they may be doing to themselves, and how what they do can affect others. The key to their future is responsible decision-making. As concerned citizens, we must never give up in our battle against

drugs. We must strive to increase awareness, and show our children that we care about both them and their future.

WWII National Dedication Day Project

On Saturday, May 29, 2004—Memorial Day Weekend—the United States dedicated the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, honoring the 16 million American servicemen and women who served, fought and died to preserve freedom, liberate the oppressed, and rid the world of the scourge of tyranny. The American Legion recognized that there were men and women from this "greatest generation" living in every community across the nation, who would be unable to participate in the celebration in Washington, DC, but who were equally deserving of the recognition and honor as those who were able to attend.

Authorized by Resolution 17, Spring NEC 2003, the WWII National Dedication Day project encouraged American Legion family members in posts, units and squadrons across the nation to coordinate community celebrations on Memorial Day weekend 2004, to honor the men and women who served their country during World War II and to care for the legacy they fought to ensure—namely America's children. Early reports indicate that between 5,000 to 7,000 communities participated in this event.

National Dedication Day was a suggested three-tier event that included a prayer breakfast, a walkathon to benefit hospitalized children, and a community celebration that culminated with the presentation of awards and tokens of appreciation to local World War II veterans.

The National Dedication Day project was designed to be a celebration of their service, with maximum participation by every citizen, business, organization and clergy in town. To assist our members, a booklet was developed and distributed to all posts and units in September 2003. This booklet provided post officials with suggested steps for coordinating a successful Memorial Day weekend event.

The guide contained a number of tools to assist the local post in their efforts: an award certificate, a recommended presentation program, post commander remarks, a proclamation, media materials, message points and milestones. In addition, for electronic or color output, flyers and programs were made available on a special member-only National Dedication web site. Compact disks with color art and ad slicks, as well as, pre-recorded television and radio PSA's were available free on request through the Legion's Public Relations Division. Our Emblem Sales Division produced and made available for members to purchase National Dedication Day T-shirts, lapel tacks and commemorative merchandise.

The WWII National Dedication Day community observances mirrored the activities of The American Legion in Washington, D.C., and allowed the veterans, and the community at-large, to feel like an integral part of the national effort to pay tribute to our World War II generation.

The National Dedication Day observance was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for The American Legion Family, as well as for the communities in which they serve. It cut across all boundaries and commissions within our organization. It highlighted what The American Legion was charged to do by our Founders in 1919—to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in the great wars; to care for the veterans, and for their legacy—the children of our nation.

National Leadership & Information Conferences (NLIC)

The 2003 NLICs saw an increase in the number of new attendees for both Legion and Auxiliary members. At these workshops, information on programs and methods of implementation is shared with the Posts and Units. In 2003, the NLIC's were:

Region 1—Nashua, New Hampshire—March 21-23
Region 2—Cherry Hill, New Jersey—April 25-27
Region 3—Macon, Georgia—April 4-6
Region 4—Dallas, Texas—September 19-21
Region 5—Indianapolis, Indiana—March 28-30
Region 6—Sioux City, Iowa—April 25-27
Region 7—Las Vegas, Nevada—April 4-6
Region 8—Boise, Idaho—September 19-21

To stabilize expenses and encourage participation, the National Leadership and Information Conferences remain at one site within each Region for three years. This provides Posts in every department the opportunity to send representatives at a very minimal cost. Our major goal is to help children, and our presence at these outreach workshops has a positive impact on the annual program.

Legislative Efforts

The initiation and support of worthwhile Children & Youth legislation is one means by which the Commission on Children & Youth has attempted to accomplish its goals during the 2003-2004 program year. At National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, August 27-29, 2002, the following resolutions, here summarized, were approved.

Admission of Children of United States Citizens: Res. 99-2002. United States citizens now have greater access to the nations of the world for work opportunities, both in the public and private sectors, and travel. In part, because of this, many children in foreign countries are progeny of United States citizens. Public Law 97-359 was enacted to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide preferential treatment in the admission of certain children of United States citizens, but addresses only alien children from Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea or Thailand born after 1950 and before October 22, 1982. As The American Legion believes that no child born of a United States citizen should be denied equal treatment under the laws of this country, we urge legislative action to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to provide equal treatment in admission of all children of United States citizens.

Children in Pornographic Literature: Res. 239-2002. Studies indicate that there is a direct and strong correlation between those who read pornographic magazines and those who commit related crimes. Additional data reveals that child pornography, "kiddy porn," is often found in the personal effects of child molesters after their arrest. The American Legion is firm in its position that the interstate transportation of obscene material must be stopped and that the United States Postal Service be provided sufficient investigators to enforce existing federal laws against pornography and the transportation of pornographic material.

Production, Sale and Distribution of Obscene Literature: Res. 240-2002. As there have been attempts to eliminate protective laws from the criminal code regarding the production, distribution and sale of pornographic and obscene literature, The American Legion is strongly opposed to any attempt to weaken existing laws.

Reaffirming Immunization Program: Res. 241-2002. The American Legion realizes that in today's society there is no place for communicable disease for which there is a vaccine. Though true, we also realize that several childhood communicable diseases breakout annually because children are not properly immunized. It is our belief that full protection is available and that the state and federal governments should provide sufficient funding so that indigent families with children can receive the necessary immunizations against all communicable diseases.

Violence and Vandalism in the Schools: Res. 242-2002. Juveniles account for nearly 35 percent of our population and better than 50 percent of serious crimes as reported by the FBI Crime Reports. Much of that crime is directed to the over $500 million damage done to Government-supported institutions, specifically schools and housing. With this violence and vandalism in our Nation's institutions is an enormous loss of educational and domestic resources and human potential. The American Legion urges local school boards, law enforcement agencies and their state organizations to develop a balanced and effective program to reduce and prevent violence and vandalism in educational institutions. Further, Congress is urged to enact legislation through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to establish a grant program to assist in these efforts.

National Family Week: Res. 243-2002. One of the basic principles of the children and youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. In today's fast paced society, it is critical that we seek to recognize the importance of strengthening the basic unit of our country...the family. No institution can take the place of the family in giving meaning to human life and stability to our society. We urge the President and the Congress to establish National Family Week on a permanent basis during the Thanksgiving holiday week.

School Nutrition Program: Res. 244-2002. The American Legion again reaffirms its position that the Congress of the United States and the various state legislatures be urged to appropriate sufficient funds for school nutrition programs. This is necessary to reflect the increased cost of food and to provide for needed facilities and trained personnel for the purpose of conducting an adequate school lunch program.

Support for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: Res. 247-2002. The American Legion is vitally concerned about the high levels of violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation each year. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is organized to develop and encourage the implementation of national standards for the administration of juvenile justice. They develop and implement effective methods of preventing and reducing juvenile delinquency, including methods with a specific focus on maintaining and strengthening the family unit so that juveniles may be retained in their homes. OJJDP develops effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert juveniles from traditional juvenile justice systems and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization. They coordinate all Federal juvenile delinquency programs and all Federal programs related to missing and exploited children. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention program now promoted by the OJJDP has proven effective in many states. The American Legion opposes any and all efforts to eliminate the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and its programs because of a lack of funding.

Catastrophic Illness among Children: Res. 245-2002. It has long been our position that all children should have adequate health services to assure their physical, mental and emotional well being. In the Temporary Financial Assistance program, we have seen an increase in the caseload of needy medical problems. Unfortunately, many of our children are not receiving the necessary medical care due to the extreme requirements placed on the financial abilities of the average family. Consequently, children with severe catastrophic illnesses are not receiving the needed medical care. The rising cost of medical care in such cases is not covered by even the best medical policies. The American Legion believes that the state and federal governments should enact legislation to financially assist those families faced by catastrophic illness to the end that the family will not be financially devastated.

Drug Trafficking: Res. 246 -2002. We realize that one of the best methods to attack the drug problem is from the demand side, but this resolution urges funding for all necessary areas and agencies that can help reduce the quantity of the substances that are being made available in this country. By working at both ends of the problem, we can make a difference in the number of users.

Protect Children from the Unrestricted Media: Res. 248-2002. The producers of movies, television shows and TV news, and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence. Organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union defend such actions as the author's constitutional right of free speech without regard for the potential consequences to minor children. The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity, and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and on the Internet. In addition, we encourage Departments and Posts to conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public, about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Comprehensive Health Care for Children and Youth: Res. 249-2002. Many of our children continue to face health needs that are not properly addressed due to the high cost of our health care delivery system. The American Legion continues to support and endorse the programs as outlined by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau as authorized under Title V of the Social Security Act and urges the Congress of the United States to continue its support by adequately funding these programs, including the Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the Healthy Start Initiative, Emergency Medical Services for Children Program and the Abstinence Education Program.

These are the highlights of our 2003-04 Children & Youth legislative program. The American Legion's Commission on Children & Youth has constantly urged Departments to support Children & Youth legislation as it relates to our National objectives. Local Posts are also encouraged to support city ordinances that deal with the community's efforts to improve conditions for children and youth. The Children & Youth legislative program is a never-ending struggle, which we eagerly accept for the sake of all children—everywhere.

Children & Youth Expenditures

Annually, as it has for the past 80 years, the Commission on Children & Youth records activities from the nearly 15,000 Posts of The American Legion, 11,000 Units of the American Legion Auxiliary, and hundreds of Salons of the Eight and Forty. In addition, the expenditures of Departments and of the National Organization are obtained for the 12-month period of June 1 through May 31, and combined with these reports.

This year, Posts, Units and Departments of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary reported expenditures of $21,784,483. To this amount, we proudly add $997,643 by the Sons of The American Legion. Our Temporary Financial Assistance program provided $328,437 in grants to 411 families in need. Including $676,679 in contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, this amounts to a grand total of expenditures and contributions to the total Children & Youth program in 2003-04 of $23,787,242.

Children & Youth Literature

During the 2003-04 program year, hundreds of thousands of pieces of Children & Youth literature were distributed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Division in order to further the objectives of the total program.

As shown in Table #5, our most popular brochures are related to our major points of emphasis—Missing Children, Child Safety, Substance Abuse Prevention and Teenage Suicide Prevention. It is of further interest to note that some 2,286 citations were distributed to Departments in order to recognize Posts for their contributions to the overall Children & Youth Program.

Appreciation Acknowledged

The Commission on Children & Youth and its Chairman take this opportunity to thank the volunteers of The American Legion family. Many hours, tremendous amounts of energy and personal sacrifice cannot be repaid. Special mention must also go to National Commander John A. Brieden, III not because of his rank, but because of his sincere dedication and enduring support for our programs this past year. In addition, the Commission sincerely thanks National Adjutant Robert W. Spanogle for his support and cooperation. The members of The American Legion do an excellent job with this program, but the record must be clear. Without the assistance of the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion, our National Children & Youth Program would have little chance for success.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN & YOUTH
Executive Section

Elmer Fuhrhop, Hamler, Ohio—Chairman
Robert D. Scott, Lebanon, Oregon—Vice-Chairman
W. Darrell Hansel, Vevay, Indiana—National Commander's Representative
Robert M. Johnson, Laplata, Maryland—Consultant
Walter F. Baker, Seneca Falls, New York—Consultant
Talmage C. Carawan, Rockville, Maryland
James P. Holley, Center, Texas
Peggy Moon, St. Joseph, Minnesota
Herbert J. Petit, Jr., Kenner, Louisiana
Miles Smith, Chicago, Illinois

AMERICAN LEGION CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION, INC.
U.S. "Udie" Grant, Kansas, President
William A. Pease, Indiana, Executive Secretary

In 1954 The American Legion endorsed the separate incorporation of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Since then, the Foundation has granted over six million dollars to other non-profit youth oriented organizations.

The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's foremost philanthropic priority is to provide other nonprofit organizations with a means to educate the public about the needs of children across this nation. The Foundation accepts proposals from nonprofit organizations for projects that:

- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge about new and innovative organizations and/or their programs to benefit youth; and/or
- Contribute to the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual welfare of children through the dissemination of knowledge already possessed by well-established organizations, to the end that such information can be more adequately used by society.

Table No. 1

Region and Department	Reporting Legion	Reporting Auxiliary	Temporary Financial Assistance by National	Contributions to Child Welfare Foundation by Posts & Units	Direct Aid from Posts, Units and Departments	Contributions to Other Child Serving Agencies by Legion and Auxiliary	Other Expenditures for Children by Legion and Auxiliary	Department Admininstrative Expense by Legion and Auxiliary	Total Aid for Children from 8/40	Total Number of Children Served Nationally	Total Aid Legion and Auxiliary Lines 4 thru 10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
REGION 1											
Connecticut	35%	0%	$0	$1,500	$17,891	$31,974	$11,188	$1,850	$2,102	5,170	$66,505
Maine	74%	0%	0	3,405	57,602	127,707	75,793	0	1,135	2,159	$265,642
Massachusetts	22%	67%	0	3,705	113,247	337,532	45,629	1,141	2,925	12,704	$504,179
New Hampshire	52%	100%	2,160	10,384	84,255	138,524	67,481	500	260	23,287	$303,564
Rhode Island	23%	0%	688	0	3,805	8,187	1,493	500	340	535	$15,013
Vermont	63%	90%	0	3,135	124,717	130,069	98,330	6,145	1,230	5,167	$363,626
TOTAL:	**40%**	**78%**	**2,848**	**22,129**	**401,517**	**773,993**	**299,914**	**10,136**	**7,991**	**49,022**	**$1,518,528**
REGION 2											
Delaware	73%	89%	870	4,369	40,487	48,483	28,437	7,106	(2)	20,219	$129,752
D.C.	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	$10
Maryland	67%	0%	1,000	10,250	381,330	481,400	107,179	0	560	8,067	$981,719
New Jersey	35%	78%	2,000	7,155	107,498	265,609	74,492	0	578	10,559	$457,433
New York	66%	100%	2,054	29,804	505,593	1,011,670	865,299	700	839	52,595	$2,415,959
Pennsylvania	91%	0%	3,645	15,534	335,965	421,326	694,337	0	11,526	50,301	$1,482,334
Virginia	100%	57%	11,817	3,335	184,552	328,392	174,827	6,001	5,397	58,477	$714,321
West Virginia	70%	0%	964	4,225	110,133	130,376	82,305	0	820	6,846	$328,823
TOTAL:	**72%**	**78%**	**22,351**	**74,672**	**1,665,559**	**2,687,256**	**2,026,876**	**13,807**	**19,830**	**205,064**	**$6,510,350**
REGION 3											
Alabama	15%	43%	4,393	3,069	28,350	36,337	15,867	150	2,970	5,180	$91,136
Florida	93%	100%	5,420	27,399	400,337	315,428	353,398	23,683	6,661	48,726	$1,132,326
Georgia	55%	24%	2,000	10,705	217,091	228,129	148,042	0	(2)	16,471	$605,967
Kentucky	57%	35%	8,904	6,954	169,943	361,699	142,347	0	2,628	32,346	$692,475
North Carolina	20%	34%	1,857	5,905	68,932	73,009	67,495	0	(2)	6,527	$217,198
South Carolina	21%	34%	2,399	1,695	18,869	34,130	13,691	0	(2)	3,643	$68,984
Tennessee	29%	12%	2,825	525	42,432	32,762	23,216	0	0	6,466	$101,760
TOTAL:	**43%**	**46%**	**27,798**	**56,252**	**943,954**	**1,081,494**	**764,256**	**23,833**	**12,259**	**119,359**	**$2,909,846**
REGION 4											
Arkansas	22%	0%	1,823	4,021	8,955	63,210	9,579	975	2,481	3,395	$91,044
Louisiana	16%	0%	0	1,150	28,097	37,605	11,977	500	2,892	1,885	$82,421
Mississippi	15%	0%	6,740	675	14,844	95,638	14,375	0	1,373	4,420	$133,645
Oklahoma	32%	50%	14,299	531	55,710	61,513	26,352	550	1,741	3,195	$160,697
Texas	41%	75%	5,024	21,010	124,347	313,986	132,177	0	1,168	25,340	$597,712
TOTAL:	**29%**	**69%**	**27,887**	**27,387**	**231,953**	**572,152**	**194,460**	**2,025**	**9,655**	**38,215**	**$1,065,519**
REGION 5											
Illinois	24%	61%	19,445	6,243	119,827	158,025	127,713	2,445	21,908	36,047	$455,605
Indiana	44%	0%	25,483	12,160	169,219	378,657	123,923	0	10,255	8,185	$719,697
Michigan	54%	70%	6,574	7,820	166,739	270,566	89,610	300	13,088	27,031	$554,697
Missouri	37%	39%	2,708	5,649	71,637	133,803	98,630	264	3,724	28,545	$316,416
Ohio	78%	57%	1,435	28,781	375,904	778,449	392,376	13,908	12,615	101,880	$1,603,467
Wisconsin	85%	73%	4,813	8,451	96,275	150,840	169,197	2,531	(2)	17,783	$432,107
TOTAL:	**52%**	**61%**	**60,459**	**69,104**	**999,601**	**1,870,339**	**1,001,449**	**19,447**	**61,784**	**219,451**	**$4,081,990**
REGION 6											
Iowa	24%	80%	1,598	747	51,423	96,245	44,395	20	(2)	16,163	$164,428
Kansas	61%	0%	2,246	4,310	60,662	39,952	55,449	3,500	944	3,141	$167,062
Minnesota	48%	80%	22,880	8,612	361,097	469,519	223,106	10	1,495	37,026	$1,086,719
Nebraska	67%	76%	0	2,993	47,396	84,106	102,371	8,219	4,661	30,488	$249,654
North Dakota	58%	55%	1,506	5,332	54,230	141,011	67,126	300	(2)	12,474	$269,505
South Dakota	38%	86%	250	1,501	8,972	18,052	47,086	1,825	3,280	15,828	$80,966
TOTAL:	**46%**	**78%**	**28,480**	**23,495**	**583,780**	**818,885**	**539,532**	**13,874**	**10,379**	**115,120**	**$2,018,334**
REGION 7											
Arizona	77%	0%	37,824	4,610	142,672	73,434	128,252	1,500	12,845	11,755	$401,137
California	45%	97%	500	24,339	382,058	223,755	503,813	300	30,077	53,036	$1,164,842
Colorado	51%	0%	2,625	814	50,109	64,002	30,241	0	779	5,355	$148,570
Hawaii	61%	0%	350	0	745	8,150	510	0	806	210	$10,361
Nevada	40%	0%	7,541	0	1,825	2,824	855	0	610	414	$13,655
New Mexico	33%	43%	3,467	5,690	69,776	205,713	131,147	7,500	3,378	15,751	$426,672
Utah	23%	0%	0	0	4,650	2,015	7,256	0	1,126	234	$15,047
TOTAL:	**46%**	**90%**	**52,307**	**35,453**	**651,835**	**579,893**	**802,074**	**9,300**	**49,421**	**86,755**	**$2,180,284**
REGION 8											
Alaska	69%	64%	0	2,200	76,825	67,892	81,023	7,728	1,065	5,273	$236,732
Idaho	71%	29%	19,845	1,559	46,071	23,251	20,274	6,121	1,397	1,988	$118,519
Montana	98%	0%	1,571	225	8,258	12,192	4,368	0	2,588	1,334	$29,200
Oregon	43%	52%	0	2,315	520,714	980,854	25,518	5,729	5,134	119,076	$1,540,264
Washington	49%	0%	67,582	2,408	18,433	22,957	11,974	0	11,456	1,459	$134,809
Wyoming	68%	93%	2,815	525	10,243	24,706	12,027	0	177	1,704	$50,493
TOTAL:	**64%**	**53%**	**91,813**	**9,232**	**680,542**	**1,131,852**	**155,184**	**19,578**	**21,817**	**130,834**	**$2,110,017**
REGION TOTALS	**51%**	**68%**	**313,944**	**317,635**	**6,158,742**	**9,515,864**	**5,783,744**	**112,000**	**193,135**	**963,820**	**$22,394,867**
FOREIGN											
France	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
Mexico	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
Philippines	0%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	$0
Puerto Rico	0%	0%	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	65	$200
TOTAL:	**1%**	**0%**	**200**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**$200**
SUBTOTAL:	**50%**	**68%**	**314,144**	**317,635**	**6,158,742**	**9,515,864**	**5,783,744**	**112,000**	**193,135**	**963,820**	**$22,395,262**

(2) - Not organized in the Department

Child Welfare Foundation by National Auxiliary	$10,000
Children & Youth Division by National Auxiliary	$20,000
Child Welfare Foundation by National 8/40	$1,448
Children & Youth Division by National 8/40	$1,000
Other children programs by Jr. Auxiliary	$0
Child Welfare Foundation by individuals	$5,874
Bequests to Child Welfare Foundation	$64,625
C.W.F. by Sons of The American Legion	$313,930
Child Welfare Foundation by National Legion	$6,203
GRAND TOTAL	$22,818,342

TABLE # 1 REPORTING PERIOD: JUNE 1, 2003-MAY 31, 2004

TABLE NO. 2
EXPENDITURES FROM NATIONAL TEMPORARY AID FUNDS TO DEPARTMENTS ACCORDING TO YEARS

	1926-45	1946-65	1966-85	1986-95	1996-2003	Jun-Dec 03	Jan-May 04	Grand Total
Alabama	29,181.33	51,167.06	76,790.45	165,155.82	122,663.59	3,893.18	500.00	449,351.43
Alaska	———	1,627.56	1,550.00	———	———	———	———	3,177.56
Arizona	26,061.70	8,752.00	21,380.31	228,396.73	230,803.46	25,295.50	12528.70	553,218.40
Arkansas	33,873.20	25,992.22	2,881.07	58,723.29	14,358.19	1,823.42	———	137,621.39
California	30,106.15	16,028.45	1,550.00	7,559.00	7,450.00	500.00	———	63,191.60
Colorado	41,621.11	22,618.11	1,395.00	13,205.63	2,129.19	———	2625.00	83,594.24
Connecticut	1,854.00	440.00	450.00	1,192.00	5,971.56	———	———	9,907.56
Delaware	2,035.00	1,000.00	475.00	2,635.00	7,627.64	870.00	———	14,642.64
D. of C.	2,570.00	1,203.50	600.00	26,636.75	2,319.00	———	———	33,329.25
Florida	33,341.26	25,520.50	2,530.00	33,542.78	35,082.66	3,480.54	1939.43	135,437.17
Georgia	69,894.07	86,084.42	4,865.00	8,498.51	5,950.00	2,000.00	———	177,292.00
Hawaii	870.00	———	900.00	———	2,850.00	350.00	———	4,970.00
Idaho	7,593.50	5,771.85	7,366.39	24,202.62	102,939.08	10,352.79	9492.38	167,718.61
Illinois	30,220.79	4,343.53	10,525.73	129,729.07	228,595.42	9,323.22	10121.83	422,859.59
Indiana	31,850.08	9,066.40	2,920.00	152,703.98	114,274.49	12,968.78	12514.67	336,298.40
Iowa	17,493.08	597.00	3,928.45	16,982.47	182,048.80	500.00	1097.68	222,647.48
Kansas	20,766.80	42,064.35	8,923.00	9,691.54	6,984.00	1,184.00	1,062.00	90,675.69
Kentucky	23,843.50	45,527.90	64,854.96	48,497.66	97,394.25	6,286.61	2617.00	289,021.88
Louisiana	23,400.50	38,454.30	3,395.00	7,640.45	1,800.00	———	———	74,690.25
Maine	3,618.94	1,910.26	2,676.55	20,812.00	15,695.50	———	———	44,713.25
Maryland	5,887.00	3,390.57	3,383.00	4,770.00	27,020.94	1,000.00	———	45,451.51
Massachusetts	2,754.50	455.00	150.00	7,050.00	11,271.13	———	———	21,680.63
Michigan	23,895.33	33,281.24	15,346.82	17,575.76	29,847.14	2,634.18	3740.00	126,520.47
Minnesota	8,610.77	23,322.79	11,840.33	172,036.26	30,259.31	8,747.27	14133.21	268,949.94
Mississippi	40,293.63	63,254.14	117,892.56	54,314.88	39,956.95	5,674.00	1066.00	322,452.16
Missouri	53,073.08	47,799.64	11,056.00	19,362.51	25,005.93	1,447.16	1,261.08	159,005.40
Montana	5,414.25	1,668.85	1,575.30	45,267.56	19,079.48	375.00	1,196.11	74,576.55
Nebraska	18,470.10	17,795.68	17,531.06	4,520.25	759.49	———	———	59,076.58
Nevada	585.00	766.00	7,272.00	1,495.00	7,569.77	5,053.42	2487.75	25,228.94
New Hampshir	4,250.50	4,941.50	———	55,557.79	10,450.00	———	2,160.00	77,359.79
New Jersey	8,995.53	1,946.00	4,478.00	65,437.20	44,909.10	300.00	1700.00	127,765.83
New Mexico	20,074.30	53,098.74	58,723.89	117,760.24	40,295.33	650.00	2817.06	293,419.56
New York	7,887.54	4,803.00	1,150.00	42,484.24	58,240.15	2,054.24	———	116,619.17
North Carolina	46,597.50	81,019.60	9,740.00	23,502.67	19,995.19	1,857.00	———	182,711.96
North Dakota	26,017.45	11,788.21	5,771.32	7,064.40	9,920.74	604.00	902.20	62,068.32
Ohio	23,930.43	5,116.25	11,613.89	12,357.65	6,861.00	935.00	500.00	61,314.22
Oklahoma	40,458.05	65,406.47	88,956.03	171,688.84	153,908.41	11,340.57	2958.87	534,717.24
Oregon	1,250.50	13,750.15	24,595.95	46,815.83	13,176.00	———	———	99,588.43
Panama	675.00	534.00	600.00	———	———	———	———	1,809.00
Pennsylvania	22,847.41	651.00	19,204.85	38,663.37	13,035.17	872.04	2,773.39	98,067.23
Puerto Rico	17,057.00	57,754.00	55,499.50	49,720.00	10,900.00	———	200.00	191,130.50
Rhode Island	1,562.00	1,641.00	1,060.00	19,527.38	11,200.14	———	688.44	35,678.96
South Carolina	68,453.05	28,693.34	5,339.00	900.00	7,763.26	1,635.92	762.84	111,547.41
South Dakota	42,430.27	16,362.05	725.00	46,361.43	3,895.30	———	250.00	110,024.05
Tennessee	31,144.77	54,613.20	20,604.30	61,868.79	18,009.91	1,825.00	1000.00	189,065.97
Texas	35,373.50	47,392.43	26,714.50	8,534.74	6,812.78	2,446.00	2,578.19	129,852.14
Utah	11,125.48	3,248.00	3,396.00	13,414.42	12,034.34	———	———	43,218.24
Vermont	1,824.50	9,251.50	———	5,425.00	1,068.00	———	———	17,569.00
Virginia	45,310.31	28,037.78	17,636.00	37,295.82	26,361.50	7,218.09	4,599.23	166,658.73
Washington	3,378.00	427.50	625.00	100,545.28	299,486.40	28,206.06	39375.63	472,043.87
West Virginia	27,629.98	11,395.94	3,460.00	24,514.68	23,376.61	163.58	800.00	91,340.99
Wisconsin	15,881.98	8,067.25	9,878.00	19,309.78	24,835.48	4,813.14	———	82,785.63
Wyoming	8,160.00	1,993.00	1,350.00	2,279.00	7,555.11	1,826.94	988.16	24,172.21
Other Depts	560.00	173.50	———	———	———	———	———	733.50
Miscellaneous	19,499.21 (1)	———	———	———	———	———	———	19,499.21
TOTAL	$1,121,572.95	$1,089,976.73	$777,325.21	$2,253,246.25	$2,201,817.09 (2)	$170,706.65	$143,436.85	$7,758,081.73

1) Includes $19,499.21 for the year 1926--Department totals not available
2) Includes first 5 months of 2004

Table 3, 2003-2004

Comparison of Number of Children of WW II, Korean, Vietnam, Grenada/Lebanon and Panama Veterans Receiving Aid from National Children and Youth Division

	World War II	Korea	Vietnam	Grenada/ Lebanon	Panama	Desert Storm	Totals
June	0	0	26	16	10	25	77
July	0	1	34	27	12	23	97
August	0	1	15	16	13	21	66
September	0	2	15	30	9	16	72
October	0	2	14	2	23	39	80
November	0	0	11	5	8	30	54
December	1	0	20	7	8	31	67
January	0	0	11	7	12	27	57
February	0	0	9	14	13	31	67
March	2	0	12	10	11	24	59
April	0	0	7	11	18	38	74
May	0	0	23	16	5	35	79
Totals	3	6	197	161	142	340	849
Percentage	0.35%	0.71%	23.20%	18.96%	16.73%	40.05%	100.00%

Table No. 4

Printed Material Furnished Upon Request
During Period June 1, 2003 through May 31, 2004

	Total
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Brochure	4,008
American Legion & Children's Miracle Network - Poster	6
American Legion Child Welfare Foundation	4,629
American Legion CWF Precious Moments Brochure	17,143
Annual Children & Youth Program Piece	17,824
April is Children & Youth Month	18,956
Children's Miracle Network Champion Booklet	45,226
Family Support Network	30,339
Gateway Drugs	34,448
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Brochure	100,066
Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night - Project Guide	407
Nathan's Visit Comic Books	400
National Family Week	19,296
National Resource Directory	438
Play It Safe Safety Booklet	42,214
TFA Applications	100
TFA Brochures	23,919
Walkathon Project Guide	1,930
Warning Signs -- Suicide Prevention	33,924
Citations:	
Annual Children and Youth Citations	1,877
Certificate of Meritorious Service	55
National Achievement Award	28
Special Children & Youth Citation	326
Reporting:	
Unit Report Form	9,741
We Want a Report from Your Unit or Salon	402
TOTAL	407,702

In October of 2003, the Board of Directors approved grants to 13 non-profit organizations in the amount of $338,700 for projects to be completed in calendar year 2004. The organizations and amounts are as follows:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation Grants

Advocates for Youth	Washington, DC	$10,000
American Humane	Englewood, CO	$29,700
Birth Defect Research for Children	Orlando, FL	$29,800
The Center for Coordinating Action for Children's Health	Naperville, IL	$30,500
Connect for Kids	Washington, DC	$35,800
EveryChild, Inc.	Austin, TX	$40,000
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation	New York, NY	$35,500
Kartini Foundation	Portland, OR	$18,400
Mercy Medical Airlift	Virginia Beach, VA	$25,000
National Children's Cancer Society	St. Louis, MO	$20,000
PKU Action Group	Seattle, WA	$ 8,000
Project OZ	Bloomington, IL	$31,000
Toledo Children's Hospital	Toledo, OH	$25,000

During the 2003-2004 contribution year, donations exceeded $676,678 with over $313,930 of that amount coming to the Foundation from the Sons of The American Legion. We receive most of our support from the members of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and the Sons of The American Legion. Their Posts, Units, Salons, and Squadrons are the primary contributors to the success and growth of our Foundation.

We encourage each member and each local organization to make an annual contribution in support of their Foundation so it can continue to fund projects that will assist children by giving them a better chance at life. It is important to remember that every dollar given to the Foundation is put directly into the trust fund to be used for grants that assist our young people.

At the meeting of the Board of Directors of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation held in Indianapolis on May 2, 2004, the following officers were elected: U.S. "Udie" Grant of Kansas, (President); James P. Holley of Texas, (Vice President); Kenneth D. Danilson of Iowa, (Secretary); and Robert Turner of Georgia, (Treasurer). Administrative personnel that were re-appointed by the Board of Directors were George A. Buskirk, Jr. (Assistant Treasurer) and William A. Pease (Executive Secretary). Note—shortly following the election, the Board received word of the passing of President Grant (a valued leader, staunch advocate, and Director of 36 years). In accordance with Foundation By-Laws, Vice-President Holley assumed the duties of President until the annual election in May 2005.

Under the 1969 Tax Reform Act, the Foundation retains its tax-exempt status. Gifts, therefore, are deductible for federal income tax purposes to the extent permitted by law, and bequests to the Foundation are deductible for federal inheritance tax purposes to the extent permitted by the Federal Tax Act.

NATIONAL CONVENTION COMMISSION
Jeffrey L. Olson, Minnesota, Chairman
Richard D. Holmes, Indiana, Director

The 85th annual National Convention of the American Legion was conducted in St. Louis, Missouri, August 22-28, 2003. National Commander Ronald F. Conley (Pennsylvania) called the national convention to order at 9:00AM on Tuesday, August 26, 2003. Commander Conley welcomed the Legionnaires to St. Louis, Missouri and thanked them for their continuing service to our Country and to our Veterans. The Honorable Bob Holden, Governor of the State of Missouri, the Honorable Francis G. Slay, Mayor of the City of St. Louis, Clark Pointer, Department Commander, the American Legion Department of Missouri, and James F. Mareschal, President of the National Convention Corporation of Missouri welcomed legionnaires to the National Convention. Congressmen Christopher H. Smith, Timothy F. Murphy, Jim Marshall, Senator Christopher Bond, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs and General Richard B. Meyers (USAF) The Chairman, Joints Chiefs of Staff also addressed the attendees of the 85th National Convention.

The Honorable George W Bush, President of The United States, addressed a standing room only crowd of Legionnaires on Tuesday, August 26, 2003.

One of the many highlights for the 2003 National Convention was The National Commander's Banquet for Distinguished Guests that took place in the America's Convention Center. The Wright Brothers provided entertainment to a crowd of approximately 2,200 Legionnaires and guests.

Convention Commission Activities

The National Convention Commission held three regular meetings during the year. Discussions continue regarding the revisions of our request for proposal (RFP) that is sent to cities interested in hosting a National Convention. This process is extremely important as it provides an equal opportunity for all cities to be judged the same way during the initial review and site visit process. It is the commission's desire to continue to attract new cities desirous of hosting our National Convention. This provides our "blue cap" Legionnaires and their families with a varied and enjoyable convention that can be shared by all on an annual basis.

New color guard rules approved by the National Convention Commission for the 2001 convention were refined and improved again for the 2003 national convention in St. Louis, Missouri. One additional color guard class and one additional band contest class were implemented at the 2003 national convention.

The National Convention Commission also rewrote and submitted for approval the Articles of Agreement between the host Convention Corporation and the National Organization of the American Legion for the conduct of the national convention. Included in this revision were update Convention Corporation Policy and Procedures, which are provided to each corporation hosting the national convention. This revision will allow both organizations to more efficiently and effectively conduct the business of the national convention and those responsibilities for each contained therein. These new procedures become effective with the 2004 national convention in Nashville, Tennessee.

Beginning with the 1999 national convention and continued at the 2003 convention, each attendee had to have the proper identification badge/credentials to enter all of the venues of The American Legion national convention. On-site registration tables were available for those who needed to register at the site of the convention. This process continues to prove successful and will be in effect for all future national conventions.

Additionally, the convention & meetings office was directed to procure a new paper within plastic badge for the national convention. This badge proposal was made available for the first time at the 2001 national convention and continued successfully at the 2003 national convention. There have been no changes to the traditional Distinguished Guests badges and the traditional badges continue to be available for purchase through the Emblem Sales Division during and after the national convention.

The National Convention Commission reviewed bids, provided to The American Legion, for the 2009 National Convention from the cities of Baltimore, Maryland; Boston, Massachusetts and Louisville, Kentucky. Subsequent to conducting site visits and after listening to formal presentations from each of these fine cities, the National Convention Commission recommended to the National Executive Committee that the city of Louisville, Kentucky be tentatively awarded the National Convention for 2009, the dates being August 21-27, 2009. The National Executive Committee later approved the recommendation.

Dates and future conventions are:

Honolulu, Hawaii	August 19-25, 2005
Salt Lake City, Utah	August 18-24, 2006
Reno, Nevada	August 24-30, 2007
Phoenix, Arizona	August 22-28, 2008
Louisville, Kentucky	August 21-27, 2009

DISTINGUISHED GUEST COMMITTEE
Robert C. Lahiere, Tennessee, Chairman

The Distinguished Guest Committee exists under the umbrella of the National Convention Commission. Responsibilities include the coordination of activities of all persons invited to attend the national convention as our distinguished guests.

The committee arranges each guest's arrival and departure at the national convention. Each distinguished guest is also assisted with credentials, agendas and other details of the national convention.

ECONOMIC COMMISSION
Kenneth A. Sercerchi, Maine, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director

This report covers the programs, activities and accomplishments of the National Economic Commission, its two standing committees (Employment and Veterans' Preference), and the staff from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. Since the commission and the committees always meet concurrently, all future reference to the commission in this report will automatically indicate the inclusion of the committees.

2003-2004 Meetings

During the period this report covers, the commission met for four regularly scheduled executive sessions. A list of those meetings follows:

1. Members and guests of the National Economic Commission met on Saturday, August 23, 2003, in the America's Center, St. Louis, Missouri, in conjunction with the Eighty-fifth Annual National Convention. A report on that meeting was made to the National Executive Committee on Monday, August 25, 2003.

The complete text of that report appears in the Proceedings of the National Executive Committee's Pre- and Post-Convention Meetings.

2. An executive session of the National Economic Commission was held in the headquarters of The American Legion in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 6-7, 2003. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, October 8-9, 2003.
3. The National Economic Commission met in conjunction with the Forty-fourth Annual Washington Conference on Monday and Wednesday, March 8 and 10, 2004. Those sessions were held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. A report on the topics covered during those two sessions is contained in the commission's Advance Report to the NEC.
4. Members of the commission met on May 3-4, 2004, in the headquarters of The American Legion, in Indianapolis, Indiana. A complete report on that meeting appears in the Digest of Proceedings of the National Executive Committee, May 5-6, 2004.

Legislative Appearances

A very important part of the work of the National Economic Commission is the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony on issues affecting the economic well-being of America's veterans. During the period covered by this report, the commission staff itself did not testify before Congress, but did participate in the preparation of testimony presented by other members of the Legion staff on several occasions.

The economics staff also prepared the commission's portion of the testimony that was presented in September 2003 by the National Commander at a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs regarding The American Legion's goals and concerns.

Administrative Activities

The commission's staff of two manages all of its activities and programs on a daily basis.

The staff's major responsibility is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans at the national level. This is accomplished through the commission's ongoing work with Congress and a number of federal agencies, including the Department of Labor, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business Administration, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The deputy director also represents The American Legion on the following boards and committees: the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training; the Veterans' Committee of the National Association of State Workforce Agencies; the veterans' advisory committees of the Small Business Administration, its Service Corps of Retired Executives, and the Office of Personnel Management; and the Secretary of Commerce's Decennial Census Advisory Committee. He also acts as an advisor to the Legion's Veterans Planning and Coordinating Committee.

In addition to those activities, the deputy director works closely with community based groups such as the National Organization on Disability, the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, and the Veterans Organizations Homeless Council.

Another staff responsibility is answering the large volume of mail and electronic mail that is received annually from veterans seeking information or assistance on issues which come under the commission's jurisdiction. While the staff can neither place individual veterans in jobs nor represent them in labor disputes, the staff does provide

information, guidance and, when appropriate, referral. Besides correspondence from individuals, the staff also receives and answers frequent requests and inquiries from government agencies, members of Congress, congressional committees, private organizations, and other groups regarding veterans' economic issues.

One of the commission's major programs is its awards program, which is administered by the staff. Through this program The American Legion pays tribute to those employers across the country who have established outstanding records in the employment and retention of veterans, workers with disabilities and older workers, and to outstanding members of the state employment security agencies.

Publications

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the commission does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on a network of employment chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment.

In order to assist the employment chairmen to be as effective as possible, the staff provides them with pertinent information and guidance through the Legion's biweekly newspaper, The Dispatch. They also provide articles on a routine basis to The American Legion Magazine. In addition, the commission's Homeless Veterans Task Force publishes a bimonthly newsletter.

The commission's various publications are kept in stock and distributed upon request, free of charge.

Employer of the Year Awards

Each year since 1969, the Legion's National Economic Commission has sponsored an Employer of the Year Awards Program. This program seeks to honor those employers across the country that have established an outstanding record in the employment and retention of veterans. Nominations for these awards are submitted by Posts to their Departments for review. Each Department must then select what it feels is the most worthy nominee in the large employer category (those companies with more than 200 employees), one in the medium-size employer category (51-200 employees), and one in the small employer category (50 or fewer employees). These three nominations are then forwarded to the National Economic Commission prior to January 15 for final approval and the issuance of plaques. After the plaques are prepared, they are sent to the Departments for presentation.

Prior to this year's Washington Conference, the chairman of the National Economic Commission, Kenneth A. Sercerchi (ME), appointed a six-person subcommittee to review all of the nominations that had been received during 2002 in the Employer of Veterans Awards Program. The purpose of this subcommittee was to select a national winner and a runner-up in each of the employer categories.

The members of the Employer of the Year Subcommittee met on March 8, 2004, to consider employer nominations from Departments.

Prior to the meeting, the staff liaison to the subcommittee mailed copies of all nominations and supporting data to each subcommittee member. After a thorough review of this material, the Employer of the Year Subcommittee selected the following winners:

Large Employer: Wheatland Tube Company, Wheatland, Pennsylvania

Medium Size Employer: Wackenhut Services, Inc., Spring Lake, North Carolina

Small Employer: Anderson Iron works, Post Falls, Idaho

Officials of the three winning companies have agreed to send representatives to the 86th Annual National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, to accept the national awards.

Upon their arrival in the convention city, each company will receive a small stipend to help defray the travel costs of their representatives.

Employment Service Awards

Beginning in 1993, three awards have been presented to the Local Veterans Employment Representative of the Year, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist of the Year, and the Employment Service Office of the Year. These awards are given in cooperation with local Job Service offices across the country, to recognize truly outstanding veteran-dedicated staff members.

Department winners were selected and submitted to the national commission in the same manner as employer award winners. Entries were considered by the employer awards subcommittee on March 8, 2004. Winners are to receive their plaques at the 86th National Convention. National winners are the following:

LVER of the Year: Claud "Sonny" Miller, Anniston, Alabama

DVOP of the Year: Jim Balog, Helena, Montana

Local Office of the Year: Pocatello Job Service Office, Pocatello, Idaho

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Albert M. Robotti, New Jersey, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director

The mission of the committee is to promote employment and training opportunities for veterans. To accomplish this, the committee works at the national level with Congress and various federal agencies. The committee does not place veterans in jobs, but rather, relies on its network of employment chairmen to assist individual veterans in finding employment. These employment chairmen are appointed by their Posts and Departments. Occasionally, Departments also appoint them at the county and District levels.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE COMMITTEE
Richard T. Lee Jr., California, Chairman
Joseph C. Sharpe Jr., Maryland, Deputy Director

This committee is charged with the responsibility of promoting veterans' employment opportunities in federal government and for ensuring that agencies continue to observe all veterans' preference laws.

Federal Veterans' Economic Programs

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's interactions with those federal agencies, and their veterans' programs, with which the commission works regularly.

Department of Labor: The Deputy Director for Economics meets frequently with top officials in the Veterans' Employment and Training Service.

The Economic Division referred some dozen veterans' inquiries to VETS for investigation and reply.

Department of the Treasury: The Economic Commission continues its active support of U.S. Savings Bonds, which have recently gained a new popularity because of an added education benefit. Savings bonds can be completely tax free when used for higher education tuition.

Because of federal budget cuts, the U.S. Treasury Department can no longer afford to send each Legion post promotional material on savings bonds. The Economic

Commission, however, continues to provide Legionnaires with information on the value of these bonds through articles and public service advertisements in Legion publications.

The American Legion has testified in favor of continuing to sell paper Savings Bonds along with the new availability of electronic bonds.

Department of Veterans Affairs: The Economic Division referred several veterans' inquiries to the VA Home Loan Guaranty Service, the Education Service, and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Service for investigation and reply.

Office of Personnel Management: The Economic Division referred nearly two dozen veterans' inquiries to OPM for investigation and reply.

The Veterans' Preference Committee continues to monitor veterans' employment trends in the future. It will also continue to work with OPM to promote employment opportunities for veterans.

Postal Service: The Economic Division referred several veterans' inquiries to USPS for investigation and reply.

The Veterans' Preference Committee continues to promote employment opportunities for veterans within the Postal Service.

Small Business Administration: The Deputy Director of Economics meets regularly with the SBA's Assistant Administrator for Veterans' Business Development, and invited the Assistant Administrator to speak to the Commission at Washington Conference in March 2004 and at National Convention in August 2003.

Conclusion

The National Economic Commission is fully aware that it would be impossible to carry out its mandates without the active involvement of Posts, Districts, Counties, Departments and individual Legionnaires. We deeply appreciate their continued support and involvement. Chairman Sercerchi also thanks the National Commander, the National Adjutant, the National Executive Committee, and the staff of both the Washington and Indianapolis offices for the outstanding support and cooperation they have provided during the past year.

FINANCE COMMISSION

Kenneth D. Danilson, Iowa, Chairman
George A. Buskirk, Jr., Indiana, National Treasurer
Paul M. Allen, Minnesota, Director

The primary obligation of the Finance Commission is to prepare a yearly budget for the National Executive Committee, handle funds under that budget, and exercise reasonable oversight to see that the various divisions and departments of the National Organization operate within appropriations. The Finance Commission includes seven members, with the National Adjutant as ex-officio secretary, and the National Commander and National Treasurer as ex-officio members. Also attending these meetings are the executive directors of the Washington and Indianapolis offices and the Finance Director, as well as liaison observers from the National Executive Committee.

The National Organization had an operating surplus of $1,881,757 for 2003. In that year, we received $9 dues per member, allocating $6 to the General Fund and $3 to *The American Legion Magazine*.

Income of the National organization derives from annual membership dues, interest on investments, magazine advertisements, Emblem Sales, contributions, and other approved activities.

A full financial statement is incorporated in the auditor's report. Your attention is directed also to the Reports of Committees and Trusts, which can be found in this publication.

These entities include the:

American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, Inc.
American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation
American Legion Life Insurance and Trust Committee
American Legion Emblem Committee
American Legion Overseas Graves Decoration Trust

Emblem Committee
Keith H. Gwilliam, Utah, Chairman
Jeffrey O. Brown, Indiana, Director

The American Legion emblem is the exclusive property of the National Headquarters. The sale of the emblem, emblem pins, merchandise carrying the emblem and other items of organizational equipment is the responsibility of the National Headquarters in Indianapolis. The following tables show gross sales, net earnings, etc., for the entire calendar year 2003 and for the first three months of 2004.

January 1 to December 31, 2003
(12 months)

Gross Sales	$11,585,519
Cost of Goods Sold	6177380
Overhead	3842484
Operating Profit	1565655

Total number of 2003 orders processed was 127,090.

January 1 to March 31, 2004
(3 months)

Gross Sales	$2,243,070
Cost of Goods Sold	1194445
Overhead	820470
Operating Profit	228155

Total orders processed for first 3 months of 2004 was 26,239.

The American Legion Life Insurance Committee
Leroy S. Lakey, North Carolina, Chairman
G. Paul Dunn, Oklahoma, Member Benefits Administrator

When considering the plans offered through The American Legion Life Insurance Program, it is important to remember these plans are for supplemental coverage only and are not meant to be the only coverage a member has. In addition, these plans are not meant to replace existing coverage. These plans are not designed to compete with individual/private insurance plans or employer benefit plans.

As with any insurance coverage, members should carefully consider these plans and read and understand all materials received including rates, benefits, features, scheduled premium increase or benefit reductions.

Important Information: Effective January 1, 2004—All Term Life plans were transferred to Reliastar Life Insurance Company. Insured members were informed of this change in October.

As a result of this change, all Term Life Insurance plans are under review. As soon as determinations are finalized about existing plans or new plans, appropriate announcements will be made. We expect to have additional plans available in 2004.

If you have questions from current policyholders call 1-800-542-5547: Marsh Affinity Group Services, Formerly (Seabury & Smith, Inc.), 1776 West Lakes Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50398.

The American Legion Whole Life Insurance Program

Another plan available to members and spouses is Birthday Life, underwritten by Union Fidelity Life Insurance Company, located in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania. This plan is a guaranteed-issue, whole life plan combined with accidental death insurance. The benefits do not decrease and premiums paid at entry age do not increase, as the insured grows older. No medical exam is required.

Guaranteed renewable for life, Legionnaires and spouses age 45 through age 80 are eligible to enroll in this plan, which builds cash values and offers a loan provision. **The age limit in Washington and New Jersey is lower than age 80. Contact Union Fidelity for details.**

The plan provides a limited death benefit, for the first two years, for death from natural causes and provides full benefits during that period for accidental deaths. Full benefits in any event are payable after two years.

For more information, contact Union Fidelity at the following address and phone number: **Union Fidelity Life Insurance Co. (Now Owned By GE Capital), Administrative Offices, 500 Virginia Dr., Fort Washington, PA 19034, 1-800-523-5758.**

Claims

The primary feature of The American Legion Insurance Plan is the benefits paid to beneficiaries of deceased insured Legionnaires. In 46 years, claims have been paid amounting to more than $254 million in benefits. These benefits were paid at no cost to the National Organization of The American Legion and no expenses to the general membership, other than certificate-policyholders. The insurance plan has proven to be a self-sustaining program. By the end of 2004, the total benefits paid will be nearly $265 million.

Health Care Plans

The American Legion has the following health care plans available to American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members and their dependents.

Please Note: ***The plans are not available in all states.*** Call for details.

1. A variety of major medical plans, called "Market Basket", which allows members (Legion and SAL) to call and request quotes on major medical insurance.
2. Small Business Group Insurance—provides quotes on major medical coverage for small employer groups of 2-50 employees. Additional options offered for employees are term life, accidental death, long and short-term disability and

dental. Remember, these plans are for employees of the small business group—not the general membership. Posts and Departments with 2 to 50 employees could also use this plan.

3. Dental Insurance—this is an indemnified insurance plan with a full schedule of benefits, for members and their dependents, including SAL.

For more information, call 1-877-886-0110.

The American Legion TRICARE Supplement Program

The American Legion has approved a National TRICARE Supplement Program for active duty and retired military members and dependents.

The program is designed to meet the needs of active duty and retired military members who may be referred to civilian facilities for care. It includes an active duty and retired version. A combined brochure is available from the Administrator. Information on the plan has previously been distributed to Departments.

This program can also provide an important tool for Posts and Departments that desire to recruit members on or near military bases or retired military personnel.

For additional information, questions, or quantities of brochures, call 1-800-542-5547. The American Legion TRICARE Supplement Program is underwritten by Hartford Life Insurance Company and Administered by Marsh Affinity Group Services, of West Des Moines, Iowa. **Please Note:** (***These plans are not available in all states***).

The American Legion Discount Prescription Program

An important benefit for American Legion, Sons of The American Legion (SAL) and The American Legion Auxiliary members and dependents is The American Legion Discount Prescription Program designed by Seabury & Smith and administered by RxAmerica. The program was approved nationwide by the National Executive Committee at its October 1995 meeting. We are pleased to announce that the Department of Maryland entered the National program in 2003, after their own program was terminated.

The program has two components: a network of retail pharmacies and a mail order service. It's easy to use. Members simply present their current American Legion, SAL, or Auxiliary membership card at the pharmacy when purchasing a prescription to receive the discount. For mail service, obtain a mail order request form from the local Post or by calling the toll-free number, 1-800-905-9818, complete the mail order form and send it to: RxAmerica, P.O. box 960125, Fort Worth, TX 76161-9863. The mail service is guaranteed to be more cost-effective than AARP mail service.

Most of the time members can save as much as 20% or more on prescription purchases. In cases when members appear not to save, it is usually when the drug is already on sale as a loss leader. Loss leaders are drugs priced well below retail, sometimes below cost, to lure customers into the pharmacy. However, the Legion Discount Prescription Program assures that members pay the lowest price in the network pharmacy for that drug on that particular day—the lesser of the two.

Members have actually experienced an average savings of about 17.5% nationally. This amounts to nearly $45 million in savings for Legion, SAL and Auxiliary members thus far. Continued utilization will increase savings even more.

Notice: In the September issue of The American Legion Magazine, an ad was published and two (2) RxAmerica prescription cards were inserted. The cards were provided to increase awareness of the program and assist members when they encounter

pharmacists who are not familiar with the program. However, membership cards are accepted and can still be used.

If you would like additional prescription cards, contact the Member Benefits Division at 5745 Lee Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46216; (317) 860-3013.

The Discount Prescription Program is providing assistance to members in a highly visible need area and can potentially be one of the most valuable member benefits available.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMISSION

David Rehbein, Iowa, Chairman
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Director

The following annual report covers the activities of the American Legion's Foreign Relations Commission and Foreign Relations Council for the 2003-2004 program year ending June 30, 2004.

Overview

There are two principal goals of the Commission's continuing work. First, the Commission is dedicated to keeping the membership and leadership of The American Legion informed on relevant foreign policy issues and to carrying the Legion's important voice as contained in adopted resolutions to our government. Second, the Commission and its staff work to urge bipartisan cooperation by the Congress and the Administration in developing consistent, viable foreign policies for the United States.

To keep the membership fully informed, the Foreign Relations Commission conducts meetings and programs throughout the year, which highlight current foreign policy issues. The Commission is also dedicated to providing and exchanging information on foreign relations topics and ideas through its speaker program, while also regularly consulting with its grassroots membership on these key issues.

The Commission works to influence the Administration and Congress toward development of bipartisan foreign policies, which are consistent with the principles of Democratic Activism as well as our entire portfolio of active resolutions. The American Legion participates in numerous meetings, hearings and programs throughout the year providing both input and recommendations to the State Department, to congressional offices and committees, and to the White House. This is done through liaison offices at these agencies.

Mr. David Rehbein, of Iowa, was appointed in the Fall of 2003 and serves as the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Commission.

Foreign Relations Commission Resolutions

Foreign Relations resolutions that are legislative in nature adopted at the 84th National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina and the 85th National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri compromise The American Legion's positions that are valid for the 108th Congress. These resolutions, in addition to those previously adopted which are not legislative in nature, seek to address the range of issues associated with American foreign policy. Two overarching general foreign policy resolutions outline the major principles that have characterized The American Legion's approach to foreign affairs over many years:

Resolution Number 66 (85th NC), American Leadership in the New Millennium, which outlines the major international goals sought by The American

Legion and recognizes the unprecedented and far reaching changes in the international security environment in the post-Cold War and post 9/11 period. This Resolution calls upon the U.S. Government to adopt policies that reflect American values, which include maintaining a strong national defense to deter or defeat aggression, and to review our strategic relationships.

Resolution Number 94 (84th NC), Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy, which outlines The American Legion's objectives for U.S. foreign policy in order to maintain peace with freedom while preserving and promoting democracy. This resolution also suggests that U.S. foreign policy embody key principles that include:

- Recognition of U.S. responsibilities as a world leader
- Dedication to world peace and a peace through strength posture
- Active promotion of democracy
- Support for a global war on multiple fronts to end the scourge of terrorism
- Support for democracy and human rights in other countries when such is consistent with U.S. national interests
- Participation in collective security alliances
- Equitable and verifiable arms control agreements
- Opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery
- Determined opposition to international terrorism and drug trafficking
- Support for responsible international organizations consistent with our interests
- Participation in the increasingly interdependent free world trade system
- Recognition of the importance of national sovereignty in foreign relations issues

The additional resolutions adopted at the 85th National Convention in St. Louis are:
Resolution Number 2: Support for the Republic of Korea
Resolution Number 3: Support for the Republic of China
Resolution Number 37: Puerto Rico Self Determination
Resolution Number 148: Free Trade Area of the Americas

National Executive Committee Meeting, Fall 2004

On October 7th and 8th, the Foreign Relations Commission met in executive session in the Radisson City Centre Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business.

In the initial meeting on October 7th, two resolutions were considered. These were referred from the 85th National Convention and both were disposed of administratively.

The Commission engaged in a vigorous debate on the current situation in regard to the situation in Iraq. Also discussed were America's participation in the United Nations as well as the continuing crisis in North Korea.

The Foreign Relations Commission covered ideas for guest speakers for the Washington Conference in March 2003, including potential speakers for a possible POW/MIA Update program during the conference.

The final meeting of the Foreign Relations Commission was held jointly with the National Security Commission to view a videotape entitled "Kim's Nuclear Gamble."

2004 Washington Conference

The Foreign Relations Commission met in general session on March 8 and 10, 2004 during the 44th annual Washington Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Washington, DC. The following is a summary of their sessions:

Morning Session, March 8

The Commission met jointly with the National Security Commission to hear several speakers of mutual interest. Brigadier General Louis Weber, Director of Training, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-3, addressed the many challenges facing the Army. The Army is undergoing the largest troop redeployment in Iraq since World War II with over four divisions being replaced by four divisions. Forty percent of the American force in Iraq will be composed of activated Guardsmen and Reservists; and forty-eight percent of the Reserve Components have been activated. Additionally, the Army is rebalancing the Active Component/Reserve Component mix and will be reorganizing its brigade structures so as to created additional brigades with aviation and other capabilities. Finally, the Army intends to stabilize personnel assignments in the years ahead.

The second speaker, Mr. David Ballard, Director of the Office of Foreign Press at the U.S. Department of State, updated the Commissions generally on the role of his office in working with representatives of foreign media organizations in reporting news from the United States. Of immediate interest to the commissions was Mr. Ballard's accounting of his time in Iraq from December 2003 to February 2004, assisting in the process of beginning the institution of a true democratic government in Iraq and educating the local population in the workings of democracy. He discussed the problems facing the people of Iraq and despite the acts of terrorism that were being perpetrated by those opposed to the regime change hopeful signs were appearing. His report included instances of cooperation between the Shiite, Sunni and Kurd populations in working together toward taking control of their government. Mr. Ballard was generally optimistic on the prospects of conditions continuing to improve in Iraq. Mr. Ballard answered numerous questions from the members of the Commission on his impression of the current situation in Iraq.

Afternoon Session, March 8

The National Security and Foreign Relations Commission met in joint session to attend the POW/MIA update presented by the Foreign Relations Commission.

The first speaker of the POW/MIA session was Colonel John Moulton, USAF, Commander of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA). Col. Moulton summarized the responsibilities of the JPRA and provided a short history of the Agency's since its formation in 1999. JPRA is a joint-service agency charged with developing and implementing policy and procedures for training of United States military personnel in the event of they are captured by a hostile force. The agency coordinates and evaluates the training in each of the individual service's survival schools both for the basic course and the more advanced course for personnel who run a greater risk of capture such as aircrew and Special Forces. JPRA also has responsibility for tailoring the training of military personnel to the particular mission type being undertaken since the status of captured personnel can differ based on the type of mission; from Prisoner of War to hostage to political detainee. The appropriate behavior of the captured personnel changes according to their status and thus the training needs change.

Ms. Ann Mills Griffith, Executive Director of the National League of Families of Missing from Southeast Asia, provided an update on the status of recovery operations and relations with the government of Vietnam. Her presentation included a historical sketch of the status of the POW/MIA issue and particularly credited President Ronald Reagan with resurrecting awareness toward providing an accounting of the missing. She touched on the support of The American Legion with the League of Families in opposing normalization of trade relations with Vietnam and thanked The Legion for their strong support over the past 30 years. In response to questions, Ms. Griffith addressed the need

to continually press the government of Vietnam on the issue of recovery and repatriation of remains but particularly in the area of those personnel whose status is in the category of 'last known alive.' It is the League's opinion that Vietnam could do much more in this area to help. She also spoke of the initial steps being taken by the government of Vietnam to allow a US salvage vessel into their territorial waters to investigate more than 30 known sites of US aircraft that went down with personnel aboard. These sites have the potential for recovery of approximately 90 US personnel. Ms. Griffith also touched on the possibility that the Vietnamese government may have remains in storage to be returned as circumstances warrant to achieve their objectives. She concluded by asking the continued assistance of the Legionnaires in achieving the fullest possible of all those missing, not just Southeast Asia but from all wars.

Wednesday Session, March 10

The Foreign Relations Commission met in a business session on Wednesday morning, March 8, 2004. Assistant Director John C. Petersen gave a briefing on the International Affairs portion of the federal budget. He outlined the major portions of this account, which include State Department funding, foreign humanitarian aid and military assistance. Petersen also stressed that all international affairs spending accounts for only one half of one percent of the federal budget. The members of the Commission were encouraged to submit ideas for speakers and topics of discussion at the meeting to be held at the 2004 National Convention in Nashville.

National Executive Committee Meeting, Spring 2004

An executive session of The Foreign Relations Commission met on May 3, 2004 in the Circle West room of the Radisson City Centre Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana to discuss a variety of issues. The Commission discussed recent world events, especially the war in Iraq, and corresponding American Legion resolutions. The expansion of NATO and the European Union, HIV/AIDS in Africa, Libya's moves toward renouncing terrorism, the human rights situation in Vietnam and Taiwan's talk of independence were just a few of the current issues that were covered by the Commission. The Commission also discussed the upcoming 86th National Convention in Nashville, TN in detail, including recommendations for speakers and resolution requirements.

On Tuesday, May 5, 2004, the Foreign Relations and National Security Commissions viewed videotapes of mutual interest including a recent *PBS Frontline* program on the potential for Cyber warfare.

The National Security—Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of: G. Michael Schlee, Director; Dennis M. Duggan, Deputy Director; John C. Petersen, Assistant Director; Angela L. Rose, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Tina T. Hines, Secretary.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The division also coordinates the National Commander's foreign travel as well as managing a variety of special assignments. The duties included answering correspondence, E-mail and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army,

Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Transportation (Coast Guard); the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. The foreign relation's responsibilities also entail continuing liaison with embassies, "think tanks" and a variety on governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization as well as Congress, the Department of State and the general public. Coordinating foreign travel, writing and delivering speeches, preparing reports and testimony, are also duties of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field. Numerous press interviews, background briefings and public releases are coordinated with our Media Relations Office.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as the *Dispatch* and *The American Legion Magazine* which are a primary means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign relations.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Herman G. Harrington, New York, Chairman
John W. Querfeld, Illinois, Director

The National Internal Affairs Commission was established by resolution of the National Executive Committee in 1947. The original charge for this constitutional commission still remains: "to formulate and recommend policies and to oversee the implementation of adopted policies relating to activities conducted for organizational purposes."

Among those purposes are all those not properly the responsibility of any other national commission, as well as membership strategies, post formation, clerical and records administration for posts and individual members, and special projects. The commission also is required from time to time to provide guidance and assistance to the National Adjutant on necessary administrative operations of the National Headquarters.

Under the broad interpretation of those purposes not properly the responsibility of other commissions, Internal Affairs oversees awards, constitutional discipline, and commemorative activities. The commission also monitors legislative and other regulatory activities, which potentially affect posts and departments, and recommends appropriate courses of action.

The commission has four standing committees assigned to it for supervision and coordination. They are Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials, Resolutions Assignment, Constitution and By-Laws, and Membership & Post Activities. The latter has separate reporting responsibilities to the National Convention and the National Executive Committee.

Internal Affairs is responsible for overseeing and reviewing the activities of the Sons of The American Legion, which is not a separate organization, but rather, a major program of the organization.

The commission also oversees long-term programs and activities as the National Paid-Up-For-Life program and the National Emergency Fund.

TROPHIES, AWARDS AND CEREMONIALS
Randall W. Busch, Nebraska, Chairman

This committee supervises all of the official national awards and recommends to the National Executive Committee recipients for the Distinguished Service Medal; over the years, some of those awarded The American Legion's highest honor were: General John J. Pershing, Ignace Jan Paderewski of Poland, Henry Ford, Ernie Pyle, Bob Hope, Babe Ruth, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, the dead & missing of the Vietnam War, 10 men who have served as President of The United States in the 20th Century, plus many other citizens of renown who have made lasting and significant contributions.

Other awards this committee makes recommendations on include the International Amity Award, and the Canadian Friendship Award. A report is also prepared for the National Executive Committee on miscellaneous awards that have been presented during each year.

The committee also supervises the contents of the Manual of Ceremonies of The American Legion.

RESOLUTIONS ASSIGNMENT
Gerald Diercks, Minnesota, Chairman

The Resolutions Assignment Committee meets at least three days before the convening of the annual National Convention. This committee has the responsibility to receive, consider and transmit all resolutions—with or without recommendation—to the appropriate convention committee for a report to the convention. During an average year, several hundred resolutions will be assigned.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
Vincent Gaughan, Illinois, Chairman

The National Constitution and By-Laws of The American Legion can only be amended by the duly elected delegates at a National Convention.

However, the Constitution and By-Laws Committee, established by the authority of the National Executive Committee in 1939, authorizes this committee to study and make proper recommendations concerning all of the matters that pertain to the Constitution and By-laws, as well as matters relating to the Uniform Code of Procedure, which provides rules and regulations for the Revocation, Cancellation, or Suspension of Department and Post Charters of The American Legion.

MEMBERSHIP AND POST ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE
Marilyn L. Britten, Michigan, Chairman
Billy R. Johnson, Georgia, Membership Director

Membership and programs go hand-in-hand to make The American Legion an organization able to provide the people and resources to serve the need of the veteran and his/her family. The Membership and Post Activities is pleased to report a continuing membership of nearly 2.7 million members worldwide.

Membership

Final 2003 Membership	2688331
2004 Membership as of Aug. 1, 2004:	2652153

Since 1982, the Direct Membership Solicitation (DMS) Program has been responsible for acquiring over 2.6 million new members into the 52 participating Departments. In 2004, the DMS Program acquired over 102,000 new members. The DMS Program has proven to be very successful in the acquisition of new members, but again this year, the emphasis was on the transfer, renewal, and retention of those members. The DMS Program will continue to support The American Legion's on-going membership efforts with special emphasis on the retention of all members.

41st Annual National Membership Workshop

The 41st annual membership meeting was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, on Friday, July 30-31, 2004, with over 350 department and district officers in attendance from nearly all of the 50 departments.

Many of those attending arrive in Indianapolis with a very good understanding of the membership program, especially as it pertains to their areas. But, by the time the workshop concludes they are prepared to face the day-to-day membership challenges with a better understanding of The American Legion as it relates to potential members.

The goal of this workshop is to provide these essential membership workers with the tools, knowledge, and desire to grow the membership in The American Legion. Whether it is membership recruitment or program implementation—it is all about veterans helping veterans and providing communities the essential programs to maintain a quality of life for which all veterans fought and served to preserve.

New Post Development/Revitalization Program

The Membership and Post Activities Committee developed a training program in January 1996 designed to assist Posts, Districts and Departments in developing and revitalizing posts.

The program provides training workshops to interested volunteers along with practical field application.

The success of the program is evident, based on the revitalization/development of more than 500 American Legion Posts. This adds up to 19,500 new, renewed and transferred members. Efforts have now expanded into Metropolitan areas. Many Departments have been successful in this program without any actual assistance from National Staff. Whether a Department requests field assistance or just the training workshop, if the guidelines are followed, there will be successful results. The program, however, requires a commitment from every level of leadership, if it is to be successful.

Reconnect Program

The Reconnect Program is an initiative by the Department of Defense to "Reconnect" America with today's military.

"Reconnect" is an open invitation from the military for groups like The American Legion to establish ties between military installations and the civilian community. This is not a free ticket to recruit on military installations, but it is an opportunity for The American Legion to showcase the programs and services we have in place. Legionnaires should go into an event with the attitude of providing a service to the service members on the installation and promoting the military in the local community.

We have found that success depends largely on the participation of Departments and the cooperation of local American Legion Posts in the community near the military installations.

An important consideration is that while "Reconnect" visits to larger installations is important from a public relations point of view, the measure of success for The American

Legion is the amount and quality of visits to the thousands of local National Guard and Reserve Component units in the United States, as well as smaller active duty training installations. These men and women, and their families, are the "citizen-soldiers" who live far away from the larger established military support networks. They most need our support.

Internal Affairs Programs

National Leadership & Information Conferences

Sponsored through a cooperative effort of the National Headquarters of The American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons of The American Legion and Departments, this important series of conferences is held in eight regional locations throughout the United States to provide updated information and to train current and future leaders.

The American Legion is about Americans taking care of America, assisting others to prepare for the changing world in the 21st Century. These conferences explore the rapid and dramatic economic, technological, social and political trends that affect the way we conduct business today, and in the years to come.

Conference instructors are the professional staff of the organization, and some are leaders from the volunteer sector. These knowledgeable, dedicated instructors cover many programs and activities, providing a blend of experience, educational expertise, sharing of ideas, helping to solve problems, exchanging information, and sharpening individual skills.

The American Legion National College

Each November, The American Legion National College can host as many as fifty talented young Legionnaires at National Headquarters in Indianapolis for a week of intensive training. These students return to their Departments armed with newly acquired or sharpened skills in leadership, marketing, communication, and fundraising. Student candidates are nominated by the Departments and selected by a National Selection Committee of Past National Commanders.

Candidates for the National College must be veterans from the Lebanon/Grenada period (August 1982) or later with demonstrated potential for further service.

The American Legion National College is a worthwhile investment for every Department. Graduates are making a difference in leadership roles and membership teams across the country. Many have already been appointed to Department level positions while others are used in various leadership and teaching roles in Department Legion Colleges and National Leadership and Information Conferences.

Sons of The American Legion

The Sons of The American Legion will conduct its 33rd National Convention at the Opryland Hotel & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. For the 30th consecutive year, the Sons of The American Legion are at an "All Time High" in membership. The SAL closed its membership at the end of 2003 with a record 280,206 members. This number represents a 5.2% percent increase over the previous year.

Membership figures for 2004 have already exceeded the figures for the 2003 membership year. Membership currently stands at 283,000 plus which is an "All Time High."

The S.A.L. continues its support of American Legion programs and is heavily involved with support to our nation's veterans in the VAVS program. In 2003, the S.A.L. provided over 195,830, volunteer hours in VA homes and hospitals. Donations in cash

and goods to these veterans exceeded $1,949,233, nationwide. This was remarkable considering only than 10% of the Squadron's submitted reports. The S.A.L. also raised over $313,000.00 in the year 2004 for the Child Welfare Foundation surpassing all previous years. The Sons also provided several grants through The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The Sons of The American Legion have contributed over two million dollars to The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

The Sons continue to support to Legion programs with major emphasis on VAVS, National Emergency Fund, World War II memorial, and the Children's Miracle Network as well as other vital programs. As an integral part of The American Legion family, the Sons continue to serve and provide assistance to Posts and their communities.

National Emergency Fund

The National Emergency Fund continues each year in the spirit of veterans helping veterans and their families in need as it has since 1989. We topped the "$1 million mark" in 2002 for funds available to the Legion family. Last year, grants totaling over $176,000 went to 107 individuals and 15 posts. Thus far in 2004 we have approved over $60,000 representing 40 grants (four to Legion posts) due to firestorms, tornadoes, flooding, etc. and we can expect to receive many more grants from all over the United States due to unpredictable weather patterns. Total of grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 are over $3.8 million.

Each and every dollar contributed to this fund is used for the express purpose of rendering financial assistance to our members and Legion Posts that have incurred devastation from a declared natural disaster (i.e., wind, rain, fire and earthquakes.) Money to support the administrative costs of maintaining this fund and conducting fundraising is absorbed through existing budget areas.

What makes this program so unique is that our members know they can turn to The American Legion for immediate financial assistance without the red tape or repayment requirements normally associated with other federal and state agencies. With the help of all Legion members, the National Emergency Fund will continue to meet the most immediate needs of our Legion family after a "declared natural disaster" by Federal, State or local government authorities.

Consolidated Post Reports

The Consolidated Post Report—one of The American Legion's most valuable documents—is our report card to Congress. It provides a summary of the collective assistance provided to the nation from our Legion Posts. Nearly 50 percent of American Legion Posts submitted reports to National Headquarters for the 2002-2003 year.

The total figures show the cost to outfit Color Guards, Firing Squads and other uniformed groups was $2,430,773; Legion baseball team support cost $6,955,435; other athletic teams were provided $1,989,785; cash contributions to VA Voluntary Service was $1,836,723, and over 1,243,597 hours of volunteer service were provided; 56,454 Boy Scouts were sponsored at a cost of $1,537,674; scholarships valued at $3,977,835 were awarded to 8,451 students.

In addition, 2,223,378 hours were spent performing community service work, valued at $4,911,713; nearly 90,519 pints of blood were donated, and additional millions of dollars in goods and cash were contributed to programs helping veterans and their families.

Key Fact: The above figures represent just over half of all American Legion Posts.

Paid-Up-For-Life Program

They are Legionnaires who have voluntarily chosen to become Paid-Up-For-Life members under the National plan. The number of Legionnaires who have applied for a lifetime membership since the beginning of the program in 1975 is over 250,000. A Legionnaire must be in good standing to become a Paid-Up-For-Life member...to be in good standing, the member must have a valid membership card for the current Legion year. The cost of a Paid-Up-For-Life membership is based on the member's age at the time of application and the current annual dues of the Post.

Each Paid-Up-For-Life member receives a permanent plastic card, as well as an annual paper membership card, directly from National, to verify continuing membership in The American Legion. The annual card is mailed in July of each year.

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

Martin Conatser, Illinois, Chairman
Steve Robertson, Louisiana, Director

This report covers activities of the National Legislative Commission from August 9, 2003 through August 6, 2004. During this period, the Commission met four (4) times to review the legislative program and to make recommendations to the National Executive Committee. Reports of these meetings are contained in the published proceedings of the National Executive Committee.

Purpose, Personnel and Organization

The National Legislative Commission represents The American Legion before the Congress of the United States on all legislative matters in which The American Legion is officially interested. The Commission also assists the National Executive Committee in formulating an appropriate legislative program for each session of Congress. The Commission consists of thirty-three members and five National Executive Committee liaisons.

To further assist the Commission in its work, the National Executive Committee in 1975 created the National Legislative Council, composed of Legionnaires whose judgment and advice are respected by their elected Members of Congress. There is one council member for each Member of Congress. A Council Chairman, who is assisted by a Vice Chairman in 50 State Departments, heads the Council. The Chairman, Vice Chairmen and general membership of the Council are appointed by the National Commander upon recommendation by the Departments.

The professional staff of the Commission (the Legislative Division) concentrates on implementing the legislative mandates of The American Legion that are expressed in resolutions adopted at its annual National Convention and by the National Executive Committee at each of its regularly scheduled meetings. The Legislative Division is located in Washington, DC and consists of the director, a deputy director an assistant director, a grassroots coordinator, one secretary, a librarian and a research analyst. The director, deputy director, assistant director and grassroots coordinator are registered lobbyists and submit biannual lobbying reports to Congress. Because The American Legion is a federally chartered organization, an annual report is also prepared and submitted to Congress.

108th Congress, First Session

The budget process remained the focus of congressional attention during the First Session of the 108th Congress. When October 1, 2003 arrived—the official start of Fiscal Year (FY) 2004—only three of the 13 funding measures that are needed to operate the federal government had become law—Defense, Homeland Security, and the Legislative Branch. Three other spending bills were enacted in November and December: Energy and Water; Interior; and Military Construction.

Between late September and mid-November, four continuing resolutions were passed and enacted which extended funding through late January, 2004 at FY 2003 amounts. The remaining seven appropriations bills were rolled into an omnibus spending bill (Public Law 108-199), which was signed by the President on January 23, 2004 after the start of the Second Session. The First Session of the 108th Congress officially adjourned on December 7, 2003.

Economics

Included in PL 108-136, the FY 2004 DoD authorization bill, are provisions that would radically change the personnel structure of the civilian workforce within DoD. Much of the language from a separate bill—HR 1836, the Civil Service and National Security Personnel Improvement Act—was included in the final version of PL 108-136.

Specifically, The American Legion opposes any actions that would remove or jeopardize veterans' preference safeguards within the federal personnel system. The American Legion does not support dismantling veterans' earned rights and protections under the current personnel system addressed in title V, United States Code.

The American Legion supports a thorough evaluation of proposed changes contained in HR 1836 relative to any adverse impact such changes would have on veterans—past, present, or future—employed by DoD or any other federal agency.

Internal Affairs

On November 11, the President signed PL 108-121, the Military Family Tax Relief Act. This law contains language sought by The American Legion to amend the Internal Revenue Code regarding use of American Legion Post facilities by members and their families and legacy organizations.

For several years The American Legion and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have been at odds over the concept of unrelated business income, as well as the possibility of individual Posts losing their tax exemption under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Act of 1986. According to the Legion's congressional charter, only veterans who served during specific, designated wars or periods of wartime may become members of The American Legion. Section 501(c)(19) requires only 75 percent of the members to be current or former members of the Armed Forces. The Legion requires that 100 percent of its members be qualifying veterans.

However, The American Legion has many programs—including the Sons of the American Legion (SAL), American Legion Baseball, oratorical contests, and sponsorship of Scouting units— designed to further the purposes for which the Legion's tax exemption status was granted. Also, many Posts are family gathering places for social and patriotic events. However, questions have been raised whether SALs count toward the 100 percent.

PL 108-121 would provide that the definition of "member" for purposes of the tax exempt status and unrelated business income would be expanded to include ancestors and lineal descendants of the member (a "member" meaning past and present members of the Armed Services who meet the congressional charter definition).

National Security

On October 1, President Bush signed PL 108-87, the FY 2004 DoD appropriations bill. The House of Representatives passed the bill on September 24, by a vote of 407-15. The Senate followed suit the next day, approving the measure by a 95-0 vote.

The bill funds DoD at $368.2 billion. A brief outline of the major programs is presented below.

Procurement: This account would be funded at $74.7 billion, an increase of $3.1 billion over the current year's funding. Some of the major accounts include:

- $3.6 billion for 22 F-22 fighters for the Air Force.
- $2.9 billion for 42 F/A-18E/F fighter aircraft for the Navy.
- $2.1 billion for 11 C-17 airlift planes for the Air Force.
- $1.5 billion for 11 V-22 Ospreys for the Marine Corps and Air Force.
- $355 million for 350 Tactical Tomahawk cruise missiles for the Navy.
- $228 million for 19 Blackhawk helicopters for the Army.

In addition, $11.5 billion is allocated for production of another Virginia-class submarine, two Trident submarine conversions to use cruise missiles, and three Aegis-class destroyers.

Research and Development: A total of $65.2 billion was requested for this account, compared to the FY 2003 amount of $58.2 billion. Major programs funded include:

- $9.1 billion for ballistic missile defense research.
- $4.3 billion for the Joint Strike Fighter.
- $1.5 billion for the next-generation CVN-21 carrier.
- $1.1 billion for the Army's Comanche helicopter.
- $1 billion for the DD(X) next-generation destroyer.
- $791 million for Space-Based Radar and Space-Based Infra-Red System.

Military Personnel: This category will receive $98.5 billion from Congress, compared to $93.6 billion in FY 2003. The administration requested $98.9 billion for FY 2004. The bill would support the President's request for 1.388 million active duty military personnel and 863,300 Selected Reserves and National Guard personnel. Also fully funded will be: a) military personnel pay raises (average level of 4.1 percent); and b) the increase in Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), which will lower service personnel's out-of-pocket expenses from 7.5 percent in FY 2003 to 3.5 percent in FY 2004.

Operations and Maintenance: A total of $115.9 billion was assigned for this account, an increase over the current year of $1.2 billion, but below the White House request of $116.9 billion. This account provides for land forces training, tank-training miles, helicopter flying hours, ship steaming days and Air Force and Navy flying hour programs. It also supports DoD goal to fund facilities sustainment at not less than 93 percent in all branches of the armed forces.

In other programs, the Defense Health Program will receive $15.7 billion from Congress. A total of $1 billion was enacted for procurement and development of chemical and biological defenses, with additional funding for mobile chemical agent detection, air contaminant monitoring systems, early warning and detection programs, and miniature chemical and biological detectors. Drug interdiction programs will be funded at $836 million.

On October 1, President Bush signed PL 108-90, the FY 2004 Homeland Security appropriations measure. The House approved the conference report on September 24 by a 417-8 vote. Later the same day, the Senate approved the report by a voice vote. This bill— the first stand-alone measure to fund the new Department of Homeland Security

(DHS)— would allocate $29.4 billion for its various agencies. Among the categories funded are:

- $6.8 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard,
- $5.6 billion over the coming decade—including $890 million for FY 2004—for Project Bioshield, under which the federal government would acquire antidotes and take other steps to counter bioterrorism,
- $5.2 billion for the Transportation Security Administration,
- $4.9 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection,
- $4.2 billion in grants for state and local "first responders"—firefighters, police and emergency response personnel—to prepare for future terrorist events,
- $3.5 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs,
- $1.1 billion for the U.S. Secret Service, and
- $839 million for the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate. This agency identifies and assesses threats, maps threat information against current vulnerabilities, issues warnings, and takes preventive action.

On November 6, President Bush signed into law PL 108-106, the emergency supplemental bill to fund the war on terrorism. The House of Representatives passed the measure on October 31 by a 298-121 vote; the Senate passed the bill by a voice vote on November 3.

The law includes total funding of $87.5 billion. It includes:

- $65.8 billion for direct military costs of the war on terrorism,
- $20.8 billion for Afghanistan and Iraq relief and reconstruction,
- $500 million to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to deal with the California wildfires and Hurricane Isabel, and
- $210 million for aid to Liberia, Jordan and Sudan.

Some provisions of interest included in the measure include:

Force Protection: PL 108-106 includes increased spending to purchase additional body armor, to clear unexploded ordinance, and to increase the production of other protection measures such as armored Humvees and electronic jamming equipment.

Hazard Pay and Family Support: The law includes authorization for continued payment of per diem for travel by family members of military personnel who are ill or injured as a result of active duty service. It also includes a provision to continue the increased monthly rate of Imminent Danger Pay and Family Separation Allowances through September 30, 2004.

TRICARE and Reservist Health Care Benefits: One of the more important provisions included in this law allows inactive reservists and their family members to become eligible for TRICARE health coverage if they are receiving unemployment compensation or not eligible for any other health coverage. Also included are provisions that expand eligibility time periods for reservists and provide medical and dental screening and care coverage where appropriate.

One provision dropped from the final version of the bill would have required that a portion of the funds going to rebuild Iraq be made into loans that would be repaid. The White House opposed this provision, and the Senate-authored provision was dropped during conference.

On November 24, President Bush signed PL 108-136, the FY 2004 Department of Defense (DoD) authorization bill. This measure lays down the DoD budget blueprint for FY 2004. It is also used to set down many DoD policy issues that are not generally contained in the DoD spending bill.

The measure provides $401.3 billion in budget authority for DoD programs. This includes a) $114.4 billion for operations and maintenance, b) $74.2 billion for

procurement, and c) $63.4 billion for research and development. It also authorizes a modest increase in active duty forces to 1.390 million, up 800 personnel.

PL 108-136 also authorizes a) an across-the-board pay raise of 4.1 percent for all military personnel, b) an increase for imminent danger pay from $150/month to $225/month, c) extension of special pay and bonuses for active duty personnel through December 31, 2004, and d) boosting the family separation allowance from $100/month to $250/month through the end of 2004. It also authorizes access to TRICARE for National Guard and Reserve members who do not have access to employer-provided health insurance, as well as such persons who are unemployed. The measure also allows selected reservists - and Reserve retirees under age 60—the same privileges to use commissaries as active duty personnel and their dependents.

Other DoD areas receiving budget authority in PL 108-136 include:

- $9.1 billion for the continued development of ballistic missile defense,
- $1.2 billion for chemical-biological defense procurement and research and development (R&D),
- $977 million for counter-drug activities,
- $730 million for facilities enhancements to improve the training and readiness of National Guard and Reserves, and
- $451 million to dismantle, secure and eliminate weapons of mass destruction and their related facilities in the former Soviet Union through the cooperative threat reduction program.

Aircraft—PL 108-136 provides the following amounts for specific weapons systems:

- $4.5 billion for F-35 Joint Strike Fighter R&D,
- $3.5 billion for F/A-18 Hornet procurement (42 planes), modifications and R&D,
- $3.5 billion for procurement of 22 F-22 Raptor fighters,
- $1.6 billion for V-22 Osprey procurement (9 planes for the Marine Corps, 2 for the Air Force) and R&D,
- $1.48 billion for C-17 Globemaster advance procurement (14 planes) and modifications,
- $972 million for Apache Longbow upgrades and Blackhawk helicopter procurement,
- $775 million for F-15 and F-16 modifications and R&D,
- $386 million for B-1B Lancer and B-2 bomber modification and R&D, and
- $324 million for C-5 Galaxy and C-130 Hercules cargo plane modifications.

Ground Weapons, Vehicles and Naval Ships—The DoD authorization measure would provide:

- $3.2 billion for procurement of 3 Arleigh Burke-class AEGIS destroyers,
- $2.5 billion for procurement of the sixth Virginia-class new attack submarine and advanced procurement for the seventh in FY 2005,
- $1.7 billion for the Future Combat System (FSC),
- $1.5 billion for advance procurement and R&D of the next generation aircraft carrier,
- $1.2 billion for converting 2 nuclear ballistic missile submarines to carry long-range conventional Tomahawk cruise missiles,
- $1 billion for continued R&D of the DD(X), the next generation of surface combat ship,
- $955 million for Stryker medium armored vehicles, and

- $458 million for heavy forces upgrades, including M2A3 Bradley and M1A2 Abrams tanks.

Issues of national security continue to be priority concerns of The American Legion and our membership. The American Legion continues to believe in the tenet of "Peace Through Strength."

On December 8, the President signed PL 108-173, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003. A provision in the bill will help military retirees who enrolled in Medicare Part B in order to qualify for TRICARE for Life (TFL) and are paying a penalty due to a late enrollment. The new provision will waive the penalty for those who enrolled in Medicare Part B from 2001 through 2004 and are paying the penalty. Premiums effective January 1, 2004 will be lowered to the "normal" Medicare Part B rate. The rate for calendar year 2004 is $66.60 per month. To qualify for the lower rate, a special open enrollment period will occur through December 31, 2004. Since it will take time to publish the administrative regulations to implement this change, military retirees who enrolled late will continue to pay the penalty. Once enrolled under this special rule, any late fees paid on or after January, 2004 will be refunded.

This legislation does not change any prescription programs for those who use VA health care, military treatment facilities, TRICARE or Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHBP).

The American Legion continues to support legislation allowing concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation by military retirees. Representative Mike Bilirakis, R-Fla., reintroduced HR 303—the Military Retired Pay Restoration Act—in the 108th Congress and the measure has 383 co-sponsors. Senator Harry Reid (NV) reintroduced the Senate companion bill as S 392, which now has 69 co-sponsors. Also, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (SD) introduced a comprehensive bill, S 19, which includes full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and VA disability compensation. That measure has 30 cosponsors.

The final version of PL 108-136, the FY 2004 DoD authorization measure, contained a provision that affects approximately one third to one half of disabled retirees. While not the final solution hoped for, it does provide for large numbers of disabled retirees to receive both their retired pay and VA disability compensation. The projected price tag for this new program is $23 billion over 10 years.

Beginning on January 1, 2004, all military retirees with 20 years or more of service and a qualifying combat-related disability rated at: 10 percent for which the retiree received a Purple Heart, or as a direct result of combat, on hazardous service, in the performance of duty under conditions simulating war, or through an instrumentality of war, will be eligible for the program. This includes National Guard and Reserve personnel who have accumulated less than 7200 points. In addition, military retirees currently enrolled in the combat-related special compensation (CRSC) program are also eligible to participate in the program. The only persons excluded are military retirees who where medically retired with less than 20 years of service.

Retirees with non-combat related disabilities rated 50 percent or greater would receive retired pay depending upon their disability rating, phased in over 10 years. The monthly payments will be $750 for total disability, $500 for 90 percent, $350 for 80 percent, $250 for 70 percent, $125 for 60 percent and $100 for 50 percent. Beginning in 2005, these payments would be adjusted by: a) determining the amount of retired pay to which a program participant would be entitled, b) subtracting the amount received in the first year from the entitled amount and c) increasing the remainder by ten percent. This process would go on until January 1, 2014 when the offset between retired pay and VA compensation would be eliminated.

Under PL 108-136, disabled military retirees could opt into either this new program or into the CRSC program. One determining factor could be that the new program's payments are considered taxable income, while CRSC payments are tax-free. Also, as the ten-year phase-in progresses, retiree participants could determine year-to-year into which of the two programs they would like to participate. In addition, National Guard and Reserve retirees with 20 years service are also eligible for this program. Finally, PL 108-136 authorizes the creation of a bipartisan commission to review and make recommendation on the VA disability system. The commission will consist of 13 members, to be appointed by congressional leaders and the White House. More than half of its members will be highly decorated combat veterans.

Despite all the efforts of Congress, The American Legion opposed this so-called fix as inadequate. The major reason is that not all of the veterans affected by concurrent receipt will be able to take advantage of this new program. It has been described as pitting one set of veterans against another. The American Legion will continue the fight to see full concurrent receipt instituted for all disabled military retirees, especially those forced to retire with less than 20 years of military service.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

On November 11, the President signed PL 108-109, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003. This measure will direct VA to establish five new national cemeteries in the following areas: southeastern Pennsylvania; Birmingham, AL; Jacksonville, FL; Bakersfield, CA; and Greenville/Columbia, SC. This legislation requires the VA Secretary to submit a report to Congress within 120 days of enactment setting forth the five areas where those cemeteries will be established, a schedule for establishment, the estimated cost associated with establishment, and the amount of Advance Planning Funds obligated for this purpose. The bill also requires the Secretary to submit to Congress an annual report that updates the information included in the initial report until the five cemeteries are completed.

The President on December 3, enacted PL 108-147, the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2003. It would provide a two percent COLA for veterans receiving disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, the clothing allowance for certain disabled adult children, and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses.

President Bush on December 16, signed PL 108-183, the Veterans Benefits Act of 2003. The House of Representatives passed the measure on November 20 by a voice vote, after the Senate passed the bill the previous day by unanimous consent.

Among the bill's many provisions, PL 108-183:

- Allows surviving spouses of veterans to remarry after age 57 without being penalized with the loss of widow benefits, including dependency and indemnity compensation and burial in national cemeteries;
- Expands benefits eligibility to those children with spina bifida born to Vietnam-era veterans who served in Korea near the demilitarized zone. To be eligible, the veteran must have served between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971;
- Eliminates the two-year limitation on accrued benefits to which an individual was entitled at death under existing ratings or decisions, or those based on evidence on file at the date of death, and due and unpaid for two years upon the date of death, shall be payable to the claimant's eligible survivors;

- Adds cirrhosis of the liver as a presumed service-connected disability for former POWs, and eliminate the requirement that a POW be held for 30 days or more to qualify for presumptions of service-connection for several specific disabilities;
- Extends certain compensation and burial benefits to certain Philippine WWII-era veterans residing in the U.S.;
- Expands the Montgomery GI Bill program for self-employment training programs;
- Increases Survivors' and Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA) payments by 13.4 percent;
- Amends current law to provide that individuals who qualify for survivors' and dependents' education benefits under chapter 35 of title 38, United States Code, and are involuntarily ordered to full-time National Guard duty under title 32, United States Code, after September 11, 2001, will have their eligibility extended;
- Authorizes an extension—until 2009—for VA's Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education;
- Mandates that the Department of Labor place staff in veterans' assistance offices at overseas military installations 90 days after the bill's enactment to allow service members leaving the armed forces to attend Transition Assistance Program (TAP) briefings;
- Increases the specially adapted automobile grant from $9,000 to $11,000;
- Increases the specially adapted housing grant from $48,000 to $50,000 for the most severely disabled veterans and from $9,250 to $10,000 for other severely disabled veterans;
- Makes the VA home loan program for members of the Selected Reserve permanent;
- Adjusts the funding fee charged to Selected Reserve home loan applications to the same amount as that paid by active duty service members;
- Reinstates the Department of Veterans Affairs' vendee loan program;
- Expands existing law to allow states to receive the $300 plot allowance for the interment of veterans who did not serve during a wartime period and for the interment of veterans who died as a result of service-connected disabilities and whose survivors sought reimbursement of funeral expenses under section 2307 of title 38, United States Code;
- Makes permanent the State Cemetery Grants Program;
- Requires VA and DoD to review, and report on, the mission, procedures, and administration of the radiation dose reconstruction program, used to adjudicate claims for VA compensation made by radiation-exposed veterans;
- Clarifies current statutory language prohibiting the assignment of benefits and specify that any agreement under which a VA beneficiary might purport to transfer to another person or entity the right to receive direct or indirect payments of compensation, pension, or DIC benefits shall be deemed to be a prohibited assignment;
- Extends for four additional years—to 2007—VA's Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans;
- Extends for three additional years—to 2011—VA's authority to verify pension application income information with the Internal Revenue Service or the Department of Health and Human Services;

- Extends for two additional years—to 2013—VA's authority to round down to the nearest whole dollar compensation payments, as well as institute authority to round down VA educational assistance payments; and
- Expands the list of serious federal criminal offenses a conviction for which will result in a bar to all VA benefits, to include production and selling of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, genocide, and attempted murder overseas.

On December 19, President Bush signed into law PL 108-189, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act. Under the provisions of this bill:

- Servicemembers will be protected from double taxation, when they are stationed in one state but live in another.
- Servicemembers whose military service affects his or her ability to repay a debt incurred prior to entering service can have the interest rate of this debt completely forgiven.
- Eviction proceedings against a servicemember can be delayed for at least 3 months under this legislation. The bill also updates the eviction protection by raising the maximum rent for a servicemember's housing from $1200 to $1700 to qualify under this bill.
- Guarantees payment of premiums for a servicemember's life insurance policy for policies up to $250,000.
- Protects a servicemember who has fallen behind in car lease payments by requiring the lessor to obtain a court order before repossessing the car.

On September 10 the House passed two veterans measures by voice votes. The first bill, HR 2433, would authorize VA to provide prioritized health care to veterans who participated in Project 112/Project SHAD tests. These tests, which involved exposure to chemical and biological toxins or simulants, were coordinated by the Department of Defense through the Deseret Test Center from 1962 through 1973. In the past year, the Department of Defense has released information about these secret Cold War-era tests and has worked with VA to identify and notify those veterans who participated in the tests, most of them unknowingly. HR 2433 will ensure that those veterans who did participate in these tests are able to receive medical evaluation and, if necessary, treatment at VA health care facilities. HR 2433 also authorizes premium pay for Saturday duty to health care workers with direct patient-care responsibilities.

The second measure is HR 2595, sponsored by House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Evans. This measure would restore the operation of the Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program during fiscal year 2003 to the scope of that program as in effect on September 30, 2002. In June, the Department of Veterans Affairs stopped making loans under the Native American Direct Loan Program because of a $5 million limitation contained in the 2003 Appropriations Act, resulting in a number of new home construction projects being stopped. HR 2595 will allow both new home construction, as well as refinancing to resume for Native American veterans at the levels authorized in prior years.

The House on October 29 passed HR 1720, the Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act, by a 417-0 recorded vote. This measure would authorize $1.1 billion over two years for major medical facility construction projects to improve, renovate, replace, update or establish VA patient care facilities. They include: an inpatient tower at West Side Division in Chicago, IL; seismic corrections in San Diego, CA; renovations to inpatient wards and research facilities in West Haven, CT; a new medical facility in Columbus, OH; a joint VA-DOD clinic in Pensacola, FL; the lease of an outpatient clinic in Charlotte, NC; and a lease of an outpatient clinic and benefits office in Clark County, NV.

In addition, HR 1720 would require the VA Secretary to develop a specific plan for meeting the future inpatient hospitalization needs of veterans who live in southern New Jersey and certain counties in Texas, as well as consider a joint VA-Navy medical facility proposal in Charleston, SC.

On October 31, the Senate passed by unanimous consent House Concurrent Resolution (H Con Res) 159. This measure—sponsored by Rep. Jerry Moran (KS)—declares the city of Emporia, Kansas, to be the founding city of the Veterans Day holiday, and recognizes the contributions of Alvin J. King and the Honorable Ed Rees for their role in the enactment into law of the national observance of Veterans Day on November 11 of each year. The measure passed the House on September 30 by a voice vote.

108th Congress, Second Session

The Second Session of the 108th Congress convened on January 20, 2004. Major issues for both chambers included the war on terrorism, the conflict with Iraq, the final passage of the remaining seven appropriation bills for the FY 2004 federal budget, and the proposed FY 2005 budget. An omnibus funding measure for FY 2004—Public Law 108-199—was signed by President Bush on January 23. As of today, The American Legion has participated in fifteen congressional hearings during the Second Session.

On February 2, President Bush submitted his FY 2005 budget, a total of $2.4 trillion for all government programs. It projects increased spending for defense and homeland security averaging ten percent, while keeping domestic spending increases to overall less than 1 percent.

The President's budget calls for $67.7 billion for VA programs. Of that total, $35.6 billion is mandatory spending, which includes compensation and pensions, educational benefits, vocational rehabilitation, and home loan programs. The remainder—$32.1 billion —is discretionary spending, slated for: medical care; research; the National Cemetery Administration; major and minor construction; and, state veterans' homes and cemeteries grants.

The chart below shows each of the major VA discretionary accounts and their funding totals for FY 2004, the Bush Administration's proposed amounts for FY 2005, and The American Legion's proposals for FY 2005.

Account	FY 2004 Enacted	FY 2005 Proposal	Legion Proposal
Medical Care	$26.5 billion	$26.7 billion	$30 billion
MCCF Collections	$1.7 billion	$2.4 billion	$2.4 billion*
Medical, Prosthetic Research	$406 million	$385 million	$445 million
General Operating Expenses	$1.3 billion	$1.2 billion	$1.8 billion
Major Construction	$214 million	$401 million	$325 million
Minor Construction	$206 million	$182 million	$255 million
National Cemetery Administration	$143 million	$149 million	$160 million
State Veterans Hospitals Grants	$102 million	$105 million	$120 million
State Veterans Cemeteries Grants	$32 million	$32 million	$40 million
Total VA Funding	**$63.6 billion**	**$67.7 billion**	——

* The American Legion continues to ask Congress and the administration to view MCCF collections as supplements—rather than offsets—to appropriations.

While the above figures look impressive, some proposed legislative initiatives contained in the President's budget concerned The American Legion. They included:

- Increasing the projected amount of third-party collections that VA hope to collect for treating certain veterans, as noted in the above chart. Despite increased collections over the past two years, VA has never met any monetary-recovery goal it has set. The American Legion feels VA should set more modest collections goals until new processes are fully implemented.
- Increasing—from $15 to $20—the co-payment for outpatient primary care for Categories 7 and 8 veterans; and, establishing an annual enrollment fee of $250 for these same categories. The goal of the annual fee is to increase the cost burden to Categories 7 and 8 veterans who have increased the demand for medical care from VA. As it did last year when these proposals were made, The American Legion adamantly opposes these initiatives.
- Increasing the pharmacy co-payment for prescriptions paid by Category 7 and 8 veterans from $7 to $15. The American Legion continues to oppose this proposal.
- Limiting, under certain circumstances, veterans to a one-time use of the VA home loan program. This is another attempt by the administration to limit veterans' use of benefits that they earned, and The American Legion opposes it.
- Allowing all institutional and non-institutional long-term care services provided by VA to be counted toward meeting the capacity requirements for extended care services currently required by the Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act. Many veterans receiving these services have been contracted out, consequently allowing VA to slowly reduce the number of beds allocated to these veterans, against the dictates of the Millennium Act.

By contrast, there are several policy proposals that The American Legion could support. They include:

- Exempting from co-payment requirements any hospice care provided in any VA setting, rather than only in VA nursing home beds.
- Exempting former prisoners of war, if applicable, from co-payments for extended care services.
- Requiring veterans to provide health insurance coverage information to VA before receiving care. This proposal would allow VA to bill private sector health insurance companies for a greater portion of care delivered by VA.
- Providing a 1.3 percent rate increase to all pension beneficiaries, including DIC spouses and children, beginning December 1, 2004.

On February 4 and 10, The American Legion testified before the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees respectively, presenting the organization's views on the proposed funding for the VA, as well as the various policy proposals made by the administration. One of the highlights of the House hearing was testimony by VA Secretary Anthony Principi. During his statement, he revealed that he had requested that the administration add $1.2 billion more to the VA budget, but had been rebuffed by the White House.

On March 12, the Senate passed Senate Concurrent Resolution (S Con Res) 95 by a recorded vote of 51-45. This resolution is the FY 2005 budget blueprint, which sets out the broad outlines of how the federal government will divide up appropriations for the upcoming year. It should be stressed that the budget resolution is only an outline or projection and is non-binding.

When the Senate Budget Committee sent its recommendations for FY 2005 to the full Senate for its consideration, VA discretionary spending was pegged at $27.1 billion. The committee assumed MCCF payments to VA would total $2 billion. The American

Legion continues to raise questions about the ability of VA to actually collect projected sums of this magnitude, which it has failed to do over the past decade.

Several amendments were adopted during consideration of the resolution. Specifically, three amendments were offered to increase VA health care discretionary spending. One amendment, authored by Senator Tom Daschle (SD), would increase VA health care by $2.7 billion; it was defeated by a 53-44 vote. A second amendment, introduced by Senator Bill Nelson (FL), would increase VA medical care by $1.8 billion; it was voted down by a 51-46 tally. Finally, Senator Lisa Murkowski (AK) introduced an amendment to raise VA health care funding by $1.2 billion. The full Senate adopted this amendment by a voice vote.

Other veterans-related amendments include:

- An amendment introduced by Senators Daschle and Lindsey Graham (SC) to provide additional funding for Reserve/Guard TRICARE totaling $5.6 billion over 5 years. The amendment also provides an additional $1.2 billion for Reserve/Guard GI Bill funding. It was adopted by a voice vote.
- An amendment introduced by Senator Mary Landrieu (LA) to increase the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) by $2.757 billion. This program provides a "safety net" to spouses of military retirees when the retiree dies. The original legislation stated that the spouses would receive a monthly payment equal to 55 percent of the retiree's retirement pay. However, once the surviving spouse turns 62, that percentage drops to 35 percent. Senator Landrieu's amendment restores the full 55 percent for SBP payments to surviving spouses. The amendment was agreed to by a voice vote.

Another amendment that was defeated during consideration of the budget resolution was offered by Senator Robert Byrd (WV) to increase FY 2005 spending by $11.2 billion. This increased spending would go to top domestic priorities, including education, veterans' health care, global AIDS/HIV programs, transportation, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and first responder grants. The amendment was defeated by a 53-43 recorded vote.

The Daschle, Nelson and Byrd amendments each contained mechanisms to offset the increased spending by closing tax loopholes or cutting back on the federal tax cuts passed over the past two years.

On March 29, the House agreed to S Con Res. 95 by a voice vote. During debate, the House inserted the text of House Concurrent Resolution (H Con Res) 393 into the Senate bill, thus requiring a conference committee to reconcile differences. Both the House and Senate versions of the resolution contain insufficient funding for VA. The Senate version sets veterans programs spending at $71.5 billion, while the House version would provide $70.5 billion. The Senate figure is $1.2 billion greater than the President's original budget proposal, while the House version is $200 million greater than the White House budget.

During debate on the bill in the House, Budget Committee Chairman Jim Nussle (IA) defended its version, saying, "The House version is higher than the Senate version because the Senate, when it passed an amendment on the floor, included unspecified receipts, which is an interesting budget code word for co-payments, fee increases, means testing. Those are ways that we get those unspecified receipts to be specified...Veterans organizations are getting snookered out there by being told that the Senate number is somehow higher than the House number. Nothing could be further from the truth. When you hide fees, when you hide means testing, when you hide co-payments into an amendment and then pass it, that is not necessarily a higher amount because...we do not accept any fee increases, any co-payments, or any means testing to this program."

In an April 2nd letter to the House-Senate budget conferees, National Commander Brieden asked them to reevaluate the discretionary spending portion of the VA budget. In part he said, "The President's budget is inadequate...The American Legion would encourage you and your colleagues to reevaluate the Function 700 [veterans programs] budget authority level to at least $72.8 billion in FY 2005. The men and women in the armed forces —past, present, and future—deserve no less. As a nation, we are prepared to spare no expense to help them fight and win any war. We should be prepared to meet their health care needs, if necessary, when they return from being placed in harm's way"

After six weeks of meetings and negotiations, a conference report was issued on May 19. In that report, the Function 700 programs were allotted $68.9 billion in actual appropriations—$39.5 billion for mandatory funding and $29.4 billion for discretionary funding. Later that same day, the House passed the conference report for S Con Res. 95 by a 216-213 recorded vote. However, the Senate has failed to take any action on the report to date. This inaction by the Senate makes this year's budget process rather more chaotic than usual.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the budget process. Despite administration pronouncements that veterans' funding has increased steadily since 2001, neither House nor Senate budget proposal is truly enough to ensure that veterans' current needs are being met, and that other vital services are not being cut back or eliminated.

The 2004 elections are approaching. All members of the House of Representatives, which is now divided 228 Republicans, 206 Democrats, and one Independent, face re-election on November 2. In addition, a presidential election will be held. Fourteen House members have announced their retirement; eleven are running for other offices; two were defeated while running for other offices, and two have lost in the primaries for reelection. In the Senate—where the ratio is 51 Democrats, 48 Republicans and one Independent, 34 seats are up for election. Seven senators have retired and one is running for another office. The possibility exists that there will be some leadership changes in either the House of Representatives, the Senate, or the White House as a result of these elections.

Americanism

Last year, the House of Representatives passed HJ Res. 4, the constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from acts of physical desecration. On March 10, the full Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing to address SJ Res 4. Witnesses at the hearing included: Assistant U.S. Attorney General Daniel J. Bryant, Office of Legal Policy, Department of Justice; Major General Patrick Brady, Chairman of the Board of the Citizens Flag Alliance; Mr. Lawrence Korb, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense under President Reagan; Mr. John Andretti, NASCAR driver; Mr. Gary May, Assistant Professor of Social Work, University of Southern Illinois; and, Mr. Richard Parker, Professor of Law, Harvard Law School.

Each witness gave his views on the subject, but the most poignant testimony was given by Mr. Andretti. His remarks included these words: "The flag is our bond—Some look at the flag and see just a piece of cloth...their understanding of the flag's value is lacking...Nothing tears down America more than burning the flag...That flag is about values. It's about tradition. It's about America and the men and women who paid an awful price for what we have today."

Professor Parker also gave insightful testimony, attempting to dissect the various forms of opposition to the flag amendment. One of his comments was directed at newspapers that generally ignore the debate on the amendment:

"...most of the media simply will not disseminate disagreement with [their] point of view. Speaking from my experience, I can tell you that only a few newspapers have been willing to publish brief responses to what they assume is the one "enlightened" view—their own.

"There is an irony here. Those most alarmed about (supposed) discrimination against the views of people who burn or urinate on the American flag are themselves in the habit of discriminating against the views [of] others who favor protecting the flag. Warning of a (supposed) dampening of robust debate, they dampen robust debate—and they do it in good conscience and with no conscious intent to apply a double standard."

The Senate Judiciary Committee on July 20 approved its companion measure—Senate Joint Resolution (SJ Res) 4—by an 11-8 vote. Over the past year, The American Legion has been asking members of the Senate to pass SJ Res. 4—no matter how individual senators view this bill—then allow the constitutional amendment to go to the state legislatures to "Let the People Decide" the matter. Final passage would require that 38 state legislatures ratify, or pass, the amendment within seven years of its passage by Congress. At this time, final Senate action on this measure is expected before the 108th Congress adjourns.

Children & Youth

Funding for the Department of Justice (DoJ) was included in PL 108-199, the FY 2004 Consolidated Omnibus funding measure. The measure provides $19.7 billion for DoJ, which is $937 million more than the President's request. Under the bill the FBI received $4.6 billion, the Drug Enforcement Administration received $2.2 billion, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and related programs received $349 million. The increase in OJJDP programs—an increase of $74 million over FY 2003 funding —is because new programs were added to OJJDP's jurisdiction. These include gang prevention, prevention of underage alcohol consumption, the new "Secure Our Schools" program, and new juvenile accountability block grants programs.

The House, on July 8, passed HR 4754, the FY 2005 spending bill for the Departments of Commerce, Justice and State and the Judiciary. The vote for passage was 397-18. Funding for DoJ would total $20.8 billion. The FBI would receive $5.2 billion, the Drug Enforcement Administration would receive $1.6 billion, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF) would receive $870 million, and OJJDP would receive $349 million.

The Senate Appropriations Committee is still developing its version of this bill. The American Legion continues to support the work of OJJDP to combat juvenile crime and delinquency.

Economics

FY 2004 spending for the Departments of Labor (DoL), Health and Human Services (HHS), and Education were included in PL 108-199, the omnibus appropriations bill. This measure includes funding for the office of the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans Employment and Training (ASVET).

The annual ASVET funding totals $217 million, a $6 million overall increase. Federal administration funding was increased by $1.5 million, to $29 million, with homeless veterans programs receiving a modest increase of $869,000 to $19 million. The Veterans Workforce Investment Programs account received an increase of $173,000 to $7.5 million. A total of $2 million was earmarked for the National Veterans' Employment and Training Services Institute (NVTI). The NVTI is responsible for training DVOPs and LVERs.

One of the biggest changes in the ASVET funding proposal concerns Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program funding. In past years, congressional appropriators have assigned specific amounts to each program. By contrast, this year funding for these programs was provided by a $161.4 million lump-sum grant program. Individual states would administer the DVOP LVER funds as they see fit and fund the number of DVOP and LVER positions they feel are needed. The American Legion testified against this action, saying that DVOP and LVER personnel will now be more closely tied to state employment services, with little or no federal guidance.

The American Legion continues to be concerned with other administration's proposals for ASVET. For the past three years, the White House in its annual budget proposal sought to transfer ASVET's functions to VA. The American Legion opposed this proposal on both occasions, saying that DoL more appropriately handles the functions of ASVET. Both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees opposed the White House's recommendation, and it was dropped. In contrast, the FY 2005 budget proposal is silent on this issue.

On July 14, the House Appropriations Committee approved a draft bill to fund the departments and agencies under its jurisdiction. The chart below shows the ASVET funding totals for FY 2004, the administration's FY 2005 proposal, and the spending amounts as recommended by the subcommittee.

Program	PL 108-199 FY 2004	White House Proposal FY 2005	Committee Proposal FY 2005
State Administration Grants	$161.4 million	$162.4 million	$162.4 million
Federal Administration	$28.9 million	$29.7 million	$29.7 million
NVTI	$1.9 million	$2 million	$2 million
Homeless Veterans Program	$18.9 million	$19 million	$19 million
Veterans' Workforce Investment Programs	$7.5 million	$7.5 million	$7.5 million
Totals	**$218.7 million**	**$220.7 million**	**$220.7 million**

The "state administration grants" line in the above chart is responsible for funding DVOP's and LVERs in state employment services. As explained previously, The American Legion vehemently opposes this funding mechanism and will work to have DoL revert to the former method of direct appropriations. The draft bill now goes to the full House for further consideration after the August recess.

On June 23, the House by a voice vote passed HR 4345, a bill to increase the maximum amount of home loan guaranty available under the VA home loan guaranty program. Introduced by Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite (FL), the bill would raise the maximum home purchase guaranty from $240,000 to $333,700, a 39 percent increase. In addition, it would link the VA loan limit with the conforming loan rate of the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (commonly known as Freddie Mac) and adjust the maximum guaranty amount on an annual basis. A companion measure, S 2522 introduced by Sen. Jon Corzine (NJ), awaits action in the Senate.

Foreign Relations

Foreign operations funding for FY 2004 was included in PL 108-199, the omnibus spending measure. The bill allocated a total of $17.2 billion for various forms of foreign aid, including economic aid, military aid, disaster relief, and funding for various

international programs. That amount was $1.7 billion below the President's request, and $1 billion more than appropriated for FY 2003. Some of the major program areas and their proposed funding levels are:

- $2.7 billion in economic and military assistance for Israel.
- $1.9 billion in economic and military assistance for Egypt.
- $1.65 billion for global assistance to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, which complements $754 million in similar aid contained in the Labor-HHS-Education section of this bill.
- $731 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.
- $587 million in assistance for states of the former Soviet Union.
- $456 million in assistance for Jordan.
- $256 million for international disaster and famine assistance.

On July 15, the House approved HR 4818, the FY 2005 Foreign Operations spending bill, by a vote of 365-41. It contains $19.4 billion in foreign aid, $2.2 billion more than contained in the FY 2004 omnibus bill, but $1 billion less than requested by the White House. Among the earmarks in the bill are:

- $2.6 billion in economic and military assistance to Israel.
- $2.2 billion in global assistance to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
- $1.9 billion in economic and military assistance to Egypt.
- $731 million for the Andean Counterdrug Initiative.
- $550 million in assistance for states of the former Soviet Union.
- $356 million for international disaster and famine assistance.
- $66 million in military aid to Poland, a major ally in the war on terrorism.

Senate action on this measure will occur after the August recess.

On May 11, the House passed by a voice vote House Resolution (H Res) 613. Sponsored by Rep. Tom Davis (VA), this measure recognizes and honors the tenth anniversary of Vietnam Human Rights Day, May 11. It was on that day in 1990 that the Manifesto of the Non-Violent Movement for Human Rights in Vietnam was issued by Dr. Nguyen Dan Que. The Manifesto called upon Hanoi to respect basic human rights, accept a multiparty system, and restore the right of the Vietnamese people to choose their own form of government through free and fair elections, reflects the will and aspirations of the people of Vietnam. It also protested the treatment of uncounted numbers of innocent Vietnamese, including religious leaders and ethnic minorities who have been tortured, imprisoned, or held under house arrest by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam because of their nonviolent struggle for freedom and human rights. Vietnam Human Rights Day was first designated in 1994 by PL 103-258, and 2004 is the tenth anniversary of its first declaration.

Internal Affairs

On July 6, the House of Representatives passed House Concurrent Resolution (H Con Res) 257 by a recorded vote of 381-1. This measure urges the President to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Past National Commander Harry Colmery, the primary author of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights. The GI Bill of Rights has been called the most important piece of social legislation ever passed in this country's history. A companion measure, Senate Concurrent Resolution (S Con Res) 117 introduced by Sen. Sam Brownback (KS), is now awaiting action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The 60th anniversary of the enactment of this landmark legislation coincides with the anniversary of the D-Day invasion. The dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC also added some importance for passage of this measure.

National Security

Funding for the Selective Services System for FY 2004 was included in the PL 108-199, the omnibus spending bill. Selective Service funding totaled $26.3 million, a slight decrease from the previous year. The basic mission of Selective Service is to be prepared to supply manpower to the U.S. military to ensure the security of the United States during a time of national emergency. Since 1973, the armed forces have relied on volunteers to fill manpower requirements. However, Selective Service remains the primary vehicle by which prospective recruits will be brought into the military if Congress and the President should authorize a return to the draft. The American Legion continues to support this program.

The House, on June 18, passed HR 4567, the FY 2005 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funding measure. The bill was approved by a 400-5 recorded vote. On the previous day, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved S 2537, a companion measure. Each measure provides a total of $32 billion for the newest Cabinet department, an increase of $2.8 billion over the current year enacted levels. There are, however, some differences in each category's funding. Specifically:

- $7.56 billion for the U.S. Coast Guard in the House bill, $7.47 in the Senate measure;
- $5.2 billion for the Transportation Security Administration in the Senate bill, $4.3 billion in the House version;
- $5 billion for the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection in the Senate measure, $4.6 billion in the House measure;
- $4.1 billion in grants for state and local "first responders"—firefighters, police and emergency response personnel to prepare for future terrorist events—in the House measure, $3.75 billion in the Senate version;
- $3.4 billion for the Bureau of Immigration and Customs from the Senate, $2.4 billion from the House,
- $2.5 billion for Project Bioshield, under which the federal government would acquire antidotes and take other steps to counter bioterrorism in both bills;
- $1.2 billion for the U.S. Secret Service in both bills;
- $875 million for the Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Directorate in the Senate version, $854 million in the House bill. This agency identifies and assesses threats, maps threat information against current vulnerabilities, issues warnings, and takes preventive action; and
- $663 million for the Federal Air Marshals program in both measures.

Final action on these bills is expected prior to final adjournment.

On June 23, by a vote of 97-0, the US Senate approved S 2400, the FY 2005 Department of Defense (DoD) authorization bill. This measure sets the spending guidelines for DoD appropriations, and also includes various policy statements. A total of $422.2 billion in budget authority was recommended, an increase of $20.9 billion above the amount passed by Congress for the current year. The House version, HR 4200, has many similar provisions.

Some of the policy provisions contained in the Senate bill include:

- A $25 billion account to help prosecute the war on terrorism, which is the amount recently requested by President Bush. The House and Senate included these funds in both measures. However, HR 4200 set down specific details of where the money should be spent, allowing the President to transfer up to $2.5 billion between accounts, while the Senate's version did not contain so many restrictions.

- Increasing Army personnel by 20,000 next year. The House version would increase Army personnel by 30,000, and Marine Corps personnel by 9000 over the next three years.
- A 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise for military personnel, agreeing with the House;
- Elimination of the Social Security offset under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP); again mirroring action by the House.
- Giving National Guardsmen and reservists access to the TRICARE program, whether they are on active duty or not. The House bill would allow members of the Ready Reserve and their families to have coverage under TRICARE Standard as a one-year demonstration project. The objective is to see if the readiness and retention of reservists would be enhanced.
- Elimination of the 10-year phase-in for 100 percent service-connected military retirees to receive their full retired pay and VA disability compensation under the plan created last year in the FY 2004 DoD authorization law (PL 108-136) to address the disabled veterans' tax. No similar provision is in the House bill.
- Require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to undertake a comprehensive analysis of existing transition assistance services for our military personnel that are administered by DoD, VA, and DoL and to make recommendations to Congress on how these programs can be improved. The GAO study will focus on: (a) how to achieve the uniform provision of appropriate transition services to all military personnel, and (b) the role of post-deployment and pre-discharge health assessments as part of the larger transition program. There is no similar provision in the House measure.
- Keeping in place the next scheduled round of base closings in 2005. An amendment was offered by Sen. Trent Lott (MS) seeking to eliminate domestic base closings and instead targeting U.S. overseas bases. This amendment was defeated. The House bill would delay the next round of the base closures until 2007, which has drawn the threat of a presidential veto.

One amendment defeated during consideration of S 2400 was introduced by Sen. Tom Daschle (SD) relating to mandatory VA health care funding. The amendment would have frozen the VA medical care account at FY 2004 totals. Then, in each succeeding year, a formula utilizing VA's patient population and the cost of inflation would yield a figure that would be added to the medical care account as mandatory funding. Congress and the Appropriations Committees would still have funding jurisdiction over the remainder of VA's programs. The Daschle amendment was challenged on the basis that it violated the Budget Act. On a recorded vote to waive the Budget Act—with sixty votes needed—the amendment was defeated 49-48.

The two measures will now go to a conference committee to reconcile differences before President Bush can sign it into law.

The House and Senate, on July 22, passed HR 4613, the FY 2005 DoD spending bill. The House approved the measure by a recorded vote of 410-12, while the Senate passed it by a 96-0 vote. The measure now awaits enactment by the President.

The measure would provide DoD with $391.2 billion for core defense programs, a seven percent increase in the Pentagon's overall budget. Each bill also includes the President's request for a $25 billion fund to pay for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which will be available upon enactment. In addition, the anti-ballistic missile program envisioned by the late President Reagan 21 years ago will be fully funded at $10 billion, with the first elements of the missile shield set to be deployed this year.

The bill fully funds the President's request for DoD's shipbuilding budget, a total of $11.1 billion. This includes one Virginia-class submarine and three DDG-51 Aegis missile destroyers. In addition the bill would budget $306 million for advance procurement of a second DD(X) in the upcoming fiscal year.

One of the vital areas of any DoD budget is the procurement account. The final figure for this area was $77.7 billion. Among the highlights are:

- $4.1 billion for 24 FA-22 Raptor aircraft;
- $2.9 billion for 42 F/A-18 fighters,
- $2.7 billion for 15 C-17 airlift planes;
- $1.5 billion for continued procurement and deployment of an additional Stryker Brigade, the central tenet of DoD transformation program for the Army;
- $953 million for the next-generation CVN-21 carrier; and
- $918 million for 8 V-22 Osprey transport aircraft.

In other areas, the bill increased the administration's request for the Defense Health Program to $18.2 billion, an increase of $2.5 billion over FY 2004 totals. $683 million of this increase will accommodate the additional Guard and Reserve personnel who will now have access to the TRICARE program. HR 4613 also provides $2.1 billion for the Joint Strike Fighter development program. Also, a total of $906 million was appropriated for DoD's drug interdiction and counter-drug activities.

The House, on May 12, passed H Res. 608—sponsored by Rep. Randy Forbes (VA) —by a vote of 421-0. This measure expresses the sense of the House that DoD should rectify deficiencies in the military postal system. It seeks to ensure that members of the armed forces stationed overseas are able to receive and send mail in a timely manner, as well as receive and send election ballots in time to be counted in the 2004 elections. This matter was a major concern in the 2000 elections, when thousands of ballots from servicemembers overseas were not counted or ruled invalid for hundreds of state and local elections nationwide. The American Legion has testified before several congressional committees on the need to ensure that members of the armed forces are afforded their right to vote.

On June 24, HR 4711 was introduced in the House of Representatives. This measure, sponsored by Rep. Vic Snyder (AR), seeks to eliminate the $1200 deduction in base pay for members of the armed services who wish to participate in the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program. The American Legion has been in favor of eliminating this deduction since the MGIB program was created in 1984 by PL 98-525. Veterans who used the previous versions of the GI Bill did not have to lose some of their base pay for the "privilege" of participating in the program. HR 4711 currently has 24 cosponsors.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

FY 2004 funding for VA was included in PL 108-199, the omnibus appropriations measure. The bill provides a total of $60.7 billion for VA, an increase of $3.1 billion over FY 2003 spending amounts and $1.5 billion over the White House's budget request. The chart below details VA discretionary funding for FY 2003, the President's request for FY 2004, the funding contained in the omnibus spending bill, and The American Legion's request for FY 2004.

Programs	FY 2003 Actual	White House Request, FY 2004	PL 108-199 FY 2004	Legion Request FY 2004
Medical Care	$23.9 billion	$25.2 billion	$26.8 billion	$24.5 billion
Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund	**[$1.6 billion]	**[$2.1 billion]	**[$1.3 billion]	——
Medical & Prosthetic Research	$397 million	$408 million	$408 million	$445 million
Major Construction	$99 million	$273 million	$272 million	$320 million
Minor Construction	$224 million	$252 million	$252 million	$240 million
State Veterans Homes Grants	$99 million	$102 million	$102 million	$115 million
State Cemetery Grants	$32 million	$32 million	$32 million	$37 million
National Cemetery Administration	$132 million	$144 million	$144 million	$150 million
General Operating Expenses, VBA	$1.25 billion	$1.28 billion	$1.28 billion	$1.3 billion
Total	**$26.2 billion**	**$27.8 billion**	**$29.3 billion**	——

** Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund money is not included in the final total. The American Legion continues to request that Congress use third-party reimbursements—to include Medicare reimbursements—to supplement, not offset discretionary spending.

During the course of debate on the bill in July of this year, many House members attempted to increase VA medical care spending, but were rebuffed by the House leadership. As a result, many House members voted against the entire bill to protest that VA health care funding was $1.8 billion less than the amount projected by the FY 2004 budget resolution, H Con Res. 95.

Prior to its approval for House floor action, the House Appropriations Committee removed several administration proposals from the original VA funding bill—proposals that The American Legion vigorously opposed—through an amendment introduced by Rep. Virgil Goode (VA). They include:

- Charging an annual enrollment fee for Priority Group 7 and 8 veterans.
- Increasing prescription co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from $7 to $15 per 30-day supply.
- Increasing outpatient visit co-payments for nonservice-connected medical conditions from $15 to $20 per visit.

The Senate passed its original version of the bill, S 1584, on November 18 by a voice vote. During debate on the bill, $1.57 billion was added to the health care account. However, in an attempt to stay within budget rules, $1.3 billion of that amount was designated as "emergency spending." When House-Senate conferees began work on a clean bill, House conferees agreed to the higher Senate amount, while the Senate conferees agreed to drop the "emergency" designation for the $1.3 billion addition.

The American Legion advocates the position that VA medical care should be funded at a level to fulfill the mandate "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan." The current budget proposal, while incrementally more than the current year funding totals, is still not sufficient to cover all of VA's health care programs. Further, the administration has placed a tight discretionary spending ceiling on all federal government programs, with the exception of the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Homeland Security (DHS). This ceiling accounts for only 17 percent of the entire federal budget; however, VA health care spending does fall under this ceiling.

In the final report of the President's Task Force To Improve Health Care Delivery For Our Nation's Veterans, the existing mismatch between funding and demand for services was highlighted as a major problem in timely access to quality care for veterans enrolled in the VA health care delivery system. In response to those concerns, Rep. Chris

Smith (NJ), chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced HR 2475, the Veterans Health Care Full Funding Act. Also, Rep. Lane Evans (IL), the ranking member of the same committee, introduced HR 2318, the Assured Funding for Veterans Health Care Act of 2003.

Under HR 2475, a three person independent board would be created. This special board would use a formula calculation based on: OMB estimates; VA budget needs and estimates; and actuarial projections for population and cost. The board would then send a funding recommendation to the White House for consideration before the President's annual budget submission to Congress. Although this approach would be an improvement to the current methodology, there is no assurance that the board's recommendation would be included in the annual budget request or be accepted by Congress, since the normal budget and appropriations process would remain intact.

Taking a different approach, Rep. Evans introduced HR 2318. Senator Tim Johnson (SD) introduced similar legislation, S 50. Both bills would change VA medical care from discretionary spending to mandatory spending by establishing a base funding year and calculating the average cost of a veteran using the VA health care system. Funding would then be provided based on the total number of veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. That number would be indexed annually for inflation. VA would still be allowed to receive co-payments and third-party reimbursements.

Last September, The American Legion presented its FY 2005 budget recommendations for VA before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. Among the recommendations was the mandatory funding proposal. The American Legion's commitment to this legislative initiative is steadfast and justified.

To that end The American Legion, in cooperation with eight fellow veterans' service organizations (VSOs)—specifically, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Jewish War Veterans (JWV), Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH), and American Veterans (AMVETS)—are working together in The Partnership for Veterans Health Care Budget Reform to achieve mandatory funding of VA medical care. To help educate Congress, The Partnership created a brochure entitled "Honor America's Commitment To Veterans" for distribution on Capitol Hill. This brochure contains background information and content supporting mandatory funding.

When Congress opened access to the VA health care system in the late 1990s, many veterans believed VA was their best health care option and voted with their feet. Since Medicare—the nation's largest public health insurance program—does not offer its beneficiaries a substantive prescription program, many Medicare-eligible veterans chose to enroll in VHA specifically to have access to an affordable prescription program. DoD's TRICARE and TRICARE for Life require military retirees to make co-payments or pay premiums, but neither programs provides the specialized care (like long-term care) many military retirees may need; therefore, many military retirees chose to also enroll for VA care to meet their unfulfilled medical needs.

Funding for VA health care currently falls under discretionary spending within the federal budget. The VA health care budget competes with other agencies and programs for federal dollars each year. VA's ability to treat veterans with service-connected injuries is dependent upon discretionary funding approval from Congress each year. Under mandatory spending, however, VA health care would be provided funding—by law—for all enrollees who meet the eligibility requirements. With guaranteed yearly appropriations, VA could do a much better job in short- and long-range strategic

planning for the delivery of quality health care within its own acceptable access standards.

It is disingenuous for the Federal government to promise health care to veterans and then make it unattainable because of inadequate funding. Rationed health care is no way to honor America's obligation to the brave men and women who have, and continue to unselfishly put the nation's priorities in front of their own needs.

On May 7, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Anthony Principi announced the department's final report for revamping the VA health care system instituted under the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) program.

The CARES process has been on-going for the past two years, after a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report—issued in 1999—stated that VA was supposedly wasting $1 million a day on unused property and buildings at its medical centers nationwide. The CARES Commission examined GAO's findings, and then formulated a report issued last year. Secretary Principi reviewed the commission's findings over the past nine months, and announced his final findings.

Under Principi's announced plan three VA medical centers are scheduled for closure: Gulfport, MS; the Highland Drive VAMC in Pittsburgh, PA; and, Brecksville, OH. Operations at these three facilities will be consolidated with other nearby facilities. In addition, two new medical centers will be built in Las Vegas, NV and Orlando, FL. Further, two new rehabilitation centers for blind veterans will be constructed in Biloxi, MS and Long Beach, CA. Finally, new spinal cord injury centers will be erected in Denver, CO; Minneapolis, MN; Syracuse, NY and a still-to-be-determined city. The plan calls for more than 100 major construction projects and the addition of 156 new community-based outpatient clinics.

In addition to these major closures and constructions, consolidations and transfers of operations or some closures of various wards will affect VA operations in nearly every state and the District of Columbia. VA will also examine the possibility of leasing some currently-unused portions of these facilities for other purposes.

VA officials expect this plan—once fully implemented—will reduce vacant or obsolete space from 8.6 million square feet to slightly more than 4 million square feet, a reduction of 42.5 percent. Further, it hopes to cut system-wide maintenance costs from $3.4 billion to $750 million by 2022. Secretary Principi also pledged that there will be no termination of services at existing VA facilities until new construction or expansion is complete to replace those facilities. To fund these proposed changes, Secretary Principi estimated that $1 billion per year over the next six years would be needed.

As an example, in the Washington, DC area, 77 domiciliary beds from the VA Medical Center in Martinsburg, WV and 22 psychiatric beds from Maryland's Perry Point VAMC will be transferred to the Washington VAMC. VA will also be urged to take part in a joint venture with the Armed Forces Retirement Home in our nation's capitol for transitional housing for homeless veterans. In addition, VA will open 13 outpatient clinics throughout the state of Virginia, as well as 3 similar clinics in Maryland. VA also projects construction of a new nursing home facility at the Perry Point VAMC.

In a statement released the same day, National Commander John Brieden applauded the initiative, saying, "Everything the secretary said today seemed to indicate his priorities are with the health-care needs of veterans...We are all for efficiency, unless the decisions are budget-driven instead of needs-driven. Legionnaires across the nation have made that point clear to VA through every stage of the CARES process. I am proud that veterans' voices were heard and actions were taken upon their recommendations in many

parts of the country. We must continue to be heard and stay actively engaged as the CARES process continues to its next phase."

The full report is available on the Internet, at www.va.gov/cares .

On May 12, the House by a 422-0 vote approved House Concurrent Resolution (H Con Res) 409. This resolution—sponsored by Rep. Jerry Moran (KS)—recognizes the more than 16 million veterans who served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II and the Americans who supported the war effort on the home front. It also celebrates the completion of the National World War II Memorial in Washington DC, which was officially dedicated during the Memorial Day weekend. The Senate passed the resolution on May 21 by unanimous consent.

On July 22, the House Appropriations Committee approved a draft bill to fund the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and various independent agencies. The chart below shows VA discretionary funding for the current year (FY 2004), the White House request for FY 2005, the House Appropriations Committee's allocations, and The American Legion's request—as presented in testimony before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

Programs	FY 2004 Funding	White House Request, FY '05	Approps. Committee Request, FY '05	Legion Request, FY '05
Medical Care	$26.5 bil.	$26.7 bil.	$27.9 bil.	$30 bil.
Medical Care Cost Recovery Fund	**[$1.7 bil.]	**[$2.4 bil.]	**[$2 bil.]	**——
General Operating Expenses, VBA	$1.3 bil.	$1.2 bil.	$1.3 bil.	$1.8 bil.
Medical & Prosthetic Research	$406 mil.	$385 mil.	$385 mil.	$445 mil.
Major Construction	$214 mil.	$459 mil.	$459 mil.	$325 mil.
Minor Construction	$206 mil.	$231 mil.	$231 mil.	$255 mil.
National Cemetery Administration	$143 mil.	$149 mil.	$149 mil.	$160 mil.
State Veterans Hospitals Grants	$102 mil.	$105 mil.	$105 mil.	$120 mil.
State Veterans Cemetery Grants	$32 mil.	$32 mil.	$__ mil.	$40 mil.
Total VA Funding	**$63.6 bil.**	**$67.7 bil.**		——

** The American Legion continues to ask Congress and the administration to view MCCF collections as supplements—rather than offsets—to discretionary funds.

The House, on July 22, passed by a 421-0 vote HR 4175. This bill would increase the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for rates of disability compensation for service-connected disabled veterans, as well as the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. The COLA, which goes into effect on December 1, will be 2.7 percent, the same as the COLA for Social Security recipients. The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on July 20 passed a companion bill, S 2483, by a voice vote.

NATIONAL SECURITY COMMISSION

Allen L. Titus, Indiana, Chairman
G. Michael Schlee, Maryland, Director

As has been its custom since its inception, the National Security Commission has attempted to remain informed, and to keep the membership of The American Legion informed, on the range of issues related to the National Defense of the United States in

order to recommend responsible national security policies to the governing bodies of The American Legion. To accomplish this task, the Commission conducts regular meetings designed to provide members with current information from responsible government officials on timely issues concerning national security. One of these meetings takes place in conjunction with the National Convention, two in conjunction with meetings of the National Executive Committee, and the fourth is held during the Washington Conference of The American Legion.

Mr. Allen L. Titus (Indiana) is Chairman of the National Security Commission. Mr. Titus was selected as Commission Chairman at the Fall 1995 meeting of the National Executive Committee.

Pre-Convention Meetings, 2003

During the 85th National Convention of The American Legion in St. Louis, Missouri, the National Security and Foreign Relations Commissions convened a joint session at the Americas Center. General John W. Handy who is doubled-hatted as the Commander of the United States Transportation Command and the Air Force's Air Mobility Command spoke on the major role of the United States Transportation Command in the war on terrorism and the global movement of U.S. troops and material over land, air and sea. He was followed by Colonel Kevin B. Kenny, USA, who is the Military Advisor to the Bureau of African Affairs in the State Department. Colonel Kenny spoke on U.S. Foreign Relations towards Africa and the developments in Liberia.

The National Security Commission and its six Standing Committees and two Ad Hoc Subcommittees conducted a comprehensive review of the resolutions assigned to the Convention Committee on National Security.

National Security Resolutions, 85th National Convention

The following selected resolutions, listed in Committee order, were unanimously adopted by the delegates to the 85th annual National Convention:

Resolution No. 4: Fully Funding the United States Navy and Marine Corps

Resolution No. 44: Age 55 Military Retirement for Reservists

Resolution No. 87: Concurrent Receipt of Military Retired Pay and VA Disability Compensation

Resolution No. 88: Department of Defense Health Care for Military Beneficiaries

Urges a number of actions including the annual funding of the Tricare and Tricare for Life health care programs and that dual-eligible military retirees continue to receive care from both military and VA medical centers.

Resolution No. 89: Anthrax Vaccination Immunization Program

Urges the DoD to reevaluate this program and to develop a second manufacturer of the anthrax vaccine for use by the military and the American people.

Resolution No. 91: Funding Homeland Security

Resolution No. 93: Quality of Life Features

Resolution No. 94: Support the United States Coast Guard in Homeland Security

Resolution No. 95: The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

Urges the Congress to continue its determination to retain and expand the military medical school and to appropriate military construction funding for classrooms and housing for the Graduate School of Nursing.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Fall 2003

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room (Lower Level) of the Radisson Hotel on October 6, 2003, to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business.

Both the House and Senate have passed their versions the FY 2004 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 1588) and the FY 2004 Defense Appropriations Bill (H.R. 2658). The authorization bill totals $400.5 billion, the largest defense budget since the Reagan Years, and the appropriations bill totals $368.6 billion. While there are several key issues to be resolved including concurrent receipt, both the authorization and appropriations bills represent responsible increases necessary to maintain our nation's readiness and warfooting. Some highlights of the Defense Appropriations budget include: nearly $100 billion for personnel including an average 4.15 percent military pay raise, and it fully funds the Global War on Terrorism as well as flying hours, sailing days, spare parts, etc. There are a number of items with which the administration has threatened a Presidential veto to include the Buy American provision which would increase the percentage of DoD items manufactured stateside from 50 to 65 percent; the base closure and realignment (BRAC) process, and concurrent receipt are other priority issues.

Since 9/11, the Army National Guard has mobilized 209,000 of 350,000 soldiers at one time or another. They have been trained or been deployed to 98 countries. As of last week, two Guardsmen have been killed and 11 wounded in Afghanistan, and five killed, and 62 wounded in Iraq. The Army Reserve has mobilized about 155,000 since 9/11, including 80,000 for Iraq. The Army has said it will extend activated reservists for a full year. The scramble to find replacement units for duty in Iraq is stark evidence of how thin the 480,000-strong active duty American Army is stretched. Of its 33 active duty brigades, 21 are deployed overseas: 16 in Iraq, 2 in Afghanistan, 2 in South Korea and one in Bosnia. All but three of the rest are preparing for one of those missions, recovering and retraining after one of these missions, or held in reserve. Quite simply, we need to get international units in Iraq and/or increase the Army endstrength by at least two divisions. Recruiting for the reserves has dropped off even during this relatively high unemployment period. A rebounding economy with greater competition for high school graduates and an economic lure for young men and women appear as real possibilities. Your Commission believes that we as a Nation will face serious challenges in defense resourcing and manpower in the months ahead.

Washington Conference

The National Security Commission met in general session during the Washington Conference on Monday, March 8 and Wednesday, March 10, 2004. The following is a summary of their three sessions:

Morning Session, March 8, 2004

The Commission met jointly with the Foreign Relations Commission to hear several speakers of mutual interest. Brigadier General Louis Weber, Director of Training, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-3, addressed the many challenges facing the Army. The Army is undergoing the largest troop redeployment in Iraq since World War II with over four divisions being replaced by four divisions. Forty percent of the American force in Iraq will be composed of activated Guardsmen and Reservists; and forty-eight percent of the Reserve Components have been activated. Additionally, the Army is rebalancing the Active Component/Reserve Component mix and will be reorganizing its brigade structures so as to create additional brigades with aviation and other capabilities. Finally, the Army intends to stabilize personnel assignments in the years ahead.

The second speaker, Mr. David Ballard, Director of the Office of Foreign Press at the U.S. Department of State, updated the Commissions generally on the role of his office in working with representatives of foreign media organizations in reporting news from the United States. Of immediate interest to the commissions was Mr. Ballard's accounting of his time in Iraq from December 2003 to February 2004, assisting in the process of beginning the institution of a true democratic government in Iraq and educating the local population in the workings of democracy. He discussed the problems facing the people of Iraq and the hopeful signs were appearing irregardless of the acts of terrorism that were being perpetrated by those opposed to the regime change. His report included instances of cooperation between the Shiite, Sunni and Kurd populations in working together toward taking control of their government. Mr. Ballard was generally optimistic on the prospects of conditions continuing to improve in Iraq. Mr. Ballard answered numerous questions from the members of the Commission on his impression of the current situation in Iraq.

Afternoon Session, March 8, 2004

Both Commissions joined with the Special POW/MIA Committee for an update. A report on the condition of Past National Commander Bob Turner who had chaired the POW/MIA update in the past. Commander Turner was unable to attend the session due to health reasons. The Commissions joined with their Chairmen in wishing him a speedy, complete recovery.

The first speaker of the POW/MIA session was Col. Randy Moulton (USAF), Commander of the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency. Col. Moulton summarized the responsibilities of the JPRA since the Agency's formation in 1999. JPRA is a joint-service agency charged with developing and implementing policy and procedures for training of United States military personnel in the event of their capture by a hostile force. The agency coordinates and evaluates the training in the service survival schools both for the basic course and the more advanced course used for air-crew and Special Forces personnel who run a greater risk of capture. JPRA also has responsibility for tailoring the training of military personnel to the particular mission type being undertaken since the status of the captured personnel can differ based on the type of mission, from Prisoner of War to hostage to political detainee. The appropriate behavior of the captured personnel changes according to their status and thus the training needs change.

Ms. Ann Mills Griffith, Executive Director of the National League of Families of Missing from Southeast Asia, provided an update on the status of recovery operations and relations with the government of Vietnam. Her presentation included a historical sketch of the status of the POW/MIA issue and particularly credited President Ronald Reagan with resurrecting awareness toward providing an accounting of the missing. She touched on the support of the American Legion with the League of Families in opposing normalization of trade relations with Vietnam and thanked the Legion for their strong support over the past 30 years. In response to questions, Ms. Griffith addressed the need to continually press the government of Vietnam on the issue of recovery and repatriation of remains but particularly in the area of those personnel whose status is in the category of "last known alive". It is the League's opinion that Vietnam could do much more in this area to help. She also spoke of the initial steps being taken by the government of Vietnam to allow a US salvage vessel into their territorial waters to investigate more than 30 known sites of US aircraft that went down with personnel aboard. These sites have the potential for recovery of approximately 90 US personnel. Ms. Griffith also touched on the possibility that the Vietnamese government may have remains in storage to be

returned as circumstances warrant to achieve their objectives. She concluded by asking the continued assistance of the Legionnaires in achieving the fullest possible accounting of all those missing, not just in Southeast Asia but from all wars.

Morning Session, March 10, 2004

The National Security Commission met in business session on Wednesday morning. The Acting Commission Chairman reminded Commission members that this year was a renewal year for resolutions at The American Legion's 86th Annual National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee. Pre-convention trip planning includes a visit to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky to visit with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) which is returning from Iraq and will be standing down and reorganizing. The Chairman of the Law and Order Committee, Mr. George Wehrli (FL), reported on the selection of Regional winners of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award. The Commission also heard Ms. Desiree Stoy, the National Security Chairman of the Auxiliary, who delivered greetings and outlined the work The American Legion Auxiliary had done with military families during the war on terrorism. Finally, the Deputy Director of the National Security—Foreign Relations Division, presented a brief presentation on the Fiscal Year 2005 defense budget request and national defense issues. Two resolutions were also briefly considered by the Commission but were not recommended for approval.

National Executive Committee Meetings, Spring 2004

An executive session of the National Security Commission met in the Circle Center Room (Lower Level) of the Radisson Hotel on May 3, 2004 to consider resolutions properly before it and to conduct other business.

April 2004 has been a brutal, deadly, month for U.S. forces in Iraq. As of the end of April, 135 Americans have been killed, more than the U.S. personnel killed during the major combat phase that toppled Sadaam Hussein a year ago. Among those killed was Pat Tillman, a pro football player and a true patriot who was killed on April 22nd, and the first US Coast Guardsman was killed on April 24th. It has been 31 years since the draft has ended and the all volunteer force was initiated. Thus far, it has been a huge success.

Senator Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam veteran, has suggested that a military draft may be necessary to ensure that adequate forces are available for America's global leadership role. The military forces appear to be meeting both retention and recruiting goals. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has said there are no plans to return to a draft at the present. Our concerns are for the National Guard and the Reserves.

Meanwhile, military quality of life for the active and reserve components remains one of our primary legislative priorities. Activated Guardsmen and Reservists should be included in TRICARE healthcare. These activated Guardsmen and Reservists must also be fully equipped with the same equipment as the regular military including, body armor and armor plated vehicles.

The fiscal year 2005 Defense Budget of $402 billion is 7 percent higher than last year. This represents over 3.6 percent of the gross domestic product. As you are aware, The American Legion has long urged that between 3 and 4 percent of the gross domestic product be spent on our nation's security.

Twenty-nine years ago, Saigon fell as the U.S. government had assured the American people that the South Vietnamese forces could repulse North Vietnamese forces. History will also judge our country on how well we sustain our accomplishments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

National Security—Foreign Relations Division

Responsibility for the daily conduct of the extensive work of The American Legion in defense and foreign policy is assigned to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division located in the Washington, D.C. office. The staff of the Division consists of: G. Michael Schlee, Director; Dennis M. Duggan, Deputy Director; John C. Petersen, Assistant Director; Angela L. Rose, Executive Secretary to the Director; and Tina T. Hines, Secretary.

During the year, the combined Division has endeavored to not only fulfill its responsibility to implement the mandates and policies of The American Legion relating to national defense and foreign affairs, but to constantly expand and improve the ways and means of projecting our interest in these two important areas. The duties have consisted of answering correspondence and telephone inquiries; maintaining liaison with the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Homeland Security and Coast Guard; the Selective Service System, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and others. These contacts related to a variety of matters, some of which involved members of the armed forces.

Liaison also is maintained with a host of military and quasi-military organizations with whom common goals are shared. Among these are: Reserve Officers Association; Air Force Association; Military Officers Association of America; Association of the U.S. Army; and the National Guard Association of the United States. Most importantly, the National Security-Foreign Relations Division provides a steady flow of information on defense matters to members of both commissions and the leadership at all levels of our organization. Writing and delivering speeches, preparing reports and testimony, is also a duty of the staff. Additionally, promotional material is prepared and distributed to support the national programs in the national security field.

Continual use is made of all American Legion national publications, such as The Dispatch, The American Legion Magazine and the American Legion News Service, the principal means for distribution of factual information and program support in the fields of national defense and foreign affairs. The internet is rapidly becoming the primary mode of communicating responses both within and outside The American Legion. National Security and Foreign Relations Web sites are being developed.

Committee Reports

The following reports, received with grateful appreciation, were prepared under the leadership and guidance of the following Committee and Council Chairmen: Daniel M. Dellinger—Aerospace; Erwin Gus Williams—Defense Civil Preparedness; George Wehrli—Law and Order; Charles F. Moreland—Merchant Marine; Clayborn M. Lofton—Military Affairs; Nancy L. Carder—National Security Council; and Gerard W. Cheffer—Naval Affairs.

AEROSPACE COMMITTEE
Daniel M. Dellinger, Virginia, Chairman

During the past year, the Aerospace Committee continued its efforts to ensure that the United States does not become a second-rate power in modern air power or advanced aerospace technology. The authority for the Committee's efforts are the resolutions adopted at the 85th National Convention. The effort to implement these positions required both administrative and legislative activities.

Legislative Activities. Implementation of these policies necessitates correspondence and testimony to the Armed Services/National Security and Appropriations Committees

of both the Senate and House in coordination with our Legislative Division. In addition to correspondence, principal presentations were before the House and Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittees. Testimony and resolutions on aerospace and other issues were presented to the Subcommittee in their consideration of Fiscal Year 2004 and 2005 defense appropriations bills. Of particular emphasis was the Air Force aerial refueling program and adequate provision for research and development, the strategic airlift, and aircraft production and development to include the C-17, F-22 fighter, and the Joint Strike Fighter.

DEFENSE CIVIL PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE
Erwin Gus Williams, Connecticut, Chairman

The American Legion continues to advocate adequate staffing, adequate budgeting and adequate technical and research support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security. In an era when Russian civil defense efforts are far greater than those of the United States, it becomes imperative that Homeland Security be enhanced at local, state and national levels to protect our country and our citizens from terrorism.

Disaster Relief Assistance: The Defense Civil Preparedness Committee, under direction of the National Security Commission, will continue to review and monitor the progress. 1,155 Posts were involved in manmade and national disaster relief and other emergency assistance programs.

Energy: War in the Middle East with Israel and Palestine focuses the attention of The American Legion on America's continued reliance on foreign sources of energy. Unquestionably, the Middle Eastern ability to shut off aid to America could again endanger our national security interests and economic well-being. The American Legion lobbied in support of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration in 2003.

The energy crisis in 1973 prompted a series of energy-oriented resolutions in the 1980s and 1990s which addressed, primarily, nuclear energy and nuclear waste, energy recovery and conservation. At its Fall meetings in 1989, the National Executive Committee mandated that the Chairman of the National Security Commission annually appoint a Subcommittee on the Conservation of Natural Resources, which included energy issues. Over 648 American Legion posts have appointed Energy Chairmen.

The American Legion at its 73rd National Convention adopted a comprehensive National Energy Strategy resolution which collectively addressed energy conservation and efficiency, energy recovery and development, and alternative sources of energy such as nuclear electricity. Many of these recommendations were incorporated in the National Energy Act. Energy resolutions were also adopted in 2002 at The American Legion's National Convention.

Blood Donor Activities: The American Legion and The American Legion Auxiliary continue to be principal sources of blood donors in the United States. Through our vast network of Posts and Units organized into Department programs, Legionnaires and Auxiliary members continue to supply the blood needs of their own members, hospitalized veterans and through cooperative agreements, to patients in civilian hospitals. During 2002-2003, a total of 90,519 pints of blood were donated by 50,259 American Legion donors.

National Commander Awards: To stimulate activities on the part of Departments and Posts, annual awards are made by the National Commander. During the period from July 1, 2002 through June 15, 2003, many Departments of The American Legion actively

participated in the Blood Donor program. The winning Departments included Georgia, Hawaii, Minnesota, Ohio, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Each winning Department received a Certificate of Recognition signed by the National Commander and National Adjutant.

LAW AND ORDER COMMITTEE
George Wehrli, Florida, Chairman

The Law and Order Committee continued this year to emphasize crime prevention by promoting the distribution of the Crime Prevention booklet across the nation. Liaison was maintained with the National Crime Prevention Coalition in order to keep the committee up-to-date on the latest developments in the field of crime prevention.

American Legion Departments, Posts and individual citizens have been overwhelmingly responsive to the Legion's Crime Prevention program. Requests for this booklet have come from state and local law enforcement officials; from senior citizen groups; from libraries; and from school children. This program is viable, ongoing and important to our National interest. The Law and Order Committee has continued to promote its goals in this area. Over 1,091 Posts had crime resistance programs in 2002-2003.

Fire Protection/Prevention: The National Executive Committee authorized the American Legion Fire Protection and Prevention programs. An information booklet on this subject was published in the Spring of 1986, and was the basis of a slide show production. Over 1,053 Posts had Fire Prevention programs in 2002-2003.

Junior Law Cadet Program: The American Legion, in its efforts to better educate our young people in regard to laws which govern our society, and the agencies which enforce those laws, has developed several programs which feature law enforcement training. Fifteen Departments, in cooperation with state law enforcement agencies, sponsored youth programs designed to acquaint the participants with methods of basic law enforcement.

National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Program: Based on its published criteria, the Law and Order Committee annually select Regional winners who contend for the prestigious honor of being selected as the Law Enforcement Officer of the Year. Police Officer First Class Timothy C. Wiley from Maryland was selected and presented with the seventh awarding of the National Law Enforcement Officer of the Year at the 85th National Convention at St. Louis, Missouri.

MERCHANT MARINE COMMITTEE
Charles F. Moreland, Florida, Chairman

Since its founding, The American Legion has realized the importance of a strong American merchant marine and the indispensable role of this "fifth arm of defense." Today, the ever increasing dependence of the U.S. economy on raw materials from Third World countries and overseas areas demand renewed efforts to build up our merchant fleet.

Retaining American merchant marine independence in supplying our economy and the added demands of military sealift, spurred this Committee's support for expanding the Merchant Marine during the past year. The effort to inform its membership, the general public and the Congress of our views were guided by resolutions which were unanimously adopted by the 82nd National Convention.

Maritime Power: Throughout our history, maritime power has been a key element in the growth and strength of America. Moreover, the new sealift demands of the United States make the Merchant Marine even more imperative in our strategic planning. We must rebuild the merchant marine if we are to maintain free use of the seas in the face of potential challenges presented by regional conflicts.

For the eighth consecutive year, the National Organization of The American Legion presented its award to an outstanding midshipman at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. The American Legion presents awards at all the Service Academies.

MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Clayborn M. Lofton, Illinois, Chairman

During the year, the Military Affairs Committee has directed its major efforts toward maintaining a strong and modern United States armed forces, second to none in the world. We believe the times deserve no less. Our activities have been guided by the resolutions adopted by the 84th and 85th National Conventions and subsequent National Executive Committee actions. Wide dissemination was given those resolutions to Congressional, government, military and industry leaders to inform them of our mandates for supporting a strong and modern military forces to include the Reserve Components. Bound volumes of the resolutions were presented to the President, Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Maintaining a strong national defense was designated as a legislative priority by the National Commander.

Press Conference/Legislative Activities: The staff has kept up-to-date by attending press conferences on various subjects of interest, including the press conferences sponsored by the Department of Defense, Department of Transportation (Coast Guard) and several Congressional press conferences.

Through the Legislative Division, correspondence with Members of Congress and Congressional staff was initiated and followed through in other areas as follows: War on Terrorism; Homeland Security; Military funeral honors; military absentee balloting; military health care; military commissaries and impact aid for military school children; military pay and allowances; and other military quality of life incentives, to include the concurrent receipt issue. Additionally, testimony was presented before the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Defense in support of military readiness, quality of life features and continued modernization of the Armed Forces. Emphasis was also placed on revising the national military strategy so as to better match military resources with continued overseas deployments which are beginning to impact on the morale and well-being of the Armed Forces.

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
Nancy L. Carder, Illinois, Chairman

Selective Service System: The American Legion, over the past year, has continued to support the Selective Service System by strongly advocating the maintenance of the Selective Service Registration Program as a viable preparedness measure.

Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy: Criterion for judging the winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy is based on Departments giving the greatest degree of support to ROTC programs to include the number of medals presented and Legion participation in award ceremonies this year. The winners of the Paul H. Griffith ROTC Trophy are the

Departments of Hawaii, Illinois, Minnesota and Montana. The American Legion presented over 12,555 ROTC Medals to ROTC students in 2002-2003.

NAVAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
Gerard W. Cheffer, Illinois, Chairman

Guided by resolutions adopted at the 84th and 85th National Conventions, the Naval Affairs Committee has worked to strengthen the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard during the past year. It begins with the premise that sea lanes are the life lines of America, both in peacetime and war. The United States is no longer hesitant about sending powerful signals to aggressors that it will not stand idly by and watch while they conduct violent takeovers of legitimate governments, particularly when those takeovers are contrary to the national interests of the United States. This new diplomacy requires a mobile, flexible and capable and deployable United States Navy and Marine Corps.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMISSION
Robert L. Morrill, New York, Chairman
Joseph H. March, Maryland, Director

The Public Relations Commission communicates the organizational image, goals, programs and legislative positions of The American Legion to national, regional and specialized media, corporate America, and the public. During 2004, The American Legion harnessed the latest technologies in proactively marketing news releases, editorials and electronic media products.

For the first time, the Commission marketed media materials in digital format, using Digital Video Discs (DVDs) to distribute video and audio briefings, television and radio public service spots, talking points, printed ad slicks, brochures and training videos. The Commission focused on promoting public support for troops deployed in the war on terrorism enhancing public awareness about The American Legion Family Support Network, Blue Star Service Banners and the American Legacy Scholarship Fund. Special emphasis was given to development and distribution of the World War II Memorial National Dedication Day Event Planning Guide. Thanks to the efforts of American Legion Posts throughout the U.S., thousands of World War II veterans who could not travel to Washington, D.C. received the local recognition they so richly deserved.

Commission members and staff worked with their counterparts in other commissions in support of the National Commander's "Military and Veterans Vote Impact 2004" campaign. Public relations efforts included a series of ads in Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps Times and public service ads in the European, Middle East and Pacific Stars and Stripes. The outreach program solicited active duty, National Guard and Reserve participation in the selection of questions on a host of issues to the Presidential candidates. Their answers were placed on The American Legion national Internet Website, www.legion.org, along with voter registration information and links.

PR Technology

A vast array of free public service media materials including ad slicks, news releases, editorials, fact sheets, suggested speeches, and radio and television spots were provided to Departments, Districts and Posts. Many public relations media products were available for downloading from The American Legion website. Using these materials, media provided extensive coverage of Posts conducting National World War II Dedication Day events, youth programs and troop support activities. New American

Legion public relations media materials are made available on DVD and CD formats to assist post public relations officers in marketing directly to print and broadcast hometown media. Using the Internet, public service radio copy promoting The American Legion's American Legacy Scholarship Fund was transmitted by e-mail to every radio station in the country. The effort added thousands of dollars to the fund that will help defray the cost of college education for children of U.S. military members killed on or after Sept. 11, 2001 in the war on terrorism.

Media Relations

From its presence in the nation's capital, the National Pubic Relations Commission continued to nurture existing relationships and to build new ones within America's elite media. Through these relationships, the commission fostered extensive national-media coverage of The American Legion's advocacy.

National newsgathering organizations reported on American Legion advocacy more than 60 times in the first 31 weeks of 2004. *Parade Magazine* dealt with The American Legion's position on adequate funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs health care budget in its May 30 edition, and even noted The American Legion's "Impact 2004" voter-education program; the coverage ignited a surge in visits to the "Impact 2004" Web site. Both "CBS Evening News" and Fox News Channel interviewed the National Commander for pieces that aired in early August on the presidential-campaign debate on VA health care funding.

Using the nation's editorial pages proved to be an effective means by which the commission helped to disseminate The American Legion's advocacy. Knight-Ridder distributed a National Commander's op-ed in June calling for the posthumous awarding of the Medal of Freedom to the GI Bill's originator, Past National Commander Harry W. Colmery. The New York Times published July 2 the National Commander's letter to the editor on VA health care funding. USA Today July 12 published a letter from the National Commander calling for an increase in the total military force.

Reaching out to today's troops and military retirees, American Legion representatives have been quoted on numerous health issues in Army Times Publishing Company newspapers. The issues covered in July editions alone included the importance of documenting troop inoculations and the criticality of studying the long-term health of Gulf War veterans.

Highlighting the coverage were several national Associated Press reports on The American Legion's fight for "mandatory funding" of VA health care and its considerable influence on the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Service process. Additionally, Parade and C-SPAN coverage of The American Legion's positions on VA health care funding and its "Impact 2004" voter-education initiative also carried "The American Legion Story" far and wide.

Editorial page submissions calling for VA health care improvements, an increase in the active-duty force, and protecting the Pledge, which were published in *The Oregonian*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *The New York Times*, respectively, solidified journalistic and general public perception of The American Legion as a proponent for the proper treatment of troops and veterans as well as the preservation of the values for which they have sacrificed.

Awards

The National Commander's Public Relations Award was presented to the television series JAG and its creator, Donald Bellasario during the Washington D.C. Conference in March. The show was recognized for its outstanding support of the men and women of

the United States military through creative dramatic and action-packed episodes. JAG enabled millions of Americans to appreciate the dedication of not only the Judge Advocate General Corps but all who serve in the armed forces.

The American Legion presented the coveted Fourth Estate Award during the 86th National Convention in Nashville to UPI investigative editor Mark Benjamin for uncovering the plight of hundreds of sick and wounded U.S. soldiers that were "languishing" in hot cement barracks at Fort Stewart, Ga., while they waited—sometimes for months—to see doctors. His reporting prompted the rush of "doctors and dollars" to Fort Stewart to provide assistance.

The Future

The National Public Relations Commission remains committed to enhancing the image of The American Legion and engaging media at all levels to recognize the contributions and sacrifices of military veterans and their families, past and present. As the war on terrorism continues, The American Legion will continue to be the preeminent voice for veterans in our nation.

THE AMERICAN LEGION MAGAZINE COMMISSION

Dennis J. Henkemeyer, Minnesota, Chairman
Daniel S. Wheeler, Virginia, Editor-in-Chief

The American Legion Magazine continues to attract America's leaders and top writers. Since September 2003, The American Legion Magazine has published exclusive interviews with President Bush, Sen. Kerry, Donald Rumsfeld, Tim Russert, Mel Gibson, Bob Dole, Dolly Parton, Interior Secretary Gale Norton, former Deputy Assistant Attorney General Victoria Toensing, Social Security Commissioner Jo Anne Barnhart, actor Lee Ermy and Sen. George Allen. Top writers who have contributed articles included Michelle Malkin, Dinesh D'Souza, Pat Conroy, Jay Winik, Frank Schaefer, Michael Medved, Larry Sabato, Robert Bryce and Rick Reilly. Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi both contributed articles to our September issue. Additionally, we have articles by Alan Dershowitz, David Barton and Richard Perle in our inventory. We will also be publishing interviews with Cubs manager Dusty Baker, foreign policy expert Daniel Pipes, basketball great Kareem Abdul Jabbar and former Marine Ed McMahon in the coming months.

The Magazine will continue to stay on top of veterans issues. Besides publishing recent articles on Agent Orange, MIAs, CARES and mandatory funding, the magazine plans to publish articles on long term care and the transition being made by disabled veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan. For the first time in several years, the magazine has an editorial calendar encompassing the next 12 months. This is a blueprint that we believe will benefit our abilities to plan additional editorial, design and attract advertising.

Automotive and pharmaceutical advertising have remained in the magazine throughout the first three quarters of 2004. During this time, the magazine sold $6.9 million in advertising, exceeding its goal by more than $104,184.

Ranked No. 1 nationally in core readership (Doublebase/MRI), 84% of The American Legion Magazine's readers read three out of four issues.

Postage continues to be the biggest expense of the magazine. The Magazine will continue to monitor postal rates and inform its leadership and membership of pending increases. The Magazine is printed in Glasgow, Kentucky, by R.R. Donnelley and Sons.

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Paul A. Morin, Massachusetts, Chairman
Peter S. Gaytan, Delaware, Director

The following report covers the activities of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and its staff during the program year ending June 30, 2004.

The Eighty-fifth Annual National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri and the Fall and Spring Meetings of the National Executive Committee approved certain positions expressed in resolutions submitted to those bodies through the Convention Committee on Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, respectively. The approved resolutions are set forth as follows:

2003 National Convention St. Louis, Missouri

Resolution No. 60: (IL) Exempt Former POWs and Purple Heart Recipients from Prescription Drug Co-Payments

Resolution No. 61: (IL) Allow Helpless Children to Retain $90 of Their Pension while in Medicaid-Covered Nursing Homes

Resolution No. 62: (IL) DIC Benefits for Surviving Spouses of Certain Filipino Veterans

Resolution No. 63: (IL) Reduce the Number of Years of One-Hundred Percent (100%) Service Connection Required for DIC Purposes

Resolution No. 85: (MD) The American Legion Policy on Agent Orange

Resolution No. 118: (WV) Expand Pension Eligibility to Veterans Placed in Imminent Danger Under "Warlike Conditions"

Resolution No. 120: (SD) Discontinue Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Pension Maintenance Centers

Resolution No. 129: (NY) Adjustments to the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) Funding Model

Resolution No. 130: (NY) Oppose Increased Co-Payments and an Enrollment Fee for Priority Groups 7 and 8 Veterans to Receive VA Health Care

Resolution No. 133: (NY) Oppose Legislation Authorizing Legion-Accredited Representatives to Develop Claims for the Department of Veterans Affairs

Resolution No. 138: (NY) Restore and Increase Burial and Plot Allowance

Resolution No. 147: (MI) A System Worth Saving: National Commander's VA Facility Report

Resolution No. 162: (VA&R) Ensure a Domestic Source of White Marble for Standard Government Headstones and Flat Markers in National Cemeteries and for Other National Monuments

National Executive Committee Meeting
October 8-9, 2003

Resolution No. 6: (VA&R) Exempt Income for Services as an Election Judge in Determining VA Pension

Resolution No. 7: (VA&R) The American Legion Policy on the State Veterans Home Program

National Executive Committee Meeting
May 5-6, 2004

Resolution No. 6 (VA&R): Support Legislation to Mandate the National Institutes of Health (NIH) To Reimburse VA for the Facility and Administrative ("Indirect") Costs of NIH-Funded Research Conducted at VA

Resolution No. 7: (VA&R) The American Legion Policy on the Department of Veterans Affairs Nursing Home Capacity
Resolution No. 8: (VA&R) Revision of Work Standards for VA Adjudicators
Resolution No. 25: (VA&R) The American Legion Support of the VA Organ Transplant Program

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Meetings

Members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission held four meetings during the period August 23, 2003, through May 4, 2004.

The VA&R Commission met on August 23, 2003, during the National Convention in St. Louis, Missouri and a report was subsequently made to the National Executive Committee relative to the Commission's meeting.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the VA&R Commission met at National Headquarters, October 6-7, 2003, for the purpose of considering those matters, which had previously been referred for study, and to discuss a broad range of other veteran related matters. A report of that meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on October 8, 2003.

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met for the 81st consecutive year in Washington, DC, on March 8, 2004, in conjunction with the 44th Annual Washington Conference. The actions taken by the Commission were reported to the National Executive Committee on May 5, 2004, in Indianapolis, Indiana, during the Spring NEC Meetings.

A Subcommittee of the Executive Section of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission met on May 3-4, 2004, at National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana. Chairman Paul A. Morin (MA), chaired the Subcommittee meeting and encouraged those present to continue their efforts on behalf of the nation's veterans. A report of this meeting was presented to the National Executive Committee on May 5, 2004.

National Leadership and Information Conferences
The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary

Regional National Leadership and Information Conferences were conducted during the months of September 2003, and March, April, and May of 2004. The meetings were held in the following cities:

Region 1—Springfield, MA—April 16-17, 2004
Region 2—Grantville, PA—May 14-15, 2004
Region 3—Macon, GA—March 19-20, 2004
Region 4—Dallas, TX—September 19-21, 2003
Region 5—Springfield, IL—April 23-24, 2004
Region 6—Omaha, NE—April 16-17, 2004
Region 7—Phoenix, AZ—April 23-24, 2004
Region 8—Boise, ID—September 19-21, 2003

The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary provided specialized training. For the eleventh consecutive year, a Post Service Officers School was conducted. Claims, ratings, and benefits were discussed.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the VA&R Commission each attended a Conference, and the Regional Chairpersons were in attendance at all Conferences. Staff members of the VA&R Commission were present at each Conference providing those present with an overview of the VA&R program as well as significant VA&R issues.

Representatives from the Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Program (VAVS) attended the Conferences and provided updates and presentations about important program initiatives.

Annual National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference

The 81st National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference was held March 8-10, 2004, at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. Participants included members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, Department and County Service Officers and Rehabilitation Directors, members of the American Legion Auxiliary, and various National, Department, and Post officials.

Mr. Paul A. Morin (MA), Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, and K. Robert Lewis (CT), Vice-Chairman, presided at the sessions of the Conference. Conferees heard remarks by National Commander, John A. Brieden, III (TX), and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield. National Commander Brieden presented Mr. John Casey from Texas with The American Legion Volunteer of the Year award. The agenda included presentations by the Chairman of the Board of Veterans Appeals, Mr. E. Dane Clark; the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Ms. Laura Miller; the Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Mr. Richard Wannemacher, Jr.; the Director of VA Voluntary Service, Mr. James Delgado and the Director of Compensation and Pension Service, Mr. Ron Henke. Mr. Robert Ray (OH) provided updates about the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission. Greetings and remarks were received from the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary, Mrs. Katherine Morris. Remarks were also presented by Ms. Susan Edgerton, Democratic Staff Director, House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Health, United States House of Representatives; Mr. William Cahill, Health Policy Counsel, Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, United States Senate and Mr. Robert Greenstein, Executive Director, Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Prior to the Conference, for the twenty-third year, the Chairman and members of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation staff met with Department Service Officers for the Annual Department Service Officers Seminar. Topics discussed included current VA programs and staff operations.

Conference Recommendations

The members of the Recommendations Committee met on March 8, 2004, in the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Washington, DC. No recommendations were submitted from the 2003 National Information Conferences nor were any generated at the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference. Three resolutions were reviewed and recommendations for action (approval) were made to the Commission.

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Legislative Activities

During the past year the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission was actively involved with legislative issues affecting the programs and services administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Activities included drafting legislation pursuant to the mandates adopted by the National Convention and National Executive Committee and presentation of such testimony at hearings scheduled before various Congressional Committees. Active liaison is maintained with the staff of The American Legion Legislative Commission, officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congressional Committee staff and with elected Congressional officials.

The following is a synopsis of the Congressional hearings held from July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004, on matters pertaining to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

1. On July 10, 2003, the Deputy Manager of Operations and Training testified on Bills Relating to Veterans' Disability Compensation Benefits, Veterans' Survivor Benefits, Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act and other Matters, before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate.
2. On July 15, 2003, National Commander Ronald F. Conley testified on The State of the Department of Veterans' Affairs Health Care System, A System Worth Saving before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate.
3. On July 28, 2003, the Deputy Director of Health Care testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Veterans' Health Care Legislation, United States Senate.
4. On September 16, 2003, National Commander John A. Brieden, III testified before a joint session of the Veterans' Affairs Committees on the Legislative Priorities of The American Legion, United States Congress.
5. On September 25, 2003, the Assistant Director for Resource Development testified before the Subcommittee on Benefits Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The Department of Veterans' Affairs Life Insurance Programs, United States House of Representatives.
6. On September 20, 2003, the Deputy Director of Health Care testified before the Subcommittee on Health Committee on Veterans' Affairs on HR 2379, The Rural Veterans' Access to Care Act of 2003 and HR 2094, The Veterans' Timely Access to Health Care Act of 2003, United States House of Representatives.
7. On January 28, 2004, the Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The Long Term Care Policies of The Department of Veterans' Affairs, United States House of Representatives.
8. On February 10, 2004, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The Department of Veterans' Affairs FY 2005 Budget Request, United States Senate.
9. On March 2, 2004, the Deputy Director of Health Care testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The CARES Commission report to the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs, United States Senate.
10. On March 11, 2004, the Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Health Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The State of Veterans Who May Be Suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, United States House of Representative.
11. On March 30, 2004, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on The Department of Veterans' Affairs Prescription-Only Health Benefit and Transitional Pharmacy Benefit, United States House of Representatives.
12. On April 29, 2004, the Deputy Director of Health Care testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on HR 348, The Prisoner of War Benefits Act of 2003; HR 843, The Veterans Benefits Eligibility Act of 2003; HR 1735, To Amend Title 38 United States Code, To Increase the Maximum Amount Of A Home Loan Guarantee Available To A Veteran; HR 4065, The Veterans Housing Affordability Act of 2004; HR 2612, The Veterans Adapted Housing

Expansion Act of 2003; The Veterans Educational Opportunity Act of 2004; and Other Proposed Bills, United States House of Representatives.

13. On May 6, 2004, the Deputy Director of Health Care testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on HR 4020, The State Veterans' Homes Nursing Recruitment and Retention Act 2004; HR 4231, The Department of Veterans' Affairs Nurse Recruitment and Retention Act of 2004; HR 3849, The Military Sexual Trauma Counseling Act of 2004; HR 4248, The Homeless Veterans Assistance Reauthorization Act of 2004; and a Bill (Mr. Simmons) to Reform the Qualifications and Selection Criteria for the position of Undersecretary for Health, United States House of Representatives.
14. On June 16, 2004, the Principal Deputy Director of VA&R submitted written testimony to the Subcommittee on Benefits on HR 4032, The Veterans Fiduciary Act of 2004 and a draft bill, The Veterans Self Employment Act of 2004, United States House of Representatives.
15. On June 22, 2004, the Assistant Director for Resource Development testified before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs on Multiple Legislative Initiatives, United States Senate.
16. On June 24, 2004, the Principle Deputy Director of VA&R testified before the Subcommittee on Health Committee on Veterans Affairs on The Department of Veterans Affairs Real Property and Facilities Management Improvement Act of 2004, United States House of Representatives.

Informational Services

To further strengthen the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care delivery system, The American Legion has several pamphlets and brochures: *The American Legion Guide To: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—What Is It? Who Gets It? What Can Be Done?* This brochure is still very much in demand and is widely distributed. *The American Legion Guide: Women Veterans—Identifying Risks, Services, and Prevention.* This handbook is in high demand among our women veterans. *The Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans* is also an extremely helpful publication. Another publication available upon request is: *What To Do Before A Veteran Dies.* These handbooks and pamphlets are used as handouts at seminars, conferences, and Department Conventions. Supplies of these and other VA&R pamphlets are maintained and distributed upon request.

2004 Report on the National Cemetery System

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is charged with meeting the interment needs of the nation' s veterans and their dependents. NCA is striving to meet its accessibility goal of 90 percent of all veterans living within 75 miles of open national or state Veterans cemeteries. There are approximately 14,200 acres within established installations in NCA. Just over half are undeveloped and, with available gravesites in developed acreage, have the potential to provide more than 3.6 million gravesites. More than 301,050 full-casket gravesites, 58,500 in-ground gravesites for cremated remains, and 37,900 columbarium niches are available in already developed acreage in our 120 national cemeteries.

The NCA' s budget proposal totaled $454.41 million and 1,779 FTE for Fiscal Year (FY) 2005. Of the total outlay projected for FY 2005, $180.2 million is for burial benefits, $148.9 million is for National Cemetery operations and maintenance and $31.2 million is for administrative expenses. The FY2005 outlay proposal earmarks $81 million for major construction, a 45 percent increase over FY 2004 estimates. This reflects the

cemetery construction mandated by The Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act, Pub. L. 106-117, ("Mill Bill") required NCA to establish six new National Cemeteries. The first under the Mill Bill, Fort Sill, opened in 2001 under the fast-track program, while the remaining five, Atlanta, Detroit, South Florida, Pittsburgh and Sacramento are in various stages of completion. The American Legion supported Public Law 108-109, the National Cemetery Expansion Act of 2003 authorizing VA to establish new national cemeteries to serve veterans in the areas of Bakersfield, Calif.; Birmingham, Ala.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Sarasota County, Fla.; southeastern Pennsylvania; and Columbia-Greenville, S.C. All six areas have veteran populations exceeding 170,000, which is the threshold VA has established for new national cemeteries.

Total burials for NCA in FY 2003 was 89,750, with 17,170 of those burials taking place in State Veterans Cemeteries. NCA expects veterans' deaths to peak in 2006 at 687,000 followed by a gradual decrease to 548,000 in 2020. Burial space is constantly being sought. Currently, of the 120 National Cemeteries, 62 are open for full service, 27 allow only cremations and the remaining 31 are closed. Of the 89,750 interments conducted in FY 2003, 73.5 percent were in the 20 busiest national cemeteries.

Maintaining cemeteries as National Shrines is one of NCA's top priorities. This commitment involves raising, realigning and cleaning headstones and markers to renovate gravesites. The work that has been done so far has been outstanding, however, adequate funding is key to maintaining this very important commitment. At the rate that Congress is funding this work, it will take twenty-eight years to complete. The American Legion supports the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs in his goal of completing the NCA's National Shrine Commitment in five years. This Commitment includes the establishment of standards of appearance for national cemeteries that are equal to the standards of the finest cemeteries in the world. Operations, maintenance and renovation funding must increased to reflect the true requirements of the National Cemetery Administration to fulfill this Commitment.

The State Veterans Cemetery Grant Program is very robust. The FY 2005 budget requested $32 million for this program. This is "no-year money" and so any monies not spent in the previous FY can be carried over into the next fiscal year. This program is not intended to replace National Cemeteries, but to complement them. Grants for state-owned and operated cemeteries can be used to establish, expand and improve on existing cemeteries. Currently there are 48 operating state cemeteries around the country in 26 states. In FY 2003, NCA supported State cemeteries provided more than 18,180 interments.

Since the NCA concentrates its construction resources on large metropolitan areas, it is unlikely that new national cemeteries will be constructed in all states. Therefore, individual states are encouraged to pursue applications for the State Cemetery Grants Program. Fiscal commitment from the state is essential to keep the operation of the cemetery on track. NCA estimates it takes about $300,000 a year to operate a state cemetery. The NCA has an estimated 800 monuments and memorials throughout their system of 120 National Cemeteries and affiliated soldiers', Government, and confederate lots. Burials at more than two-thirds of these properties date to the Civil War or earlier. To document the largest and most significant category of its monuments and memorials, NCA is partnering with Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!), a program within Heritage Conservation Inc., a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation and care of many types of historic resources, with 10 years' experience in volunteers' survey of public outdoor sculpture nationwide. As of March 10, 2004, the Memorials Inventory Project (MIP) has progressed to nearly 60 percent completion. When the project began in May 2002, it was estimated that there were 300 memorials in national cemeteries and soldiers'

lots under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The project was originally scheduled to be completed by Dec. 31, 2002. As the survey got underway, additional memorials were reported or discovered and 300 memorials were added to the inventory list in the summer of 2003. Due to the increase in memorials, the project deadline was extended.

A subsequent call for volunteers was announced in November 2003 and it was reported by many media outlets and veterans organizations. As a result, NCA received an overwhelming response from over 2,500 individuals interested in volunteering for the project. More than 3,000 people have contacted NCA since the program's inception.

To date, 247 volunteers have completed work on 496 memorials and 124 volunteers are currently documenting memorials at several cemeteries. The total NCA count (as of March 10, 2004) is 802 memorials-nearly triple the original estimate. Only 15 memorials in Minnesota have yet to be assigned to volunteers.

The MIP has proved very popular with the public and the opportunity to volunteer has attracted persons of all ages and interests. As a result, NCA hopes to utilize volunteers for future projects in its national cemeteries and soldiers' lots. When this project is complete, the inventory data will reside at NCA as well as be publicly accessible on-line through another SOS! partner, the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The project started in the spring of 2002. On December 27, 2001, President Bush signed Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001. This law includes a provision that allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to furnish an appropriate headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries, whose deaths occur on or after December 27, 2001, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a non-government marker. This new provision is codified at 38 U.S.C. § 2306(d). FY 2003, NCA provided more than 344,800 headstones and markers and more than 254,600 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased veterans in FY 2003.

Government Life Insurance Activities

The United States Government, acting through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), directly administers four life insurance programs for veterans of the World War I, World War II and Korean War periods, as well as two special on-going programs for veterans in certain service-connected disabled categories. These programs are administered under the titles of United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI) for World War I era veterans, National Service Life Insurance (NSLI) for World War II era, Korean War era and Service-Disabled veterans (SDVI—Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance), and Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) for totally disabled veterans who are approved grants for specially adapted housing purposes by the DVA. The USGLI and NSLI programs currently have some 1.8 million policies in force as of March 31, 2004, with a combined life insurance coverage of some $ 19.2 billion dollars. Dividend distributions for participating policies in these programs amount to approximately $500-$600 million dollars annually. NSLI processes some 100,000-120,000 claims annually in addition to a very high number of other policy transactions as the program's policies are individual in nature and are composed of diverse plans of insurance. The VMLI program insures some 2700 veterans with approximately $173 million dollars of coverage in force. Currently these programs are operated out of the VA Insurance Center in Philadelphia, PA.

In addition to the life insurance programs directly operated by the DVA, the Department also has supervisory authority and responsibility over two other major government life insurance program issues. These are the Servicemember's Group Life

Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) programs. These programs have provided insurance protection, since 1965 and 1970 respectively, to active duty and reserve military personnel (SGLI), spouses and dependents, and to separated veterans and to retired and separated reservists (VGLI). The SGLI and VGLI programs are administered by the Prudential Insurance Company at a center in Newark, NJ (the Office of Servicemembers Group Life Insurance - OSGLI), with all administration and other program expenses being paid by the policyholders from a portion of their insurance premiums, save for the extra hazard mortality experience of wartime periods when general tax revenues take over. These insurance issues are solely group Term insurance without dividends, disability benefits, or diverse types of permanent plans with equity values such as the individual policy contracts contained in the DVA's NSLI program. On March 31, 2004 SGLI provided some 5.9 million active duty and reserve personnel, spouses and dependents with more than $ 685 billion dollars of life insurance coverage, while VGLI covered some 404,000 veterans with insurance in excess of $ 42.5 billion dollars. Of these policy accounts the OSGLI center in Newark, NJ maintains only VGLI, with the various military service departments maintaining the rest. The OSGLI center processes between 2500-3500 death claims annually with minimal other transactions due to the very limited nature of the coverage as group term insurance only. Currently, claims arising from military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia are processed in less than two business days from the time the last required document is received at OSGLI. In 1992 the face amount of SGLI coverage was increased to $100,000 with an additional $100,000 permitted as an option, and VGLI became renewable instead of the single five year term previously in effect. The amount of VGLI a veteran can hold cannot be in excess of the amount of SGLI he or she held in service. In 1997 Retired Reservists, instead of being insured under the SGLI program until age 60 or the receipt of their first retired pay check, were merged into the VGLI program to allow them the option of retaining their coverage as long as desired. Reservists leaving reserve service without the amount of time needed for full retirement may now also be covered under VGLI if desired. In addition, veterans are now permitted to convert their SGLI/VGLI insurance, in partial amounts at different times or in whole, to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial insurance carrier as they leave service, or at any time they are in the VGLI program, without having to wait a stipulated period as was previously the case. Effective April 1, 2001 those entering active duty are now automatically covered for a full $250,000 under SGLI as authorized by Public Law 106-419, and members of the Individual Ready Reserve who have volunteered for assignment to a mobilization category were also made eligible for SGLI coverage under that law...In addition, Public Law 107-14 has authorized other program enhancements to the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001, which allows up to $100,000 in spousal coverage on a paid premium basis, and provides $10,000 free life insurance coverage for a member's children. These dependent coverages cannot, at present, be carried over into the VGLI program and cannot be doubled in the case of both parents being in service. However, while the member's SGLI is in force, spousal coverage can be converted to a private plan of insurance with a participating commercial company upon written application in the same manner as a VGLI policy may be so converted. The American Legion insurance unit presented supporting testimony on these legislative changes as they improved greatly the range of financial options available to veterans in these programs, not only at the time of their separation from service, but in later years as their life situation changed as well, and as they permit the SGLI and VGLI programs to more effectively compete with private insurers who have the privilege of excluding applicants as desired and who may, in the case of certain military associations, be co-located on military bases.

The American Legion's National VA&R insurance unit at the Philadelphia, PA center initiated and worked with the DVA insurance management staff to provide added protection to those v terans leaving service in a totally disabled and life threatening status, to attempt to ensure these veterans do not lose coverage (as happens periodically) due to misunderstanding certain requirements of the SGLI to VGLI transfer system stemming from inconsistencies in the manner these are explained to them as they outprocess from various military facilities, or failing to respond in a timely manner to initial insurance invitations and premium billings, etc. Recommended safeguards included such items as automatic coverage and premium deduction start-ups from military retired pay or DVA disability compensation, policy liens for past due premiums, and closer contacts between the SGLI/VGLI administering office and veterans in this category. DVA insurance management completed a staff study through the military service departments, the Defense Manpower Data Center, DPC Austin and OSGLI on the methods such individuals can be identified, and has created an Outreach program to contact by telephone and with additional letters veterans in this class, and advise them of their VGLI options as needed. Currently, separating servicemembers who have been discharged on disability retirement at a rating of 50% to 100% by their branch of service are contacted. Some 2500 severely disabled cases have been processed through this effort so far. Of those contacted by phone, some 83% apply for either the SGLI Disability Extension (free coverage for one year) or VGLI coverages. These activities have resulted in the VA Insurance Center staff being awarded the prestigious Leo C. Wurschmidt Jr. Customer Service Team Award this year. An on-line SGLI/VGLI manual is available now to all military outprocessing centers to ensure these have immediate access to correct information concerning the requirements for veterans being separated to convert their in-service SGLI coverage to VGLI coverage, and in February 2004 a detailed Insurance Needs Calculator was added to the VA Insurance website, for veterans to use to assess their life insurance needs and compare VGLI coverage to other insurance options. The Calculator includes VA, Social Security and military benefits in the final assessment. VGLI policyholders also have the ability now to access their policy information through the VA website as well, using passwords and policy information. In 2002-2003 both VGLI and SGLI premiums were reduced; VGLI an overall 40% from 1998 levels, and a 19% reduction for SGLI premiums effective July 1, 2003 with a simultaneous reduction in SGLI spousal rates as well. For all programs the Department of Veterans Affairs administers and/or supervises some 7.7 million life insurance policies for military personnel, spouses, dependents and veterans, with a total in-force coverage of over $ 747.7 billion dollars.

In the SDVI program many disabled veterans annually continue to take advantage of the new supplemental Service-Disabled insurance provided in the legislative changes of 1992, whereby an additional $20,000 of coverage may be purchased by those veterans having a basic Service-Disabled policy and who become totally disabled before age 65. The American Legion VA&R office continues to maintain a special notification system for those veterans who choose The American Legion as their representative and who are applying for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) coverage to ensure they are informed as early as possible of these additional benefits. This is particularly needful as the current DVA system may, in certain areas such as during the time period while a disability compensation claim is awaiting adjudication in a VA Regional Office, be faulty in communicating information on benefits such as disability premium waivers and supplemental coverage to veterans who may qualify for it and who may very well be in life threatening (and therefore time constrained) conditions. A special activity was initiated in this benefit area in the first quarter of FY 2004 by the VA Compensation and

Pension Service to address concerns that many service-connected disabled veterans were not being informed enough on the program. A mailing on SDVI notification was included with the annual cost-of-living increase letters, reaching approximately 2.3 million veterans, resulting in many thousands of new applications being received, and expected, from both veterans directly and through DSO/VSO offices nationwide. VA is presently seeking an increase in the amount of budget authority for these expanded SDVI operations. To assist in this project, SDVI applications have also been made available on the VA's Insurance website through an Autoform program whereby applications can be made, saved, printed for mailing or submitted electronically as desired. This new tool became active March 5, 2004.

The DVA Insurance Center continues their on-going effort to provide better service and program enhancements to their veteran policyholders by periodically updating their computer and communication systems, both as part of the overall DVA area networks and through the Internet, and placing ever more records and transaction activities, previously done on paper, into their on-line computer systems. Beginning in Summer 2001, the DVA Insurance Center accelerated a planned program of transforming their insurance operation into a wholly computerized system no longer utilizing paper insurance files, but using imaging technology instead to replace paper files with electronic ones. The impetus for this was to create space in the Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center for one of the three regional Pension Centers which have been organized to assist in the reduction of the national backlog in compensation and pension cases. The new insurance system, known as VICTARS (Veterans Insurance Claims Tracking and Response System) permits on-screen display of all file documents that would previously have been maintained in a paper insurance folder, and gives VA insurance specialists the ability to input and process claims, transactions and responses to inquiries with far greater speed than any earlier system used to date, and to maintain a full history of such in the policyholder's new electronic file. In connection with this completely new software package, VA employees have been provided with large screen display monitors and updated capacity high speed computers required by the new programming. Currently, over 6 million images are available to insurance specialists via their desktop computers. All previous paper insurance folders (over 2.5 million) have now been retired to a nearby Federal Records Center, but are still available for recall as may be needed on certain cases. This accomplishment has resulted in savings of some $1 million annually. Insurance services are further augmented by automated assistance and call routing facilities added to a toll free number (an expansion of the VA's Insurance Center telephone unit has been completed to handle an increasing work load), by acceptance of faxed correspondence, claims, and transaction requests, through responding to inquiries and transaction requests received at the VA insurance Internet address (http://www.insurance.va.gov/), and by providing comprehensive insurance information through links to the VA's Home Page and VA's insurance Home Page. Additionally, in accordance with the federal initiative to have all or most government disbursements done by Direct Deposit (Electronic Transfer of Funds) the VA Insurance Center has completed actions for the direct deposit of monthly insurance installment awards to beneficiaries and those policyholders receiving monthly annuities. All monthly insurance award/annuity payments are by electronic transfer of funds to these insurance payees unless otherwise requested by the payee. In this vein, all policy loan, dividend refund and cash surrender payments are also sent to an insured's bank account if VA benefits are or were on direct deposit, or if an insured is paying premiums by automatic deduction from a checking account, unless requested otherwise. New settlement claim forms for death settlements will contain blocks for beneficiaries to include bank

information should they wish insurance settlement checks transferred to them electronically. As with the VGLI program, NSLI policyholders may now also access their account information through the VA's insurance website with a PIN number, and perform certain transactions such as policy loan applications. For VMLI there is now also an on-line Insurance Needs Calculator, similar to that for VGLI, available as well.

New legislation for VA to have authority to pay claims to the next best (contingent) beneficiary has been obtained through passage of Public Law 108-183 effective December 12, 2003, for those rare cases where a primary beneficiary cannot be found by the end of a two year period. An enhancement to the VMLI program was authorized in 2002 under the Veterans Benefits Act of 2002 (PL 107-330) whereby VMLI coverage is now allowed to be continued beyond age 70 for those qualifying veterans who still have mortgage balances outstanding past age 70. VA was additionally seeking much needed improvements to the Soldiers and Sailors Civil Relief Act of 1940 (SSCRA) through H.R. 100 (passed by the House on May 7, 2003) and S. 792, introduced on April 7, 2003, to amend that section of SSCRA by which a servicemember may have VA guarantee payment of premiums on certain types of commercial life insurance contracts from its present maximum of $10,000 to a maximum of $250,000, or to an amount equal to the SGLI limit, whichever is greater. This was accomplished through enactment of Public Law 108-183, also effective on December 12, 2003. The legislation provides recently activated servicemembers may apply to have VA guarantee premium payments on up to $250,000 in commercial life insurance coverage while they are on active duty and for two years thereafter.

Several major insurance initiatives are now pending in Congress for 2004-2005 in the SGLI, SDVI and VMLI program areas. For SGLI, S 2400, titled the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005," contains an amendment, SA 3371, submitted by Sen. Sessions on June 7, that would substantively change the death benefit amount provided in the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) program. The amendment provides for enhanced death benefits and directs the President, in consultation with the Department of Defense (DoD), to submit legislation coincidental with the submission of the President's FY06 budget. The draft legislation would include the provisions pertaining to SGLI, among other things, as provided below. The amendment was considered and agreed to in the Senate by voice vote on June 17 and modified on June 22. S 2400, with amendments, passed the Senate on June 23 by a vote of 97-0. This bill is currently being reconciled with the House version in a joint House-Senate conference. The amendment proposes to increase the maximum benefit under SGLI to $350,000. That maximum would be increased on an annual fiscal year basis by the same rate as any increase in base pay that would also take place in that year. For those who elect maximum coverage, $100,000 of coverage would be at no cost. The initial $100,000 amount of no cost coverage would also increase on an annual basis at the same rate as any increase in annual base pay. The amendment also contains retroactive provisions to account for deaths resulting from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom from the starting dates of those operations, respectively. DoD would be required to provide the requested appropriations to implement these enhanced death benefits.

In the SDVI program, there is HR 4229 which would decrease S-DVI premiums by updating the mortality basis on which premiums are calculated to the 2001 Commissioners Standard Ordinary (CSO) Table of Mortality. With the improvements in life expectancy over the last 50 years, the use of an updated mortality table would more accurately reflect lower mortality and thus would reduce premiums for S-DVI policyholders by an average of 54 percent. The change proposed by Section 2 of H.R.

4229 would incur PAYGO costs of $103 million for FY 2005-2009 and $234 million for the FY 2005-2014 period. Section 2 of this bill would deduct the administrative cost from premiums, and thereby reclassify the budget authority for S-DVI administrative expenses from discretionary to mandatory spending to: 1) ensure that the contractual responsibilities of the United States Government as regards the S-DVI program are fully funded; and 2) extricate such funding from the annual budget process to ensure that disabled veterans receive equitable service as other Government life insurance policyholders.

Lastly, for Veterans Mortgage life insurance, Section 3 of H.R. 4229 would raise the maximum coverage in the Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI) program from the current $90,000 up to $200,000. The current maximum covers only approximately 72 percent of veterans' outstanding mortgage balances; raising it to $200,000 would cover approximately 96 percent of outstanding balances and accord with a previous VA recommendation that the coverage level be increased to keep pace with rising housing costs. Section 3 allows the veteran to select the amount of coverage desired, in increments of $10,000, but coverage cannot exceed the amount of the mortgage.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Service Units:
DVA Insurance Center at Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN DMC Center

The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission Staff at Philadelphia consists of a Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative and one Secretary. An associated office at the St. Paul center has one Supervisor/VA&R Representative and one Secretary.

The Chief of Insurance Activities and the Insurance Representative must have a thorough knowledge of government life insurance laws, regulations, and transaction and adjudication procedures, and be able to analyze them correctly in order to properly represent insured veterans and their beneficiaries. The Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Director and other interested personnel are kept informed on policy matters, changes in DVA administrative procedures and all related areas to include new legislative initiatives. NSLI re-open periods for service-disabled and non-service disabled veterans with increased face value coverages continues to be an American Legion legislative effort. In connection with the milestone change in insurance operations in Philadelphia to a paperless office as described earlier, The American Legion VA&R unit there has obtained new computer equipment equivalent in capacity to that used in the DVA Insurance Center, to process casework with the new imaged electronic files and to respond to a wide variety of inquiries with far greater rapidity than previously possible, and to enable switchover to the VA's change to the Windows 2000 operating system. Coordination has also been effected with the DVA Pension Center management in both Philadelphia and St. Paul for the creation of a system whereby the national VA&R staff personnel can process pension inquiries from Department and Veterans Service Officers as they may require. These efforts will also include training in VA Pension Center operations and the on-site VA&R staff will continue to monitor and report to the VA&R Director changes in these new VA procedures as they occur.

Daily operations involve a full range of insurance services to include the representation of insured veterans and their beneficiaries, the review of insurance case files and supporting evidence and Claims files as required, the furnishing of status reports and account assistance to insureds, beneficiaries, accredited field representatives and DVA adjudicative and accounts personnel, close liaison with Department Service Officers and other field personnel to ensure prompt and complete service, and the input to, review of, and where necessary the correction of DVA actions and records both on

cases involving disability and death claims, and on those involving any of a wide variety of insurance accounting and financial transactions that occur on active and matured accounts. General insurance information and guidance is provided to field service officers across the United States, along with assistance in the preparation of insurance appeals and claims submittals. Coordination with DVA executive and program management personnel is conducted on both individual cases and broad policy/administrative matters. A telephone fax capability added to the Philadelphia office has greatly expedited claims processing by enabling rapid receipt of documents needed to complete transactions and claims that would otherwise be significantly delayed due to mailing times, particularly in emergency cases. The Philadelphia office has been heavily involved in the huge increase in SDVI applications and related appeals cases for 2004, occasioned by the mass mailing of SDVI notifications to virtually all service-connected veterans mentioned earlier.

The Philadelphia office has been provided with newer computer systems for both internal operations and to interface with the DVA networks and the Internet. These are operational and have Internet (E-Mail at AMGLAVE@VBA.VA.GOV) and VA Benefits Delivery Network access. The St. Paul office provides similar operations, staff representation and nationwide veteran's service in the field of DVA Debt Management operations (The DVA's Debt Management Center is located at the VA St. Paul center), which now comprise its main mission as transfer of all insurance accounts to Philadelphia has been completed, and in casework involving the VA Pension Center also located at the St. Paul facility.

For the period July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 the following activities of The American Legion's Philadelphia and St. Paul offices were reported:

Insurance & Debt Management:

Letters Received:	5929
Letters Written:	6559
Disability Insurance Claims:	1857
Death Insurance Claims:	2668
Insurance Folders Reviewed:	3662
In-Force Insurance Policy Accounts Reviewed:	4839
Telephone Contacts:	5281
Personal Contacts:	3783
Submittal Memorandums Reports:	3488
DVA Case Responses Processed: Insurance and Debt Management Cases:	10383
*Live Claims, Evidence and Other Submittals Presented:	10885

**Excludes death claims and includes policy transactions such as dividend, loan and premium actions, plan conversions, cash surrenders, refunds, beneficiary changes, disability claims with related medical and legal evidence, Wills, estate documents, check tracers, master record data changes, disability questionnaires processing general inquiries, and debt management case supporting documents.*

Debt Management/St. Paul Pension Center
(DMC = Debt Management Center)

DMC Original Claims:	1426
DMC Case Audits:	2680
DMC Debt Waiver Cases:	2125
Pension Center Inquiries/Transactions:	1572

Pension Center VSO Responses Mailed: 15101

Claims Service

The National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission provides assistance and representation to all veterans and their survivors in claims and appeals before the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as, appeals for upgrade of military and naval discharges and the correction of military and naval records through a staff of seventeen Appeals Representatives.

Within the Table of Organization, the Principal Deputy Director is responsible for the activities of the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit, the Military Review Board Unit, Debt Management Office in St. Paul, and the Insurance Activities Unit in Philadelphia.

Cases at the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit are reviewed and written briefs are submitted on the appellant's behalf or a personal hearing is conducted before a member of the Board of Veterans Appeals with the appellant. The Board of Veterans Appeals Unit consists of an Office Manager, a Senior Medical Consultant, three secretaries, and thirteen Appeals Representatives. The staff has been augmented by service officers from across the country participating in The American Legion/National Veterans Legal Services Program Veterans Law Internship Program. This intense veterans law training program provides hands-on education for interested service officers.

Two Appeals Representatives and one secretary are assigned to provide claims service to individuals residing under the jurisdiction of the Washington, DC VA Regional Office which includes the District of Columbia, as well as those residing overseas.

The Military Review Boards Unit reviews records prepares written briefs and also appears at personal hearings with an applicant before the Discharge Review Board and the Board for the Correction of Military or Naval Records of the various armed services. One Supervisor and one Appeals Representatives are assigned.

Board of Veterans Appeals

This report reflects the activities of The American Legion's Board of Appeals and Special Claims Unit for the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004. During the twelve months, the Appeals Representatives reviewed a total of 6,410 cases. Included in the above total were 419 scheduled hearings in Washington, DC and 191 United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims remands. Dr. Ann Marie Gordon, the Medical Consultant reviewed 132 cases and provided 56 advisory opinions during the year.

During this reporting period, the Board of Veterans' Appeals rendered a total of 40,269 decisions, which included 7,794 (19.4%) with American Legion representation. These decisions consisted of 1,427 (18.3%) approvals, 4,280 (54.9%) remands, 1,946 (24.9%) denials, and 140 (1.7%) others. The last category includes administrative withdrawals, vacated cases, deaths, and dismissals.

Effective May 1, 2003, the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit held that the regulations permitting the Board of Veterans' Appeals to develop and review evidence as the first adjudicator of that evidence violated the laws established for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs established the Appeals Management Center in Washington, D.C. to develop and adjudicate claims remanded by the Board of Veterans' Appeals. The Board of Veterans' Appeals acts as the final adjudicator for claims denied by the Appeals Management Center.

The Special Claims Service of the Unit reviewed and disposed of 14 cases involving requests by Department Service Officers of The American Legion for advisory and/or

medical opinions or assistance in obtaining Administrative Review by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Central Office, Compensation and Pension Service.

Military Review Boards Unit

Title 10, United States Code, sections 1552 and 1554, provide statutory authority for the existence and operation of the Army, Air Force, Navy—Marine Corps and Coast Guard Discharge Review Boards and the Boards for Correction of Military Records.

During the period July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004, the two staff members of the Military Review Boards Unit provided advice and assistance to applicants and petitioners seeking relief from the Discharge Review Boards and Boards for Correction of Military Records in more that 2000 instances through personal, telephone, regular and email contacts. Representation involved individual case development, submission of written briefs based on review of the documentary evidence and appearances at personal hearings with the applicants and petitioners concerning such issues as characterization upgrades, amendment of narrative reasons and reenlistment codes, entitlement to or upgrade of physical disability severance or retirement pay, issuance or reissuance of military awards or decorations as well as various other administrative corrections to military records. Of these actions, 62 personal hearings were conducted and 401 written briefs were submitted.

In addition, the staff provides periodic training for our service officers and produce reference materials to aid former service members in the preparation of their cases.
The following is a breakdown of actions by the respective service boards:

Boards for Correction of Military Records

	Presented	Allowed	Percentage
U.S. Air Force	24	4	14
U.S. Army	118	19	16
U.S. Navy—Marine Corps	63	6	10
U.S. Coast Guard	2	0	0

Military Discharge Review Boards

	Presented	Allowed	Percentage
U.S. Air Force	38	12	31
U.S. Army	50	19	38
U.S. Navy—Marine Corps	167	13	8
U.S. Coast Guard	1	0	0

All of the Boards are having continuing success in their efforts to reduce the processing time for individual applications. This action is in response to previous Congressional oversight due to concerns regarding the Boards problems with timeliness of review, questions of independence from active components, and numerous complains by applicants and petitioners. The following are current projected timeframes:

Air Force Discharge Review Board:

Documentary reviews ..... 6-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC ..... 6-12 months
Hearing reviews—travel panels ..... 10-12 months

Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records:

Documentary reviews ..... 10-12 months

Army Discharge Review Board:

Documentary reviews ..... 6-10 months

Hearing reviews—Washington, DC . . . . . 6-10 months
Hearing reviews—travel panels . . . . . 10-12 months
Army Board for Correction of Military Records:
Documentary reviews . . . . . 10-12 months
Navy Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews . . . . . 10-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC . . . . . 10-12 months
Navy Board for Correction of Naval Records:
Documentary reviews . . . . . 10-12 months
Coast Guard Discharge Review Board:
Documentary reviews . . . . . 10-12 months
Hearing reviews—Washington, DC . . . . . 10-12 months
Coast Guard Board for Correction of Military Records:
Documentary reviews . . . . . 10-12 months

Staff Workload

Part of the overall activity of the various offices of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission is reflected in the annual volume of incoming and outgoing correspondence. During this period, approximately 42,000 letters, E-mails and Faxes were received from claimants, service officers, and VA officials. Correspondence received by the VA Insurance Activities Units in Philadelphia, PA and St. Paul, MN, was in excess of 5200 and outgoing correspondence exceeded 6,415 pieces, with over 13634 casework responses to DSOs/VSOs processed.

The combined workload for the Board of Veterans Appeals Unit, the Military Review Boards Unit, and the VA Insurance Activities Unit exceeded 11,500 cases.

Department Service Officers School

The National Organization continues to authorize the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) Commission to conduct twice yearly training schools for the Department Service Officers and other accredited representatives of The American Legion. It represents the organization's ongoing commitment to developing a network of highly trained and experience service officers who can carry out the VA&R program at the department level.

The purpose of these three and one half training sessions is to provide current information about changes in veterans' law and VA adjudication policies and help the Department Service to improve their advocacy skills. The program of instruction includes basic training for new service officers, and advanced training on issues relating to claims processing, disability ratings, personal hearings, development of appeals, and the interpretation and application of precedent decisions by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. Instructors include members of the National Association of Department Service Officers; Mr. Ron Abrams, Esq., Director of Training, National Veterans Legal Services Program; and staff of the VA&R Division.

The primary goal of this training program, which began in 1985, is to enhance the skills and effectiveness of American Legion service officers. A secondary goal is to provide the school participants with the latest information on veterans' benefits, which they can, then, share with other service officers in their respective departments.

The Departments' participation in and support for the program remains very high. The thirty-fourth session was held July 23-26, 2003 at the Radisson City Center Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. There were 91 service officers in attendance. The thirty-fifth

session was held March 3-6, 2004 at the Hyatt Hotel on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC. There were 86 service officers in attendance. The Department Service Officers Seminar and the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Washington Conference followed this.

National Field Service

The National Field Service (NFS) mission is to promote universal access to high quality health care for veterans and their families through advocacy, service, and support.

In 2003, then National Commander Ronald F. Conley, began a crusade to put a face on the number of the hundreds of thousands veterans waiting in line to receive VA health care across the nation. He personally visited 60 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) and presented a report to Congress in July 2003 on not only the importance of the VA health care system and the reliance by the veteran on that system, but also that the VA system was "worth saving." During The American Legion National Convention in August 2003 the Legion passed Resolution 147 "A System Worth Saving" to ensure the continued oversight of the health care system designed and built for the sole purpose of providing health care services to the nation's veterans.

In September 2003 The American Legion National Commander, John Brieden III, appointed Legion volunteers to a task force designed to continue the mandates of resolution 147. Since it's inception, the task force has visited 56 facilities and 17 of the 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs).

The NFS, along with the task force members continue to address objectives by conducting site visits, conducting patient focus groups, and making recommendations to the Veterans Health Administration and Congress.

During the majority of the reporting period Field Service operated at 25% strength. With recent hires they are now back to 100% strength with no vacancies to report. Each Field Service Representative is assigned oversight responsibility for a number of VHA's 21 VISNs. They are also participants on several committees, councils and advisory boards at both the National and VISN levels. They prepare testimony for Congressional field hearings. Most importantly, the NFS provide case management assistance to hundreds of veterans who otherwise would have gone without needed health care.

Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission Chairman, Paul A. Morin, established a VA&R VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) Committee within the Commission in an effort to re-invigorate The American Legion's involvement in VAVS. The goal of the committee is to increase the scope of VA volunteer activity, as indicated by the number of hospital and community-based volunteers and the number of voluntary hours contributed each year. The intent is to make this a Legion family effort by synchronizing the efforts between the Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sons of the American Legion, and to integrate VAVS activity across the spectrum of Legion programs, particularly those involving youth and young adults.

The Committee made several recommendations with an action plan focusing on communication strategies to alert the Legion Family about the wide variety of VAVS opportunities. This resulted in an article, the "Future of Volunteering," in the The American Legion Dispatch, to announce this VAVS effort; a web link between Legion Baseball web page and the VAVS Student Volunteer web page was created, and a copy of a recruitment video, "A Million Reasons to Volunteer" is to be presented at Boys and Girls Nations.

The VAVS National Deputy Representatives attended the fifty-eighth meeting of the VAVS National Advisory Committee (NAC) that was held in Orlando, FL during June 9-12, 2004. The meeting included business sessions and educational workshops, and was highlighted by the NAC Volunteer of the Year Awards and the presentation of the James H. Parke Scholarship Award. The Parke Memorial Scholarship Award was established in honor of the first Director of VA Voluntary Service, who is also the founding father of the VAVS National Advisory Committee. This scholarship, awarded annually to exceptional VAVS student volunteers, was awarded this year to Joshua Lee Norris of the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, Mississippi.

Again this year, staff representatives of the VA Voluntary Service provided briefings and an overview of the VAVS program at the "break out" sessions of the National Leadership and Information Conferences.

Accredited Representatives

In completing VA Form 21-22, "Power of Attorney," the claimant appoints The American Legion as accredited representative in a claim for benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the duty of the organization to provide assistance, advice, and counsel to veterans, survivors and dependents so as to ensure their rights are protected and they receive all benefits to which they may be entitled under the law. The American Legion, as a Congressionally chartered organization, conducts this service program through the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission. Accredited Representatives of The American Legion provide formal representation in claims before VA regional offices or the Board of Veterans Appeals. Their respective Departments have recommended these representatives for accreditation because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in the field of federal benefit programs, especially those provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To become an Accredited Representative of The American Legion, a formal application (VA Form 2-21) must be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, with an accompanying endorsement signed by the Department Commander or Department Adjutant. The Director, as the National Certifying Officer, or the Principal Deputy Director, as Assistant National Certifying Officer, will review and forward the request to the General Counsel of VA for action. This form is never sent directly to the General Counsel, as accreditation will not be granted unless the request has been certified by the organization. Upon approval of the application, the individual is recognized by VA as an Accredited Representative of The American Legion and will receive official notification of this action from VA. The accreditation will remain in effect until such time as the Director, National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission receives a written request from the Department Commander or Department Adjutant to cancel the individual's accreditation due to death, retirement, or resignation. The Director will then notify the General Counsel that the accreditation should be canceled.

New accreditations and cancellations are reported monthly on VA's General List of Accredited Representatives—VA Information Bulletin IB 2-51. During the reporting period 162 requests for accreditation and 98 requests for cancellation were received from the Departments and submitted to VA for necessary action. As of June 30, 2004, there were 1,346 Accredited Representatives of The American Legion with 59 pending accreditation. Any questions concerning the proper procedure or regulations pertaining to accreditation of individuals or their activities should be submitted to the Director of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission in the Washington office.

Distribution of VA Releases

To ensure that the staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, service officers in the field, members of the VA&R Commission, and other interested parties are kept advised and informed about American Legion policies, recent legislative action, cha' ges in VA regulations, policies and procedures, the Administrative section of the Director's office receives and distributes VA news releases, printed changes in VA regulations and manuals, and other informational material to all VA&R staff. This information is then disseminated through VA&R Bulletins and Memoranda. In this reporting period 23 Bulletins and 3 Memoranda were distributed.

Personnel and Organization

The following changes occurred in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division at the Washington office from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004.

The VA&R Division underwent a number of additions and changes, including new hires in BVA, Robert Bruce, Juan Lara, Jeff Steele. The WRO office had one transfer to the Field Service, Daryl Puryear, and one new hire, Larry Green and one transfer from BVA, Dean Yorgey, The Field Service had one retirement, Tim Jones, one transfer from WRO, Daryl Puryear and two new hires, Carol Cherich and David Kayal. Joe Sharpe, Deputy Director for Economics, was activated and sent to Kuwait with his Reserve unit, but is expected to resumed his duties July 23, 2004. Melvin Oehlert, the Acting Deputy Director for Economics retired July 2, 2004. Steve Smithson, Assistant Director for Gulf War, remains temporarily transferred to Indianapolis Headquarters until October, 2004.

Currently there are two vacancies in the BVA Unit, and one vacancy in the Military Review Boards Unit. Recruitment of qualified individuals to fill the existing vacancies remains one of the Division's top priorities.

The most current table of organization of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission as of June 30, 2004, is as follows:

Director 1
    Administrative Assistant 1
Principal Deputy Director 1
    Secretary 1
Deputy Director for Health Care Issues 1
    Field Representatives 4
    Secretary 1
Manager, Operations and Training 1
    Deputy Manager 1
    Secretary 1
Assistant Director for Program Management 1
    Secretary 1
Assistant Director for Resource Development 1
Assistant Director for Persian Gulf Task Force 1
    Research Analyst 1
Supervisor, Review and Correction Boards 1
    Review Board Representative 1
Office Manager, Board of Vets. Appeals Unit 1
    Appeals Representatives 11
    Case Screener, Court of Veterans Appeals (Part-time) 1
    Secretaries 3
    Medical Consultant 1
Veterans and Dependents Claims Unit 3

Secretary 1
Total Personnel—Washington office **41**
Insurance Field offices:
Philadelphia, PA
Chief of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
St. Paul, MN
Supervisor of Insurance Activities/Insurance Representative 1
Secretary/Transcriber 1
VA&R TOTAL **45**

Staff Field Assignments

The staff of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, including the director, principal deputy director, deputy directors and assistant directors attended various Legion functions around the country, such as the National Convention, Department Conventions, Department Seminars and Service Officers Schools, the Conferences and fact-finding trips.

The Field Service staff visited 57 hospitals in 17 of the 21 VISNs, along with members of The American Legion CARES committee.

Select VA&R staff also participated in eight National Information Conferences and two Department Service Officers Schools, while the entire staff attended the Annual Mid-Winter Conference in Washington, DC.

Certificates Of Appreciation

Under authority of May 1958 NEC Resolution, we have continued the program of awarding a Certificate of Appreciation to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs, upon their retirement or resignation, For Services Rendered and Cooperation Extended in Connection with The American Legion's Rehabilitation Program. Under criteria established in line with the enabling resolution, nominations for the award are submitted by Department or National officials of The American Legion twice a year. The nominations are considered by a committee of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission at meetings preceding the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Conference, and the National Convention. The Committee recommends to the Commission the names of those considered deserving of the Certificate.

Three Certificates of Appreciation have been awarded during the period July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004, for an overall total of 1,292 since the program was initiated.

Citations for Meritorious Service

This Citation, authorized by the National Executive Committee in May 1956, seeks to recognize the long and faithful service of Post Service Officers and others. Nominations for the Citation are submitted by Department officials to the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Director at any time; the Director, acting for the Chairman and members of the Commission, issues the award.

Fifty Four Citations For Meritorious Service And Loyal Cooperation In The American Legion's Veterans Affairs And Rehabilitation Program Were Presented During The Period July 1, 2003 To June 30, 2004. Since This Type Of Recognition And Appreciation Began, 4,814 Citations For Meritorious Service Have Been Presented.

Persian Gulf War Task Force

The American Legion created the Persian Gulf Task Force in October 1995. Its original mission was to enhance The American Legion's service to our newest generation of war veterans, their families, and their advocates. As Congress has not officially ended the Gulf War era and numerous operations and peacekeeping activities have taken place since the end of the Gulf War, the role of the Task Force has been expanded to serve the needs and interests of veterans who served in these operations as well those who participate in such deployments in the future. As U.S. troops are currently deployed overseas to fight the war on terrorism and Operation Iraqi Freedom, this new role is even more significant. Heeding the "lessons learned" of the 1991 Gulf War and avoiding similar post war/deployment problems is of great concern to The American Legion and we are continuing to monitor all pre and post deployment initiatives and concerns.

The Task Force has vigorously approached its mission and has undertaken many efforts to accomplish it. These efforts include various forms of outreach, oversight of scientific and clinical studies, oversight of DoD investigations and programs, oversight of VA's compensation system, site visits to VA medical centers and regional offices, the upgrading of our presence on the World Wide Web, and the maintenance of a toll free number for Gulf War veterans.

The Task Force conducted a number of veteran outreach activities, department & service officer training sessions, VA medical center and regional office site visits and other initiatives this past year in Arizona, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Indiana, Illinois, and Washington, D.C. These events improved our outreach to Gulf War veterans, and better prepared Legionnaires to serve these veterans within their communities.

Staff members have also traveled extensively within the medical and professional communities to closely follow issues of concern to Gulf War veterans, particularly health issues such as side effects from controversial vaccines and exposure to depleted uranium (DU). The Task Force is significantly involved with the work of the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the VA's Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Research as they explore matters of interest to our Gulf War veteran community.

Disability compensation remains a top priority for the Task Force. During the past ten years, nearly 75% of claims filed for medically unexplained/undiagnosed illnesses (Gulf War veterans' illnesses) have been denied by VA. The Task Force identified the major reasons for this extraordinarily high denial rate and worked directly with members of Congress to develop legislation to correct and further clarify ambiguous language in the undiagnosed illness law in order to enable scores of ill Gulf War veterans, many of whose claims were previously denied, to receive the benefits to which they are rightfully entitled. To this end, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001 (PL 107-103) was signed into law by the President on December 27, 2001. Although we were successful in convincing VA to notify Gulf War veterans, whose claims were previously denied, of the change in the law and the opportunity to reopen their claims, the denial rate for these types of claims remains high. Therefore, we will continue to request feedback from our Department Service Officers in conjunction with our efforts to closely scrutinize VA's implementation of the Gulf War-related provisions of PL 107-103.

The lack of baseline data on various exposures due to improper record keeping during the Gulf War has resulted in roadblocks and impediments to Gulf War-related research. In February 2002, the assistant director for the Task Force was appointed to a newly established VA research advisory committee on Gulf War veterans' illnesses. This 12-person committee, comprised of medical doctors, scientists, Gulf War veterans, and

VSO representatives, is charged with advising the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the future of Gulf War-related research. During the last two years this panel has been considering areas of research that have not been thoroughly explored in the past. The American Legion's direct participation in this process enhances our ability to represent the interests of the Gulf War veteran community.

The Task Force has continued its steady oversight of the Department of Defense's efforts to investigate exposures of troops in the Gulf to environmental agents, and the implementation of "lessons learned" from the Gulf War. DoD has made some progress in these efforts, but it has not found any clear causes of these illnesses.

Additionally, all of the recommended changes to DoD doctrine in the wake of the Gulf experience have not occurred as quickly as we would like, particularly as they relate to medical surveillance and depleted uranium training. Moreover, recent reports from the Institute of Medicine and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, as well as testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health in January 2002 and March 2003, have revealed that "lessons learned" are not being fully implemented, a major breakdown being at the field level. The Task Force has testified before both the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees regarding this issue and will continue to monitor DoD's efforts in this regard.

The Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illness, Medical Readiness and Military Deployments (OSAGWIMRMD) has completed its transition into the realm of deployment health support. The new office, re-designated as the Deployment Health Support Directorate (DHSD), falls under jurisdiction of the Under Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. DHSD will continue to investigate and monitor issues pertaining to Gulf War veterans' illness, as well as deployment-related health concerns in general. The Task Force continues to work with this office to ensure that Gulf War veterans' issues are not treated as a secondary matter.

Several thousand brochures and pamphlets pertaining to Gulf War and Vietnam veteran issues have been distributed as part of our wide-scale outreach effort. The Task Force also revised the Decade of Service Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans, renaming it the Sourcebook for Military Personnel and Veterans, ensuring relevance for all Gulf War era veterans, including those fighting the war on terrorism and the second Gulf War (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Thirty thousand were printed last fall for distribution in conjunction with our outreach efforts.

The Task Force is working closely with other staff members of VA&R to heighten awareness of women veterans' issues. Of the almost 700,000 servicemembers deployed to the Gulf during the war, nearly 35,000 were women, composing most of the same positions as their male counterparts. There is an increasing interest in the role of women in our services, as well as their care within VA. The Task Force remains a strong advocate for those women who so honorably served and continue to serve our country. We will continue to follow these matters closely.

The Task Force has expanded its scope to include environmental hazards, such as Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, and Project 112/Operation Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), experienced by veterans of past wars and operations. It works closely with other divisions in the National Headquarters in order to provide the best service possible to these veterans, their families, and the service officers helping them.

The Task Force has also continued its efforts of cooperation with the Membership Division in order to encourage those we serve to join the Legion family. As part of this effort, the assistant director for the Task Force was temporarily transferred to the Indianapolis Headquarters in July 2001 to work closer with the Membership Division by providing information and expertise to Division staff regarding issues and concerns

important to Gulf War era veterans and their families. The assistant director coordinates all Task Force efforts and activities with the health policy analyst located in the Washington Office.

This past year the assistant director has traveled extensively with membership staff providing a VA&R presence to membership activities. The assistant director has also participated in several membership events briefing attendees on the importance of The American Legion's veteran focused programs and services in relation to membership goals. The American Legion's Gulf War era membership has increased from approximately 60,000 members in 2001 to almost 100,000 members today.

2004 VA&R Report to Membership
Carol Van Kirk, Chairman

Volunteerism is part of an American Legion Auxiliary member's life. The annual reports of Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation activities were filled with Hearts In Service, the theme of National President Katherine Morris.

Total number of veterans served during the 2003/04 year (as reported) were:

	Volunteers	Hours	Expenditures	# of Veterans Served
VA Facilities	19,235	592212	$1,898,290	1149557
Field Service	28584	721443	1156556	280087
Home Service	21566	875295	798330	204103
Totals	**69385**	**2188950**	**$3,854,176**	**1633747**

Members made lap robes, bedspreads, bed caddies, bib aprons, wheelchair bags, ditty bags and crocheted slippers, shawls and afghans.

They cooked meals, baked cookies and cakes, made fruit baskets and decorations for veterans' parties. They have shed tears, shared smiles and laughter.

Banana split parties, picnics, barbecues, fishing trips, baseball games, fish fries and music were provided to show our veterans the importance our members place in caring for them.

- The total cost to Auxiliary Units for hosting the reported 349 gift shops was $783,875. Christmas tours were held and VA hospitals and nursing homes visited, with gifts being given to our veterans.

Volunteers at two VA facilities escorted patients to view an antique car program. Hula Hoop contests were held and everyone enjoyed the twist, hamburgers, hot dogs and "remembering when."

A "comfort item drive" during one Mid-Winter Leadership Conference netted items valued at $10,600. They were distributed to four VA Medical Centers and a Veterans Home.

Members adopted a veteran and took him meals, shopped for him and picked up his medication. An adopted disabled veteran had members washing his clothes, cleaning his apartment weekly, taking him for haircuts and doctor's appointments.

- Reportedly, 394 VA wards were adopted. Money was donated for shaves and haircuts. They visited the wards, sent holiday cards and took patients Christmas gifts.
- Veterans in nursing homes were not forgotten. Members read to patients and provided them with pre-paid telephone cards, subscriptions to local newspapers and sent them the Post/Unit newsletter.

- Members were assisting with the needs of our veterans at outpatient clinics and VA Centers For Aging.
- Fisher House donations totaled $48,994. Some Units held "showers" where personal items, movies, puzzles, food staples and blankets are collected for their Fisher House. In addition, money was donated to help cover costs incurred at the Houses.

A Unit purchased patio furniture for one Fisher House. PX and Commissary Gift Cards were given to residents.

- Members have volunteered at stand-downs for homeless veterans. They have purchased extra warm sleeping bags, quilted shirts, hats, gloves, socks, laundry bags and toilet articles for them.

Houses were readied for homeless veterans to assist them in starting new lives. Special Christmas shopping days for their families were provided.

Three hundred pair of socks filled with personal items were distributed; stuffed animals that would appeal to that age group were given to children during a stand-down.

- Innovative ideas were used by many Departments to encourage people within our American Legion Family, as well as other acquaintances, to sign on as VA volunteers. One Chairman initiated an idea to recruit middle school students by devising special projects.

Total reported number of volunteers recruited:

Regularly scheduled	3107
Occasional	3416
Non-affiliated	726
Jr. member/VolunTeens	804

Volunteers were recognized all across our nation in order to encourage retention of those who gave so willingly of their time for our veterans.

- The Creative Arts Festival support was outstanding! To date, we have raised $83,000 during this administrative year. A raffle will be held during National Convention with those additional funds going to this program.
- Our caring volunteers recognized National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week. Dollar bills and Valentines Day cards were placed on breakfast trays. Flowers, "thank you" balloons and parties were given; performers entertained.

There was clowning around in wards as fruit and candy were distributed to celebrate the special week. "Thinking of You" cards were mailed; ice cream socials held.

- 497 members ordered Presidential Memorial Certificates.

Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is a vast program of caring. Our members have shared their time, talents and ability as they honor and support our veterans. We are meeting their needs and creating special moments for them.

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
National President Katherine Morris

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary, nearly 1 million strong, are women who put their hearts and souls into service on behalf of the nation's veterans, their families and America's children.

Again and again, our members this year have shown their hearts were in the right place, guided by the able hands and caring heart of National President Katherine Morris.

The Texan showed her concern for veterans was as big as the sprawling vastness of her native state.

National President Morris's theme, "H.E.A.R.T.S. in Service" exemplified her back to basics approach to the "Service Above Self" ethic that has guided Auxiliary members for more than 80 years.

The following reports don't tell the whole story, but the figures do reflect the range of concerns and actions that motivate individual Auxiliary members. Truly, they give their "H.E.A.R.T.S. in Service" to The American Legion Family.

Americanism Was True Blue

An essay contest titled, "Every Heart Beats True for the Red, White and Blue—Old Glory," attracted more than 42,000 entries nationwide. The entries promoted flag education awareness and were judged in five classes covering grades 3-12. Units spent nearly $22,000 on this program.

A reported 1,121 Units donated $27,000 to the Auxiliary's Spirit of Youth Fund, begun in 1983.

The fund provides scholarships to the Girls Nation President, the Honorary National Junior President, the Girl Scout Achievement Award winner and those selected for the Americanism Youth Conference.

In addition, 1,439 Units took part in Citizenship and Naturalization Activities; 1,973 Units reported they sponsored Americanism programs and activities in their local schools; and 1,284 Units spent more than 10,500 hours and $4,313 taking part in "Get Out the Vote" campaigns.

Here's a summary of "Focus on the Flag Activities:"

1. 1,764 Units volunteered over 23,000 hours to sponsor Flag Education Programs with $57,954.54 spent.
2. 960 Units volunteered over 42,000 hours to promote the "Show Your Colors America" program in their communities.
3. Over 6,168 U.S. Capitol Flags were ordered.
4. Certificates of Appreciation for Flag Displays numbered 3,573, with over 1,500 hours volunteered. Be sure to say, "Thank You!"
5. 35 Departments reported 79,753 flags donated to schools, civic organizations and others. It required $68,503 and 16,000 volunteer hours.

Putting Kids First

Children & Youth activities were highlighted by hundreds of Units taking part in the Memorial Day walk-a-thons to raise money for local Children's Miracle Network-affiliated hospitals.

The walk-a-thons were part of commemorative events in communities all over the nation marking dedication of the national World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The Youth Hero Award program recognizes acts of physical bravery performed by young people. The award, now in its third year, also offers Units a public relations opportunity in their communities.

Summary of activities in 2003-04:

Direct Aid, $1,729,346; Family Emphasis Week, 678 Units; Child Welfare Foundation Donations, $78,691; Children's Miracle Network (CMN) participation, 1,324 Units; Donations to CMN, $238,631; April is Children & Youth Month, 2,091 Units participated; Donations to other children's groups, $3,186,049.

Also, Halloween Safety, 1,599 Units participated; WWII Dedication, 180 Units; Special Programs, $1,089,304; Child Safety, 2,218 Units participated; Total # of Children Aided, 135,083; Volunteer Service Hours, 671,976.

Active in Communities

Auxiliary members made a positive difference in thousands of American communities, beginning with "Make a Difference Day" in October 2003.

A reported 773 Units conducted a "Make a Difference" activity, contributing 151,899 hours of service.

Blood donor programs were popular. Some 1,191 Units either sponsored or assisted in local blood drives. Through their efforts, 16,364 pints were collected, which helped save lives nationwide.

"Random Acts of Kindness" activities keep going strong, with $60,238 reported in donations to the program by 465 Units contributing 341,301 service hours.

Local chapters of the American Red Cross benefited from Auxiliary members' service, with 2,481 members working 49,846 hours, and donating $48,152.

All told, 3,541 Units worked 2.9 million hours and donated $2,257,890 to various community projects.

Education

It is important to note that 2,754 scholarships in the amount of $1,419,197 were awarded to deserving individuals to further education in various fields of study.

Units reported contributing $25,491 to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund and $19,089 to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship. They also reported donations of $88,460 to other scholarship funds within their communities.

Need a Lift? books were distributed by 2,021 Units at a cost of $15,245. Recipients included 4,582 schools, libraries and other facilities.

The National Education Association's "Read Across America" project was an important emphasis with members this year. In addition to other projects, 600 Units sponsored or took part in local "Seussentennial" celebrations marking the 100th birthday of children's book author Dr. Seuss.

In addition, 1,834 Units reported 1,986 volunteers spent 49,014 hours tutoring 25,716 children and 1,796 adults. And members volunteered 14,487 hours honoring educators on "National Teacher's Day."

Girls State offers its own unique educational experience to young women interested in learning how our government works.

To that end, 455 Girls State orientations were conducted with 4,450 in attendance; and 3,068 Units sent girls to their respective programs, with 4,361 schools participating.

The number of citizens attending these sessions numbered 8,916.

Supporting Security

A look at our military support efforts shows the monumental efforts by Units to provide additional service and support to our troops.

A total of 19,097 Blue Star Banners were provided and 12,442,481 coupons were clipped, sorted and mailed to various commissaries throughout the world.

American Legion Auxiliary members volunteered 23,469 hours and donated $32,721 towards civil preparedness activities, providing a valuable service to their members and their communities.

The following statistics are further proof of the support level members of the military can count on from members of the American Legion Auxiliary. Dollar contributions are followed by the volunteer hours, in parenthesis.

Supporting the USO, $152,455 (10,187 hours); Blue Star Banners, $48,477 (4,702 hours); Family Support Network activities, $71,501 (20,993 hours); Coupons for the

Military, $54,705,017 (125,135 hours); "Operation Toasty Toes," $11,827 (27,123 hours); POW/MIA program, $17,624 (4,946 hours).

Totals: $55,032,079 (199,947 volunteer hours).

Poppies for Veterans

Though just 36 Departments reported results in 2003-04, Poppy contributions benefited thousands of deserving veterans, as the following report indicates:

Number of Units Ordering Poppies, 4,707; Number of Poppies Ordered by Units, 5,436,944; Amount Received in Donations, $2,203,733; Number of Units increasing Poppy order, 919; Number of Units decreasing Poppy order, 831.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Volunteerism is part of an Auxiliary member's life. That volunteer spirit comes from caring hearts grateful for the sacrifices of America's veterans.

That fact is proven again and again when viewing VA&R activity reports turned in by Departments.

The Pennsylvania American Legion Family alone conducted a Christmas tour, visiting 17 VA hospitals and seven nursing homes and distributing more than $300,000 in gifts to veterans.

Fisher House donations totaled $48,994. Some Minnesota Units have "showers" where personal items, movies, puzzles, food staples, and blankets are collected for their Fisher House.

The Department of Washington, for example, regularly provides $25 PX and Commissary Gift Cards to Fisher House residents at Ft. Lewis and Landstuhl, Germany.

Members have gathered clothing and volunteered at standdowns for homeless veterans.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival support was outstanding! All but four Departments have made donations to this special project for our veterans.

Thank you to everyone who helped achieve our $75,000 goal!

The Department of Virginia invited the 2003 Gold Medal winner of the oil painting category to speak at their Fall Conference. They bought his winning entry and hung it in their headquarters.

Our caring volunteers celebrated the annual "National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Week," in February 2004.

Valentine's Day cards containing dollar bills were placed on breakfast trays. Flowers, "thank you" balloons, and parties were given, and performers entertained.

During one party, the Maryland Department President greeted each veteran at the VA Medical Center with a Valentine and a canteen book.

We are meeting veterans' needs and creating special moments for them. To prepare for the years ahead, we must continue our efforts to recruit and retain our volunteer force.

As a result of America's ongoing war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan and other theaters, we will have a large group of new veterans who will require our assistance.

We have had a year of love made visible with "H.E.A.R.T.S. in Service."

VA&R totals for 2003-04 are as follows, with figures combining tallies for VA facilities, field service and home service:

Total number of volunteers: 69,385; volunteer hours: 2,188,950; expenditures, $3,854,176; number of veterans served, 1,633,747.

Report of Independent Auditors

The American Legion National Headquarters
Financial Statements
December 31, 2003 and 2002
Indianapolis, Indiana

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited the accompanying consolidated statement of financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters and its wholly owned subsidiary (the Legion) as of December 31, 2003 and 2002 and the related consolidated statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the Legion's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audits to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of The American Legion National Headquarters as of December 31, 2003 and 2002, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
February 27, 2004

Nashville

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2003 and 2002

Nashville

	2003	2002
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 2,050,493	$ 2,234,216
Accounts receivable		
Emblem Division	160,041	129,869
Publications Division	1,145,576	1,234,092
Other	1,117,881	1,846,961
Prepaid expenses and deposits	850,701	1,136,217
Deferred membership expense	4,522,186	4,195,103
Inventories		
Emblem Division	2,576,785	2,939,903
Publications Division	436,548	240,852
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	74,859	90,434
Prepaid pension expense	16,245,300	16,032,673
	29,180,370	30,080,320
Investments		
Segregated for restricted and reserved funds	21,780,457	21,171,317
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,893,351	1,793,453
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	914,325	977,040
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	39,232,937	38,216,302
Other	32,302,664	36,344,270
Special account – endowment fund	2,162,624	2,224,377
General account – endowment fund	6,059,311	6,190,263
	107,750,408	102,875,416
Property and equipment		
Washington, D.C. real estate		
Land	80,000	80,000
Building	43,138,918	4,377,277
Indianapolis real estate		
Land	389,264	389,264
Building	34,611,779	3,373,420
Furniture, fixtures and equipment		
National Headquarters, Indianapolis, Indiana	4,611,241	4,319,229
Washington, D.C.	1,086,923	1,130,353
Construction in progress	200,036	-
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	761,621	772,833
	14,879,782	14,442,376
Accumulated depreciation	(7,705,884)	(7,063,400)
	7,173,898	7,378,976
	$ 144,104,676	$140,334,712

	2003	2002
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	$ 2,467,571	$ 2,418,496
Scholarships payable	908,206	872,563
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	131,748	201,843
Deferred advertising income	165,561	67,114
Deferred dues income	20,332,441	19,822,208
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	970,547	1,071,677
Accrued vacation benefits	631,133	616,785
Other liabilities	573,141	358,717
Notes payable	3,068,661	3,141,112
Deferred dues income		
Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	20,122,662	19,249,209
Life memberships due to states and local posts	26,830,199	27,804,413
	76,201,870	75,624,137
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted – general	16,486,323	15,692,427
Unrestricted – designated		
Citizens Flag Alliance	74,859	90,434
Computer reserve	500,000	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	100,000
Convention stabilization	505,457	469,456
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	925,645	(690,217)
Real estate reserve	2,137,840	1,924,637
Reserve fund	2,319,686	2,388,891
Restricted fund	19,435,380	18,764,888
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	4,543,476	4,753,532
Veteran's rehabilitation/child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	926,960	873,531
Others	961,186	1,057,527
	51,016,812	48,025,106
Temporarily restricted		
Buick scholarship	639,654	669,908
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	916,925	979,524
Samsung scholarship	2,377,121	2,571,861
National Emergency Fund	895,209	890,513
Others	807,436	315,937
	5,636,345	5,427,743
Permanently restricted		
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	6,249,649	6,257,726
	11,249,649	11,257,726
Total net assets	67,902,806	64,710,575
	$ 144,104,676	$140,334,712

Consolidated Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2003

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,157,668	$ 2,075,040	$ 23,232,708	$ -	$ -	$ 23,232,708
Direct membership solicitations	2,150,508	-	2,150,508	-	-	2,150,508
Member service fees income	1,640,398	455,089	2,095,487	-	-	2,095,487
Financial program income	308,110	-	308,110	-	-	308,110
Sales of emblem items	11,541,969	-	11,541,969	-	-	11,541,969
Advertising	9,008,879	-	9,008,879	-	-	9,008,879
Contributions	114,209	-	114,209	683,057	108,490	905,756
Label and printing fees	1,938,389	-	1,938,389	-	-	1,938,389
Sales – HPC	844,585	-	844,585	-	-	844,585
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $67,649	396,130	1,357,195	1,753,325	890,911	-	2,644,236
Net realized gains	27,622	(25,006)	2,616	(43,427)	51,149	10,338
Other	1,289,791	898,763	2,188,554	-	-	2,188,554
	50,418,258	4,761,081	55,179,339	1,530,541	159,639	56,869,519
Net assets released from restriction	964,092	-	964,092	(964,092)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	4,249,887	(4,249,887)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	55,632,237	511,194	56,143,431	566,449	159,639	56,869,519
Expenses						
Salaries	11,398,072	-	11,398,072	-	-	11,398,072
Employee benefits	2,558,375	-	2,558,375	-	-	2,558,375
Cost of sales - Legion	8,434,468	-	8,434,468	-	-	8,434,468
Cost of sales – HPC	667,162	-	667,162	-	-	667,162
Direct publication	11,033,937	-	11,033,937	-	-	11,033,937
Executive and staff travel	810,227	-	810,227	-	-	810,227
Commission and committee	1,370,962	-	1,370,962	-	-	1,370,962
Printing and postage	2,401,027	-	2,401,027	-	-	2,401,027
Scholarships, grants and awards	959,734	-	959,734	-	-	959,734
Office and other operating	9,462,946	-	9,462,946	-	-	9,462,946
Occupancy and usage	2,014,425	-	2,014,425	-	-	2,014,425
Special projects and programs	2,639,145	-	2,639,145	-	-	2,639,145
	53,750,480	-	53,750,480	-	-	53,750,480
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	1,881,757	511,194	2,392,951	566,449	159,639	3,119,039
Net unrealized losses – PUFL annuity	(617,000)	-	(617,000)	-	-	(617,000)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	(34,785)	1,250,540	1,215,755	(357,847)	(167,716)	690,192
Change in net assets	1,229,972	1,761,734	2,991,706	208,602	(8,077)	3,192,231
Net assets, beginning of year	15,690,032	32,335,074	48,025,106	5,427,743	11,257,726	64,710,575
Transfer of funds	(433,681)	433,681	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 16,486,323	$ 34,530,489	$ 51,016,812	$ 5,636,345	$ 11,249,649	$ 67,902,806

Nashville

Consolidated Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2002

	Unrestricted General	Unrestricted Designated	Unrestricted Total	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Grand Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 21,293,032	$ 2,079,945	$ 23,372,977	$ -	$ -	$ 23,372,977
Direct membership solicitations	3,317,711	-	3,317,711	-	-	3,317,711
Member service fees income	1,542,308	512,385	2,054,693	-	-	2,054,693
Financial program income	251,643	-	251,643	-	-	251,643
Sales of emblem items	11,259,127	-	11,259,127	-	-	11,259,127
Advertising	8,827,810	-	8,827,810	-	-	8,827,810
Contributions	92,379	-	92,379	478,398	23,674	594,451
Label and printing fees	1,993,839	-	1,993,839	-	-	1,993,839
Sales – HPC	982,641	-	982,641	-	-	982,641
Interest and dividends, net of trustee fees of $55,836	675,753	1,280,592	1,956,345	957,273	-	2,913,618
Net realized gains	2,268	74,645	76,913	547,258	18,030	642,201
Other	1,129,907	1,403,601	2,533,508	-	-	2,533,508
	51,368,418	5,351,168	56,719,586	1,982,929	41,704	58,744,219
Net assets released from restriction	1,123,747	-	1,123,747	(1,123,747)	-	-
Net assets released from designation	4,602,218	(4,602,218)	-	-	-	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	57,094,383	748,950	57,843,333	859,182	41,704	58,744,219
Expenses						
Salaries	10,980,616	-	10,980,616	-	-	10,980,616
Employee benefits	2,392,054	-	2,392,054	-	-	2,392,054
Cost of sales - Legion	8,674,876	-	8,674,876	-	-	8,674,876
Cost of sales – HPC	788,201	-	788,201	-	-	788,201
Direct publication	11,319,202	-	11,319,202	-	-	11,319,202
Executive and staff travel	943,559	-	943,559	-	-	943,559
Commission and committee	1,237,629	-	1,237,629	-	-	1,237,629
Printing and postage	2,456,090	-	2,456,090	-	-	2,456,090
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,106,752	-	1,106,752	-	-	1,106,752
Office and other operating	10,808,127	-	10,808,127	-	-	10,808,127
Occupancy and usage	2,037,464	-	2,037,464	-	-	2,037,464
Special projects and programs	2,520,707	-	2,520,707	-	-	2,520,707
	55,265,277	-	55,265,277	-	-	55,265,277
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	1,826,710	751,346	2,578,056	859,182	41,704	3,478,942
Net unrealized gains – PUFL annuity	3,483,285	-	3,483,285	-	-	3,483,285
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investments	33,300	3,308,110)	3,274,810)	(185,928)	224,637	(3,236,101)
Change in net assets	5,343,295	(2,556,764)	2,786,531	673,254	266,341	3,726,126
Net assets, beginning of year	10,787,352	34,451,223	45,238,575	4,754,489	10,991,385	60,984,449
Transfer of funds	(440,615)	440,615	-	-	-	-
Net assets, end of year	$ 15,690,032	$ 32,335,074	$ 48,025,106	$ 5,427,743	$ 11,257,726	$ 64,710,575

Consolidated Statement of Cash Flow
Years Ended December 31, 2003 and 2002

	2003	2002
Cash flows from operating activities		
Change in net assets	$ 3,192,231	$ 3,726,126
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash from operating activities		
Depreciation expense	834,889	776,053
Loss on sale of fixed assets	10,006	1,473
(Gain) loss on sale of investments	(188,077)	946,432
Unrealized losses (gain) loss on investments	(803,268)	3,765,633
Contributions restricted for long-term investment	108,490	23,674
(Gain) loss on Paid-Up-For-Life annuity	617,000	(3,483,285)
Accounts receivable	787,424	(420,496)
Prepaid expenses and deposits	72,889	(857,553)
Deferred membership expense	(327,083)	1,546,870
Inventories	167,422	(1,395,799)
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	15,575	36,716
Accounts and scholarships payable	84,718	(1,367,637)
Deferred income	(280,306)	343,006
Other accrued liabilities	228,772	(2,566,590)
Net cash from operating activities	4,520,682	1,074,623
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of property and equipment	(640,116)	(478,104)
Proceeds from sale of property and equipment	299	-
Purchase of investments	(141,483,952)	(50,836,386)
Sales and maturities of investments	137,600,302	50,419,660
Net cash from investing activities	(4,523,467)	(894,830)
Cash flows from financing activities		
Proceeds from contributions restricted for investment	(108,490)	(23,674)
Payments on line of credit	(72,451)	(61,779)
Net cash from financing activities	(180,941)	(85,453)
Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(183,726)	94,340
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	2,234,219	2,139,879
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	$ 2,050,493	$ 2,234,219
Supplemental cash flows information		
Income taxes paid	$ 149,792	$ 279,566
Interest paid	52,062	236,111

Notes to Financial Statements December 31, 2003 and 2002

NOTE 1 - NATURE OF OPERATIONS AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General: The American Legion National Headquarters (Legion) is a national veterans organization which was declared to be a corporate body by an Act of the United States Congress on September 16, 1919.

According to the Original Act and Subsequent Amendments, the purpose of the Legion is "To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to promote peace and goodwill among the peoples of the United States and all the nations of the earth; to preserve the memories and incidents of the two World Wars and the other great hostilities fought to uphold democracy; to cement the ties and comradeship born of service; and to consecrate the efforts of its members to mutual helpfulness and service to their country."

Approximately 50% of the Legion's income is derived from membership dues (including amounts allocated for magazine subscriptions). An additional 15% is generated through advertising for the American Legion Magazine. Another significant source of income is Emblem sales, which includes the sale of apparel, jewelry, and other items bearing the American Legion Emblem. Income is expended by the Legion on several different programs including The American Legion Magazine, Emblem sales, veterans' assistance and rehabilitation, youth programs and others. The Legion's youth programs include American Legion baseball, oratorical contests and Boy's Nation.

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenues, expenses, gains, losses and other changes in net assets during the reported period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Principles of Consolidation: The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of The American Legion National Headquarters, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc. (HPC); the American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation (ALEF); and the National Emergency Fund (NEF) (collectively, the Legion). All material inter-organizational accounts and transactions have been eliminated in consolidation. Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc., an Indiana corporation, is a full-service, direct marketing and advertising agency whose services include innovative marketing and creative automated mailing. The majority of its sales are to the Legion. The remaining sales are made primarily within the State of Indiana. American Legion Endowment Fund Corporation, a tax-exempt Indiana corporation, was created to provide permanent funding for the rehabilitation of American veterans and assistance to orphans of veterans. The National Emergency Fund is a tax-exempt trust established to provide gifts and grants to relieve suffering and ameliorate financial hardship incurred by American Legion members, families and Posts.

Net Asset Classifications: The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Statement of Financial Accounting Standards (SFAS) No. 117, *Financial Statements of Not-for-Profit Organizations*. SFAS No. 117 requires, among other things, that the financial statements report the changes in and total of each of the net asset classes, based upon donor restrictions, as applicable. Net assets are to be classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted and permanently restricted.

The following classes of net assets are maintained:

Unrestricted Net Assets – The unrestricted net asset class includes general assets and liabilities of the Legion, as well as assets and liabilities designated by the National Executive Committee, the governing body of the Legion. The unrestricted net assets of the Legion may be used at the discretion of management to support the Legion's purposes and operations.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets – The temporarily restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion related to gifts with explicit donor-imposed restrictions that have not been met as to specified purpose, or to later periods of time or after specified dates. Unconditional promises to give that are due in future periods and are not permanently restricted are classified as temporarily restricted net assets.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets – The permanently restricted net asset class includes assets of the Legion for which the donor has stipulated that the contribution be maintained in perpetuity. Donor-imposed restrictions limiting the use of the assets or its economic benefit neither expire with the passage of time nor can be removed by satisfying a specific purpose.

Cash and Cash Equivalents: For purposes of reporting cash flows, the Legion considers all liquid investments with an original maturity of three months or less to be cash equivalents, except for those investments held or part of a managed portfolio. The first $100,000 of deposits per financial institution is insured by a government agency.

Inventory: Inventory consists of Emblem items held for sale, magazine paper and publication rights and is stated at the lower of cost or market. Inventory items are valued at average cost. Supplies which are not intended for sale are expensed when purchased.

Investments: Investments are carried at fair value. Realized and unrealized gains and losses are reflected in the consolidated statements of activities. Premiums or discounts on investments are generally recognized at the time of disposal or maturity.

Property and Equipment: Expenditures for property and equipment and items which substantially increase the useful lives of existing assets are capitalized at cost. The Legion provides for depreciation on the straight-line method at rates designated to depreciate the costs of assets over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation on buildings is computed on the straight-line method using a 30-year life. All other capital assets are depreciated over lives ranging from three to seven years.

Support and Revenue: The Legion reports gifts of cash and other assets as restricted support if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, temporarily restricted net assets are reclassified to unrestricted net assets and reported in the statement of activities as net assets released from restrictions.

Dues Income and Expense: Dues are recognized as income over the applicable membership period, which is on a calendar-year basis.

In addition to other methods of obtaining new members, the Legion uses direct mail and other direct marketing approaches. The income generated from direct membership solicitation is recognized over the applicable membership period (calendar year). The direct-response expenses incurred in obtaining new members are deferred and written off in the subsequent membership year.

Income Taxes: The Legion is exempt from federal income taxes under section 501(c)(19) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. ALEF and NEF are exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. None of these organizations is considered to be a private foundation. The Legion is subject to income tax on unrelated business income. However, due to net operating loss carryforwards, the

Legion paid no taxes for the years ended December 31, 2003 and 2002.

Federal and state income tax expense is recorded for HPC, a for-profit corporation, as incurred.

Fair Value of Financial Instruments: The carrying amount of all financial instruments of the Legion approximate their fair values, with the exception of the line of long-term debt as disclosed in Note 8.

Expense Allocation: Expenses have been classified as program services, management and general, member development and fund raising based on actual direct expenditures. Additionally, some expenses are allocated among departments based upon estimates of the amount of time spent by Legion employees performing services for these departments.

NOTE 2 - INVESTMENT IN AFFILIATE

The Legion, in conjunction with approximately 120 other organizations, has created a nonprofit corporation known as The Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. (CFA) for the purpose of aiding in the campaign to secure a constitutional amendment empowering the Congress and the States to enact legislation to protect the Flag of the United States of America from physical desecration.

CFA recognized a net decreasee/increase in net assets of $15,575 and $36,716 in 2003 and 2002, respectively. Accordingly, the Legion's investment in CFA has been decreased by these is amounts and corresponding charges haves been reflected in unrestricted designated net assets for 2003 and 2002.

NOTE 3 - INVESTMENTS

The Legion's market value of investments is as follows:

	2003 Market					
	Segregated for Restricted and Reserve Funds	Segregated for Washington D.C. Building	Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Program	Other	Total
U.S. Government obligations	$ 21,338,557	$ 1,843,140	$ 882,342	$ 16,319,339	$ 27,430,443	$ 67,813,821
State and Municipal Bonds	-	-	-	832,984	-	832,984
Corporate Bonds	-	-	-	10,659,833	2,336,064	12,995,897
Foreign Bonds	-	-	-	-	33,444	33,444
Common and preferred stocks	-	-	-	9,647,257	-	9,647,257
Mutual funds	-	-	-	-	1,944,860	1,944,860
Money market accounts	227,832	34,078	25,443	1,664,811	11,826,187	13,778,351
Accrued interest	214,068	16,133	6,540	108,713	358,340	703,794
	$ 21,780,457	$ 1,893,351	$ 914,325	$ 39,232,937	$ 43,929,338	$ 107,750,408

	2002 Market					
	Segregated for Restricted and Reserve Funds	Segregated for Washington D.C. Building	Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Program	Other	Total
U.S. Government obligations	$ 20,774,728	$ 899,127	$ 462,948	$ 9,926,736	$ 12,463,657	$ 44,527,196
State and Municipal Bonds	-	-	-	1,013,663	-	1,013,663
Corporate Bonds	-	-	-	5,510,571	2,427,215	7,937,786
Common and preferred stocks	-	-	-	15,389,836	-	15,389,836
Mutual funds	-	-	-	-	1,613,802	1,613,802
Money market accounts	184,554	880,210	507,552	6,128,644	24,012,175	31,713,135
Accrued interest	212,035	14,116	6,540	246,852	200,455	679,998
	$ 21,171,317	$ 1,793,453	$ 977,040	$ 38,216,302	$ 40,717,304	$ 102,875,416

Notes to Financial Statements December 31, 2003 and 2002

NOTE 4 - PAID-UP-FOR-LIFE MEMBERSHIP FUND

The National Executive Committee approved the establishment of a life membership plan available to any member of a participating department. In accordance with the plan, the assets of the Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Membership Fund are segregated in a trust account from which funds equal to the annual dues of life members are withdrawn for current operations each year. The trust agreement provides that the Legion has the right to withdraw part or all of the assets of the trust account and to modify or terminate the trust agreement at its discretion.

Under the terms of the PUFL program, participating member's national, state and local dues are paid by the Legion for the remainder of the individual's life. Management has estimated and recognized a liability for the future payments to state and local Legion organizations. Likewise, management has deferred recognition of the national dues portion of the members' payment. Deferred PUFL dues are recognized in annual amounts equal to the national dues in effect each year. The liability and deferred revenue amounts are estimated by the Legion's actuaries using PUFL membership summaries and discount rates comparable to the Legion's recent investment performance.

NOTE 5 - RESTRICTED AND RESERVE DESIGNATED FUNDS

The restricted fund is designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee of the Legion. Earnings of the restricted fund, along with the principal, can be expended only upon recommendation of the National Finance Commission and a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee at two successive meetings. It is the policy of the Legion to transfer 10% of the prior year's defined net income to the restricted fund. The Legion transferred $162,077 and $120,615 in 2003 and 2002.

The reserve fund is also designated for use by the National Finance Commission and National Executive Committee. However, earnings of the reserve fund may be used for the general operations of the Legion. The principal can be expended only by action of the Legion at its national convention, or by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the National Executive Committee in two successive meetings not less than 60 days apart.

NOTE 6 - LIFE INSURANCE PLAN

During October 1992, the National Executive Committee approved a resolution to terminate the Legion's Life Insurance Trust. Upon dissolution in April 1993, funds remaining in the Trust totaling $4,285,984 were transferred to a segregated bank trust account (named The American Legion Life Insurance Plan) under control of the Legion for use in youth programs.

The Legion's National Executive Committee has directed that monies within The American Legion Life Insurance Plan used to fund oratorical contests, Boys' Nation, American Legion Baseball, and other youth programs of the Legion. At December 31, 2003, $1,100,000 in funds had been approved for use in designated programs during 2004.

NOTE 7 - PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

The Legion received $5,000,000 from The Samsung Group during 1996. The principal is to be permanently endowed and the income is to be used to fund undergraduate scholarships for descendents of Korean War veterans and other wars in which U.S. servicemen and servicewomen participated. Such scholarships are administered by the Legion.

Contributions to The American Legion Endowment Fund are recorded as increases in permanently restricted net assets, the income from which is to be used to support the veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth activities of the Legion.

NOTE 8 - LONG TERM DEBT

In 2003, the Legion refinanced its long-term debt on its facility for emblem sales, information technology, member benefits and HPC. This debt is payable in monthly installments of $25,213, including interest, beginning July 30, 2003, with a stated rate of 5.3% and final payment due August 1, 2018. The outstanding balance on long-term debt is $3,068,661 and $3,141,112 for 2003 and 2002.

The future maturities for the line of credit are as follows:

2004	$ 142,737
2005	150,488
2006	158,662
2007	167,276
2008	176,561
Thereafter	2,272,937
	$ 3,068,661

NOTE 9 - LEASES

The Legion has several noncancelable operating leases, primarily for facilities, computer equipment, copiers and cash registers that expire over the next three five years. Rental expense for these leases aggregated $408,676 in 2003 and $737,095 in 2002.

Future minimum lease payments under operating leases are as follows:

2004	$ 175,319
2005	87,211
2006	25,953
2007	-
	$ 288,483

In addition, the Legion has a lease with the State of Indiana for rental of the National Headquarters building in Indianapolis through June 30, 2006. The lease can be renewed at the option of the Legion for nine additional four-year periods. According to the terms of the lease, the Legion is required to maintain the interior of the building, and provide adequate insurance on the building in lieu of lease payments. The cost of maintenance approximated $471,000 in 2003 and 2002. Insurance coverage is included in the Legion's general insurance policy.

NOTE 10 - INCOME TAXES

The following is a reconciliation of income taxes at the federal statutory rate to actual income tax recorded by HPC:

	2003	2002
Income tax expense		
Currently payable		
Federal	$ 32,020	$ 52,291
State	13,392	31,265
Deferred		
Federal	1,900	5,900
	$ 47,312	$ 89,456

Reconciliation of federal statutory to actual tax expense

Federal income tax at statutory rates	$ 45,171	$ 76,239
Nondeductible expenses	1,485	2,487
Effect of state income taxes	11,998	14,854
Change in valuation allowance and other	(11,342)	(4,124)
	$ 47,312	$ 89,456

The components of the net deferred tax (liability) asset are as follows:

Asset		
Net operating loss carryforward	$ 24,100	$ 25,300
Liability		
Other	(25,200)	(24,500)
	$ (1,100)	$ 800

The deferred tax asset and liability are included in other accounts receivable and other liabilities, respectively, in the statement of financial position.

NOTE 11 - NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM RESTRICTION

Net assets were released from donor restrictions by incurring expenses satisfying the restricted purposes or by occurrence of other events specified by donors.

	2003	2002
Purpose restrictions accomplished		
Overseas graves decoration	$ 74,892	$ 57,981
Scholarships and grants (including relief aid)	271,250	433,940
Veterans affairs and rehabilitation and children and youth programs	599,056	478,263
Other	18,894	153,563
	$ 964,092	$ 1,123,747

NOTE 12 - NET ASSETS RELEASED FROM DESIGNATION

Net assets were released from designations by satisfying the designations previously established.

	2003	2002
Purpose designations accomplished		
Paid-Up-For-Life memberships	$ 2,428,777	$ 3,045,979
Youth programs (Life Insurance Plan)	1,083,298	1,041,709
Other	737,812	514,530
	$ 4,249,887	$ 4,602,218

NOTE 13 - EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

The Legion has a defined-benefit pension plan covering substantially all of its employees as well as those of certain affiliated and subordinated groups. The plan was established in 1944 by vote of the Legion's National Convention. Contributions to the plan are made by the Legion and other participating groups on the basis of annual actuarial valuations. The following table sets forth the Legion's portion of the plan's funded status and amounts recognized in the Legion's consolidated statement of financial position at December 31, 2003 and 2002.

	2003	2002
Benefit obligation	$(35,046,175)	$(30,611,098)
Fair value of plan assets	46,512,234	48,023,639
Funded status	$ 11,466,059	$ 17,412,541
Prepaid benefit cost recognized in the statement of financial position	$ 16,245,300	$ 16,032,673

	2003	2002
Benefit cost	$ (36,179)	$ (169,353)
Employer contribution	179,333	168,957
Benefits paid	1,532,103	1,569,627

	2003	2002
Weighted-average assumptions		
Discount rate	6.5%	7.0%
Expected return on plan assets	8.5%	8.0%
Rate of compensation increase	2.0%	2.5%

HPC maintains a defined-contribution plan under Section 401(k) of the Internal Revenue Code. Elective deferrals are available to employees twenty-one and a half years of age who have completed one year of eligible service. HPC may make discretionary contributions to this plan.

NOTE 14 - FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

The following represents a functional breakdown of the American Legion National Headquarters' expenses by program and supporting services.

	2003	2002
Program services		
Veterans programs and services	$30,894,757	$30,685,586
Americanism and children and youth activities	2,357,647	2,533,591
Flag education and legislation	401,772	923,917
	33,654,176	34,143,094
Supporting services		
Management and general	$ 14,464,619	$ 13,382,152
Member development	5,580,425	7,689,821
Fund raising	51,260	50,210
	20,096,304	21,122,183
	$53,750,480	$55,265,277

Member development includes direct response advertising expense of $3,059,196 and $4,648,617 for the years ended December 31, 2003 and 2002.

NOTE 15 - LITIGATION

The Legion is currently involved in and/or has been mentioned as a defendant or co-defendant in several legal actions. It is the opinion of the National Judge Advocate that these claims are without merit and any ultimate liability of the Legion with respect to these actions will not materially affect the financial position of the Legion.

Supplementary Information

Report of Independent Auditors

Members of the National Finance Commission
The American Legion National Headquarters
Indianapolis, Indiana

We have audited and reported separately on the basic financial statements of the Legion for the years ended December 31, 2003 and 2002. Our audits were made for the purpose of forming an opinion on the Legion's basic financial statements taken as a whole. The accompanying analyses presented in the following schedules have been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audits of the Legion's financial statements and, in our opinion, the accompanying other information is stated fairly in all material respects in relation to those basic financial statements taken as a whole.

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Crowe Chizek and Company LLC

Indianapolis, Indiana
February 27, 2004

Reconciliation of Internal Financial Statements to Audited Financial Statements
Years Ended December 31, 2003 and 2002 Restated

Change in net assets – internal financial statements	$ 1,881,757	$ 1,826,710
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains not included in internal financials		
Unrestricted designated	511,194	751,346
Temporarily restricted	566,449	859,182
Permanently restricted	159,639	41,704
	3,119,040	3,478,942
Net unrealized gains (losses)		
General	(651,7856)	3,516,585
Unrestricted designated	1,250,540	(3,308,110)
Temporarily restricted	(357,847)	(185,928)
Permanently restricted	(167,716)	224,637
Change in net assets – audited financial statements	$ 3,192,231	$ 3,726,126

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2003

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 867,140	$ 19,004	$ -	$ 1,164,349	$ -	$ 2,050,493
Accounts receivable						
Emblems	160,041	-	-	-	-	160,041
Publications	1,145,576	-	-	-	-	1,145,576
Related party	-	-	-	499,688	(499,688)	-
Other	986,791	73,121	-	87,447	(29,478)	1,117,881
Prepaid expenses and deposits	743,385	3,037	-	104,279	-	850,701
Deferred membership expense	4,522,186	-	-	-	-	4,522,186
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,248,986	-	-	-	(2,248,986)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	2,576,785	-	-	-	-	2,576,785
Publication division	436,548	-	-	-	-	436,548
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	74,859	-	-	-	-	74,859
Prepaid pension expense	16,245,300	-	-	-	-	16,245,300
	30,007,597	95,162	-	1,855,763	(2,778,152)	29,180,370
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserve funds	21,780,457	-	-	-	-	21,780,457
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,893,351	-	-	-	-	1,893,351
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	914,325	-	-	-	-	914,325
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	39,232,937	-	-	-	-	39,232,937
Other	34,562,510	-	1,144,893	-	-	35,707,403
Special account – endowment fund	-	2,162,624	-	-	-	2,162,624
General account – endowment fund	-	6,059,311	-	-	-	6,059,311
Investment in HPC	1,955,651	-	-	-	(1,955,651)	-
	100,339,231	8,221,935	1,144,893	-	(1,955,651)	107,750,408
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,138,918	-	-	-	-	4,138,918
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,611,241	-	-	-	-	4,611,241
Washington, D.C.	1,086,923	-	-	-	-	1,086,923
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	761,621	-	761,621
Work in progress – Washington, D.C. building	200,036	-	-	-	-	200,036
Accumulated depreciation	(7,097,733)	-	-	(608,151)	-	(7,705,884)
	7,020,428	-	-	153,470	-	7,173,898
Total assets	$ 137,367,256	$ 8,317,097	$ 1,144,893	$ 2,00,233	$ (4,733,803)	$ 144,104,676

Supplementary Information

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position December 31, 2003

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,522,209	$ 2,514	$ 249,684	$ 368,052	$ (674,888)	$ 2,467,571
Scholarships payable	908,206	-	-	-	-	908,206
Accounts payable – Legion	-	2,079,445	-	57,617	(2,137,062)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	131,748	-	-	-	-	131,748
Deferred advertising income	165,561	-	-	-	-	165,561
Deferred dues income	20,332,441	-	-	-	-	20,332,441
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	970,547	-	-	-	-	970,547
Accrued vacation benefits	631,133	-	-	-	-	631,133
Other liabilities	545,231	-	-	27,910	-	573,141
Notes payable	3,068,661	-	-	-	-	3,068,661
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	20,122,662	-	-	-	-	20,122,662
Life memberships due to state and local posts	26,830,199	-	-	-	-	26,830,199
	76,228,598	2,081,959	249,684	453,579	(2,811,950)	76,201,870
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted – general	16,852,522	-	-	-	(366,199)	16,486,323
Unrestricted – designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	74,859	-	-	-	-	74,859
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	505,457	-	-	-	-	505,457
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	925,645	-	-	-	-	925,645
Real estate reserve	2,137,840	-	-	-	-	2,137,840
Reserve fund	2,319,686	-	-	-	-	2,319,686
Restricted fund	19,435,380	-	-	-	-	19,435,380
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	4,543,476	-	-	-	-	4,543,476
Veterans' rehabilitation/ child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	926,960	-	-	-	-	926,960
Other	975,697	(14,511)	-	-	-	961,186
	51,397,522	(14,511)	-	-	(366,199)	51,016,812
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	639,654	-	-	-	-	639,654
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	916,925	-	-	-	-	916,925
Samsung scholarship	2,377,121	-	-	-	-	2,377,121
National Emergency Fund	-	-	895,209	-	-	895,209
Others	807,436	-	-	-	-	807,436
	4,741,136	-	895,209	-	-	5,636,345
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	-	6,249,649	-	-	-	6,249,649
	5,000,000	6,249,649	-	-	-	11,249,649
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,157,077	(1,157,077)	-
Total net assets	61,138,658	6,235,138	895,209	1,555,654	(1,921,853)	67,902,806
	$ 137,367,256	$ 8,317,097	$ 1,144,893	$ 2,009,233	$ (4,733,803)	$144,104,676

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (Restated) December 31, 2002

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
ASSETS						
Cash and cash equivalents	$ 1,322,325	$ 6,026	$ 3,497	$ 902,368	$ -	$ 2,234,216
Accounts receivable						
Emblem	29,869	-	-	-	-	129,869
Publications	1,234,092	-	-	-	-	1,234,092
Related party	-	-	-	433,682	(433,682)	-
Other	1,844,011	-	-	135,978	(133,028)	1,846,961
Prepaid expenses and deposits	1,010,214	3,673	-	122,330	-	1,136,217
Deferred membership expense	4,195,103	-	-	-	-	4,195,103
Due from American Legion Endowment Fund	2,000,000	-	-	-	(2,000,000)	-
Inventories						
Emblem division	2,939,903	-	-	-	-	2,939,903
Publication division	240,852	-	-	-	-	240,852
Investment in affiliate (CFA)	90,434	-	-	-	-	90,434
Prepaid pension expense	16,032,673	-	-	-	-	16,032,673
	31,039,476	9,699	3,497	1,594,358	(2,566,710)	30,080,320
Investments						
Segregated for restricted and reserve funds	21,171,317	-	-	-	-	21,171,317
Segregated for Washington, D.C. building	1,793,453	-	-	-	-	1,793,453
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	977,040	-	-	-	-	977,040
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	38,216,302	-	-	-	-	38,216,302
Other	31,166,664	-	1,136,000	-	-	32,302,664
Special account – endowment fund	-	2,224,377	-	-	-	2,224,377
General account – endowment fund	-	6,190,263	-	-	-	6,190,263
Investment in HPC	1,861,427	-	-	-	(1,861,427)	-
	95,186,203	8,414,640	1,136,000	-	(1,861,427)	102,875,416
Property and equipment						
Indianapolis real estate						
Land	389,264	-	-	-	-	389,264
Building	3,611,779	-	-	-	-	3,611,779
Washington, D.C. real estate						
Land	80,000	-	-	-	-	80,000
Building	4,138,918	-	-	-	-	4,138,918
Furniture, fixtures and equipment						
National Headquarters, Indianapolis	4,319,229	-	-	-	-	4,319,229
Washington, D.C.	1,130,353	-	-	-	-	1,130,353
Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	-	-	-	772,833	-	772,833
Accumulated depreciation	(6,475,232)	-	-	(588,168)	-	(7,063,400)
	7,194,311	-	-	184,665	-	7,378,976
Total assets	$ 133,419,990	$ 8,424,339	$ 1,139,497	$ 1,779,023	$ (4,428,137)	$140,334,712

Supplementary Information

Consolidating Statement of Financial Position (Restated) December 31, 2002

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
LIABILITIES						
Accounts payable	$ 2,659,029	$ -	$ -	$ 226,948	$ (467,481)	$ 2,418,496
Scholarships payable	872,563	-	-	-	-	872,563
Accounts payable – Legion	-	2,083,314	-	-	(2,083,314)	-
Deposits on emblem merchandise sales	201,843	-	-	49,714	(49,714)	201,843
Deferred advertising income	67,114	-	-	-	-	67,114
Deferred dues income	19,822,208	-	-	-	-	19,822,208
Deferred income – direct membership solicitation	1,071,677	-	-	-	-	1,071,677
Accrued vacation benefits	616,785	-	-	-	-	616,785
Other liabilities	317,784	-	-	40,933	-	358,717
Notes payable	3,141,112	-	-	-	-	3,141,112
Deferred dues income – Paid-Up-For-Life Memberships	19,249,209	-	-	-	-	19,249,209
Life memberships due to state and local posts	27,804,413	-	-	-	-	27,804,413
	75,823,737	2,083,314	-	317,595	(2,600,509)	75,624,137
NET ASSETS						
Unrestricted – general	16,058,627	-	-	-	(366,200)	15,692,427
Unrestricted – designated						
Citizens Flag Alliance	90,434	-	-	-	-	90,434
Computer reserve	500,000	-	-	-	-	500,000
Convention reserve	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Convention stabilization	469,456	-	-	-	-	469,456
Employee insurance stabilization	100,000	-	-	-	-	100,000
Paid-Up-For-Life Membership Fund	(690,217)	-	-	-	-	(690,217)
Real estate reserve	1,924,637	-	-	-	-	1,924,637
Reserve fund	2,388,891	-	-	-	-	2,388,891
Restricted fund	18,764,888	-	-	-	-	18,764,888
Youth program (Life Insurance Plan)	4,753,532	-	-	-	-	4,753,532
Veterans' rehabilitation/ child welfare (special account)	2,000,000	-	-	-	-	2,000,000
Sons of the American Legion	873,531	-	-	-	-	873,531
Other	974,228	83,299	-	-	-	1,057,527
	48,308,007	83,299	-	-	(366,200)	48,025,106
Temporarily restricted						
Buick scholarship	669,908	-	-	-	-	669,908
Overseas Graves Decoration Fund	979,524	-	-	-	-	979,524
Samsung scholarship	2,571,861	-	-	-	-	2,571,861
National Emergency Fund	-	-	890,513	-	-	890,513
Others	315,937	-	-	-	-	315,937
	4,537,230	-	890,513	-	-	5,427,743
Permanently restricted						
Samsung scholarship	5,000,000	-	-	-	-	5,000,000
American Legion Endowment Fund	-	6,257,726	-	-	-	6,257,726
	5,000,000	6,257,726	-	-	-	11,257,726
Shareholders' equity						
Common stock	-	-	-	1,000	(1,000)	-
Additional paid-in capital	-	-	-	397,577	(397,577)	-
Retained earnings	-	-	-	1,062,851	(1,062,851)	-
Total net assets	57,845,237	6,341,025	890,513	1,461,428	(1,827,628)	64,710,575
	$ 133,668,974	$ 8,424,339	$ 890,513	$ 1,779,023	$ (4,428,137)	$140,334,712

Consolidating Statement of Activities Year Ended December 31, 2003

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 23,232,708	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 23,232,708
Sales of emblem items	11,541,969	-	-	-	-	11,541,969
Sales – HPC	-	-	-	5,118,942	(4,274,357)	844,585
Advertising	9,008,879	-	-	-	-	9,008,879
Direct membership solicitation	2,150,508	-	-	-	-	2,150,508
American Legion Endowment Fund income	384,232	-	-	-	(384,232)	-
Contributions	625,100	108,490	172,166	-	-	905,756
Affinity income	308,110	-	-	-	-	308,110
Label and printing fees	1,938,389	-	-	-	-	1,938,389
Member service fees income	2,095,487	-	-	-	-	2,095,487
Investment income, net of fees	2,154,554	439,485	41,126	9,071	-	2,644,236
Net realized gains	(19,232)	34,395	(4,825)	-	-	10,338
Other	2,429,192	-	-	299	(240,937)	2,188,554
Net income in subsidiary	94,226	-	-	-	(94,226)	-
	55,944,122	582,370	208,467	5,128,312	(4,993,752)	56,869,519
Expenses						
Salaries	11,398,072	-	-	-	-	11,398,072
Employee benefits	2,558,375	-	-	-	-	2,558,375
Cost of sales	8,579,194	-	-	-	(144,726)	8,434,468
Cost of sales – HPC	-	-	-	4,043,601	(3,376,439)	667,162
Direct publications	11,033,937	-	-	-	-	11,033,937
Executive and staff travel	810,227	-	-	-	-	810,227
Commission and committee	1,370,962	-	-	-	-	1,370,962
Printing and postage	2,401,027	-	-	-	-	2,401,027
Scholarships, grants and awards	959,734	-	-	-	-	959,734
Office and other operating	-	-	-	-	-	-
Veterans and child programs	9,362,495	30,312	-	823,331	(753,192)	9,462,946
Occupancy and usage	2,014,425	-	-	167,154	(167,154)	2,014,425
Special projects and programs	2,462,820	458,016	176,325	-	(458,016)	2,639,145
	52,951,268	488,328	176,325	5,034,086	(4,899,527)	53,750,480
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	2,992,854	94,042	32,142	94,226	(94,225)	3,119,039
Net unrealized gains (losses) – PUFL	(617,000)	-	-	-	-	(617,000)
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	917,567	(199,929)	(27,446)	-	-	690,192
Change in net assets	3,293,421	(105,887)	4,696	94,226	(94,225)	3,192,231
Net assets, beginning of year	57,845,237	6,341,025	890,513	1,062,851	(1,429,051)	64,710,575
Net assets, end of year	$ 61,138,658	$ 6,235,138	$ 895,209	$ 1,157,077	$ (1,523,276)	$ 67,902,806

Supplementary Information

Consolidating Statement of Activities (Restated) Year Ended December 31, 2002

	American Legion National Headquarters	American Legion Endowment Fund	National Emergency Fund	Haynes and Partners Communications, Inc.	Eliminations	Total
Revenue, gains and other support						
National member dues	$ 23,372,977	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 23,372,977
Sales of emblem items	11,259,127	-	-	-	-	11,259,127
Sales – HPC	-	-	-	5,593,290	(4,610,649)	982,641
Advertising	8,827,810	-	-	-	-	8,827,810
Direct membership solicitation	3,317,711	-	-	-	-	3,317,711
American Legion Endowment Fund income	478,263	-	-	-	(478,263)	-
Contributions	462,753	23,674	108,024	-	-	594,451
Affinity income	251,643	-	-	-	-	251,643
Label and printing fees	1,993,839	-	-	-	-	1,993,839
Member service fees income	2,054,693	-	-	-	-	2,054,693
Investment income, net of fees	2,401,112	477,439	16,651	18,416	-	2,913,618
Net realized gains	623,135	19,035	31	-	-	642,201
Other	2,707,743	-	-	-	(174,235)	2,533,508
Net income in subsidiary	134,776	-	-	-	(134,776)	-
	57,885,582	520,148	124,706	5,611,706	(5,397,923)	58,744,219
Expenses						
Salaries	10,980,616	-	-	-	-	10,980,616
Employee benefits	2,392,054	-	-	-	-	2,392,054
Cost of sales	8,854,637	-	-	-	(179,761)	8,674,876
Cost of sales – HPC	-	-	-	4,486,519	(3,698,318)	788,201
Direct publications	11,319,202	-	-	-	-	11,319,202
Executive and staff travel	943,559	-	-	-	-	943,559
Commission and committee	1,237,629	-	-	-	-	1,237,629
Printing and postage	2,456,090	-	-	-	-	2,456,090
Scholarships, grants and awards	1,106,752	-	-	-	-	1,106,752
Office and other operating	-	-	-	-	-	-
Veterans and child programs	10,693,584	30,937	-	816,177	(732,571)	10,808,127
Occupancy and usage	2,037,464	-	-	174,235	(174,235)	2,037,464
Special projects and programs	2,380,516	478,263	140,191	-	(478,263)	2,520,707
	54,402,103	509,200	140,191	5,476,931	(5,263,148)	55,265,277
Change in net assets before net unrealized gains (losses)	3,483,479	10,948	(15,485)	134,775	(134,775)	3,478,942
Net unrealized gains (losses) – PUFL	3,483,285	-	-	-	-	3,483,285
Net unrealized gains (losses) - investment	(3,511,154)	264,866	10,187	-	-	(3,236,101)
Change in net assets	3,455,610	275,814	(5,298)	134,775	(134,775)	3,726,126
Net assets, beginning of year	54,389,627	6,065,211	895,811	928,076	(1,294,276)	60,984,449
Net assets, end of year	$ 57,845,237	$ 6,341,025	$ 890,513	$ 1,062,851	$ (1,429,051)	$ 64,710,575