

The Legion Link

September 2012

Vol. 20 Issue 2



AIMING HIGH FOR VETERANS

FALLEN SOLDIER



NEVER FORGOTTEN

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Labor Day



Al 'Gunner' Dudley
Department Commander
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I had the great honor of attending a BBQ at Post 358 and met with the Junior and Senior State Baseball Champions from White City American Legion. Congratulations to them! They represented the State of Florida in the Regional's however, they were eliminated by keen competition. You have to admire the hard work and dedication these young men gave of themselves!

Our Florida Legion Team met with leading candidate for National Commander Jim Koutz. He is going to be a great commander and he is thoroughly impressed with our Florida Family and the direction we are heading!

I sincerely want to thank Post 367 (Installation), Post 88 and the entire 5th District (District Meeting), Post 1 and the 12th District (District Meeting), Post 69 and the American Legion Riders (Legion Riders Executive Board Meeting) for the hospitality you showed me and Belinda during our visit with you.

We are now 2 months into our 2012-2013 year. The hard work and dedication is going to make Florida the premier Department. We must all continue to make Florida Legion transparent to the media, our veterans and the general public! On my travels, I take our brochures and place them in rest stops or other places that they may get noticed and I encourage you to do the same. Remember R&R (Retention & Recruit) each and every member of the Florida

Legion Family. As you have heard before, if every member was to recruit just one member into the family, just imagine how awesome the attention that we would receive!

I want to wish everyone a Happy and Safe Labor Day weekend!

Art Schwabe
Department Vice Commander
Vicecommander@floridalegion.org
386.235.9990

I am writing this from Panama City where I attended a USSSA softball tournament which was all military; all 129 teams worth. There was also a Wounded Warriors exposition game on Thursday night. The determination by our Wounded Warriors is unbelievable. There is truly no obstacle they cannot overcome. The event will be on my calendar for next year. It was worth every mile to get here to see.

Now that the smoke has cleared from all the installations, it's time to talk about membership. Let's orientate our new members so they know what the four pillars are. Let's inform them what programs we offer to not only them but also to Veterans, the community, charities, and the children's programs being supported by the Post. JUST TELL THEM!!

Congratulations to Post 9 for being the first Post to reach "100 percent in membership" and still climbing.

You will never get a volunteer if you don't ask, or if you don't let them know what is going on in the Post. Never refuse a volunteer. Yes you can do it yourself but they want to help and be part of the Post. That's the fastest way to lose volunteers. Trust me! At least this time!

Art Schwabe
Department Vice Commander
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386.235.9990

Next month is Halloween. Make sure you order early the coloring books from Department. The order form is in the Post Administrative Manual page 12. Plan ahead and make it fun!!!! Don't wait till they run out; get them now while the ink is still wet.

Well, we are heading to the National Convention. I will give you the update in the next link. For God and Country and God Bless our Troops.

TRIVA.

- A. What year was the first G I. Bill written? Where was it written? And by whom was it written?
- B. What. Are the four Pillars of the American Legion?
- C. Where is the first American Legion Post in the United States located?

Ole and Lena were getting a little frisky. Then Lena whispered To Ole, "Tell me those three little words every woman want to hear". Ole thought for a minute them said, "GO PACK GO!! It's time for some football! ". Ole is now recovering nicely and should be out of the cast in a week or two! Have a nice day!

- Answers: A. 1943, Mayflower Hotel in Washington D.C., Past National Commander Harry Colmery
B. Americanism, Children and Youth, National Security, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation
C. Wheeling, West Virginia - they beat St Louis, MO by 20 minutes to be chartered in Congress

Bob Vick
Department Chaplain

Greeting in the name of the Lord.

We live in the world, we interact with the world, but we must always remember our proper position may be in the world but not of the world!

The most powerful way we can escape the influence of a sinful world is to make God the center of our world. How do we do that? We do that through prayer. When you are weak, tempted, in need, ill, needy, or any position where you need support, PRAY. God hears all the prayers of His children.

I'm reminded of the story of two women darning their husband's trousers. The first woman said: Her husband was so discouraged he just wanted to throw in the towel and quit. The second woman said: Her husband was so encouraged and upbeat she was amazed at him. Oh, did I tell you, one woman was mending the seat of her husband's trousers and the other one, the knees. I guess you can tell which one was discouraged and who was encouraged. God Bless you and your families.

Jay Conti, Sr.
Department Sgt.-at-Arms

Hi Fellow Legionnaires!

The Department of Florida SGT-at-ARMS & PROTOCOL Manual is now available for download on the Florida Legion web site under the Manuals and Forms section. This manual will help aide ALL SGT-at-ARMS at the Post, Squadron, Riders and District Levels. It will also serve as a Protocol Manual for Post and District Commanders and for special events. We are also having copies of it printed up and I will be handing them out to each Post and District SGT-at-ARMS in my visits to your Districts. I hope that it helps your Post & District in the area of SGT-AT-ARMS & Protocol. If any questions on this manual please don't hesitate to email or call me.

Besides teaching Sgt-At-Arms, you have seen me (or will) in your Districts teaching classes on Post Commander, Post Adjutant & Post Operations. Post and District Commanders please remember that I am always available to assist. Please give me a call and invite me to attend or if you would like me to speak I am here to serve you my fellow Veterans!

Don't forget about helping your Post plan for all Patriotic Holiday's. We have POW/MIA Remembrance Day; Patriot Day, Veterans Day and Pearl Harbor Day coming up. In addition to this planning you can also be a big help with your Post and District on Programs such as The Oratorical Contest, Children & Youth events, Boys State Interviews and Indoctrination, Law & Order Awards ceremony and many more Legion programs that touch our Veterans, Community and youth. Please make that extra effort to help your Post and District in making a Difference in these Ceremonies as its part of our History.

I attended the 9th District Meet & Greet - Marlins -vs- Dodgers Baseball game. This was a great display of professionalism with the 9th District Honor Guard presenting Colors as well as The Legion Family getting noticed not only within the Community but Nationwide. This is the involvement I have been talking about. BRAVO ZULU goes out to 9th District Commander Rick Johnson! "For God and Country"



9th District Honor Guard Presented Colors prior to the Miami Marlins -VS- Los Angeles Dodgers Baseball game on August 11, 2012. The Honor Guard was made up with Legion Family members: Rick Johnson (9th District CDR), Loretta Young, Dave Conklin and Jackie Martin. 110 Legion Family members from the Southern Area attended the game along with National Vice Commander Larry Sheets, Department Vice Commander Art Schwabe, Department Historian Sue Mason and Department Sergeant-at-Arms Jay Conti Sr.

Scott Grabner
Dept. ALR Chairman
alr@floridalegion.org

Well our first ALR E-Board meeting held on August 18th at Post 69 in Avon Park has come and gone. First I want to thank Post 69 and their Commander for their gracious hospitality. We received a lot of positive feedback and recommendations from several of the ALR Chapters. The ALR E-Board recommended and voted on adding an ALR Sgt-at-Arms position to the Legion Riders. The ALR Sgt-at-Arms will be used primarily to insure a proper dress code and American Legion Meeting Protocols are upheld during our Department Convention and Fall Conference. The Legion Riders SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) seems to be taking hold across the state. I would like to thank all of the District Commanders and ALR Chairmen for their hard work in explaining the SOP to all of their Legion Riders.

I recommend to the ALR District Chairmen to keep working closely with the ALR Chapters in their districts. Hold quarterly meetings to share schedules so Chapters don't set up events on the same day so they can support each other's rider events. Our success depends on communications between Chapters, Districts, and Department.

If your chapter is going to recommend changes to the SOP it must be given to the Department ALR Executive Board by October 8, 2012.

FYI, this is not a requirement just a suggestion. Florida Guidelines do not require a member to own a motorcycle and that will remain the same as we move forward under the new SOP. If your Chapter membership wants its members to own a motorcycle to be an ALR member, then you need to put it in your Chapter By-Laws. Whether or not your Chapter requires you to own a motorcycle to be a Legion Rider or not is up to your members.

In closing, remember the Four Pillars of The American Legion: Veteran's Affairs and Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children and Youth, as we conduct ourselves in our community. Remember you are a Legionnaire, Auxiliary, or Sons of the Legion first. Still Serving & Riding For Veterans

Frank Sardinha, III
Boys State Director
ATTENTION ALL POSTS

I hope all is well! I just wanted to let you know about a partnership Gator Growl was partaking in this year, and I thought it might be of interest to you and some of the Legionnaires who comprised our FALBS staff! Gator Growl 2012 is sponsoring tickets for veterans and their families through the Wounded Warrior Project (\$25 each) and I think this is something the Legion could certainly support. I was wondering if you could spread the word and see if perhaps some of the state's more prominent Legionnaires could spread this to the Gator brethren.

The show's theme this year is United We Growl and it's on Veterans Day Weekend, so it's an ideal time to invite some veterans to Gainesville for a fantastic show.

Boys State

Boys State registration fees are now \$325.00 per delegate. The rising costs of food, housing, travel, and materials to run the program have all created the need for this increase.

Michael Clark
Americanism
Americanism@floridalegion.org

School has started again and now is the time to get into the schools. Please talk to the guidance and financial counselor of the school district in your area. That person can make life so much easier for you to get into the schools. The link to find this person is http://www.fldoe.org/schools/schoolmap/flash/schoolmap_text.asp.

Now is the time to get all the programs before the school officials so that the students will have enough time to work on the various programs. Remember that Boys State Fees of \$325.00 are due December 23rd. Posts, now is the time to get authorization before your E-Board for approval, don't wait until the last minute. Oratorical chairs - now is the time to start because before you know it the dead lines will be upon you and, as you all know, getting your judges together on a day certain is difficult.

I hope that everyone had a great summer. God and Country

UPDATE!

With the new year comes new information. We have updated all of our guides and manuals. **Throw out all old materials.** Communication is the key to keeping our programs active. Make sure your program chairmen have all the material they need. Send in the Packet Request forms; **Administrative Manual pages 13-15.**

50% Goal

September 5, 2012

Membership Report as of July 26, 2012

Jim Ramos
Membership Chairman
membership@floridalegion.org

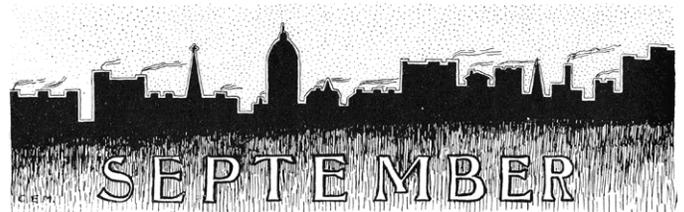
As we enter the month of September and approach our first goal of the year, which is 50%, I want to thank Posts 208, 388 and 187 who have attained 90% of their goal; Posts 116, 232, and 344 with an 80% renewal rate; Post 44, 195, 320, 390 and 144 who are over 70% and Posts 395, 33, 121, 241, 84, 27, 237, 54, 233, 239, 347, 71, 385, 265, 245, 32, 108, 138, 275 and 255 who are at 60% plus. I want to offer a very special acknowledgment to Post 9, Jacksonville having achieved a membership rate of 162%! Congratulations! In addition, a special mention to Districts 1, 6, 8, 9, 12, 15, and 17 for having no zero reporting.

While we currently have a number of Posts who have not met the 50% goal and a few that are at zero percent, you can move forward by using the membership tools and techniques that are provided for you in the "Post Membership Training Guide". For example - schedule, advertise, and host a Post Open House for your local community. Get involved in local community events by setting up an American Legion information booth to share our purpose and programs. Consider doing a project supporting our troops and veterans in the area to increase awareness of The American Legion. Sponsor and actively participate in community service projects with members of your Legion family who actively work in the neighborhood schools, churches and citizens organizations. As each Post has a unique personality, use that knowledge to meet and greet potential members throughout your community and you can reach 100% by December 31, 2012.

I'm here to serve the Department of Florida and your Post. If you need assistance please contact me by e-mail at jramos149@bellsouth.net or membership@floridalegion.org or call me at 352-226-4370. I will do as much as I can to serve you and your Post. Remember, to ensure that your Post receives the proper credit for membership, submit your renewals in a timely fashion. Send in your renewals on a regular basis and do not hold them for an extended period of time.

We shall stand together with "LEGION PRIDE", to serve our comrades with a sense of individual obligation to our Post, Community, State and Nation. We shall continue being the advocate for our military, for our Veterans and for a strong America.

District/ Area	Commander	Goal	Rec'd	% Goal
6	Robert Kiley	10,193	6,382	62.61
2	Homer Frailey	1,365	833	61.03
15	Eunice Butts	5,178	3,134	60.52
4	Charles Ferguson	4,160	2,481	59.64
9	William Johnson	4,342	2,575	59.30
17	Michael Wolohan	4,135	2,442	59.06
11	Richard Smith	4,094	2,414	58.96
1	Verna Joyce	6,256	3,645	58.26
7	Nancy Thomas	3,863	2,248	58.19
8	Debra Roush	8,218	4,714	57.36
12	Albert Diaz	8,424	4,810	57.10
16	James Burgess	11,977	6,819	56.93
5	Henry Combs	7,697	4,189	54.42
13	William Hauser	8,783	4,613	52.52
14	Gary Decker	3,161	1,611	50.97
3	M. Christians	1,712	845	49.36
Eastern	Mark Johnson	18,617	11,192	60.12
Western	Charles Lecroy	7,621	4,478	58.76
Central	James Zipler	21,018	12,201	58.05
Southern	George Rafajko	11,597	6,600	56.91
Northern	Robert Brewster	17,704	9,957	56.24
SW	Steven Slachta	17,001	9,327	54.86
Dept			53,755	
Post 400		11,977	7,994	66.74
Post 208		2,141	2,123	99.16
Totals		107,775	63,872	59.26



The American Legion Legislative Division
(202) 263-5752
LEGION-RELATED LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

Congressional Updates

Members of both the House and Senate recessed to go back to their home states and districts for the summer district work period, which is August 6 through September 10. Both chambers have pro-forma sessions every three days so that President Obama cannot make recess appointments.

The Commander's Testimony before the joint House and Senate Veterans' Affairs committees is scheduled for October 3.

LEGISLATIVE DIVISION ACTIONS

Preparations for National Convention

As the Legislative Division prepares for the upcoming National Convention, a number of point papers are being prepared for distribution to members of the National Legislative Commission. These documents will give the Commission members some in-depth background to topics which will dominate congressional actions for the remainder of this year. These point papers include:

The Flag Amendment – Prospects for action on the flag protection amendment this year are dim. With elections in November, the likelihood for changes in Congress raises questions about the amendment moving forward in the next Congress. What actions should be expected in the 113th Congress?

The FY 2013 VA Appropriations – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is projected to receive its largest funding amount in its history. Besides its base medical care programs, research into traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress will be expanded.

The FY 2013 DOD Appropriations – With U.S. forces still committed to Afghanistan, and with unsettled conditions elsewhere, national security concerns will continue to dominate our country's armed forces. Congress and the Obama administration are starting to explore ways to reduce current military spending levels. Eventually those "savings" would be funneled to domestic spending. Will our national security standing suffer, like the "hollow forces" of the post-Vietnam and Cold War eras?

The FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act – The NDAA, as passed by the House, begins to restore fiscal sanity to the defense budget, reflecting concern about America's mounting debt, but also ensuring that our armed forces have the resources they need to meet an increasingly dangerous world. A final version of this legislation has yet to pass Congress.

Licensing and Credentialing of Military Skills –Every year, skilled service members leaving the armed forces miss out on the chance to quickly move into good, high-paying, career-building jobs because they must undergo lengthy and expensive retraining in order to meet civilian licensure and certification requirements, often for the same type of jobs they held in the military. President Obama signed the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act of 2012 into law in July, which directs the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for a federal license. However, federal leadership is still necessary to achieve the new law's goals.

Stolen Valor Act – In *United States v. Alvarez* the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on June 28, 2012, that the Stolen Valor Act was an unconstitutional abridgment of the freedom of speech under the First Amendment, striking down the law in a 6 to 3 decision. Currently, there is legislation in both chambers awaiting action to address this problem. H.R. 1775 and S. 1728, rather than criminalizing the act of lying about military honors, would make it a crime to profit from those lies.

Sequestration – Last year, President Obama signed Public Law 112-25, the Budget Control Act of 2011 into law on August 2, 2011. This legislation was thought to be a workable compromise to end battles over increasing the federal debt ceiling and limiting government spending. After the failure of the "supercommittee" to agree to the size and scope of the budget reductions, automatic sequestration (withholding spending) of all non-exempt federal budget programs would be instituted. Although VA is mainly exempt from sequestration, P.L. 112-25 said "administrative costs" of VA are non-exempt. So far, the White House and OMB have failed to define this term, thereby leaving open what VA programs may be affected by sequestration.

These point papers will soon be made available on The American Legion's website, www.legion.org.

Legislative Commission Meeting Speakers Announced

During the upcoming National Convention in Indianapolis, IN, the National Legislative Commission will hold a regular meeting to discuss its work for the upcoming Congress, as well as recommended a slate of resolutions to represent The American Legion's legislative priorities for the upcoming year.

In addition, there will be two outside speakers addressing the commission. One is Ms. Rory Riley, recently promoted to Staff Director of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs. She will be speaking on efforts to address the burgeoning disability claims backlog in the VA.

The second speaker will be Mr. Mark Seavey, New Media Manager in The American Legion's Magazine Administration. He will be speaking on legislation to address the recently-overturned Stolen Valor Act.

Update on Flag Amendment Bills

Sen. Orrin Hatch's (UT) office continues to solicit additional cosponsors for Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 19, a proposed constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration. Its text states simply: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The cosponsor total for the Senate legislation stands at 36. To date, H.J. Res. 13 – the House companion bill to the Senate measure – has accumulated 89 cosponsors.

Please contact your representatives' and senators' offices, and ask them to become cosponsors of the flag amendment in their respective chambers. If they are already cosponsors, be sure to thank them for their support.

Bob Koger,
Department Blood Donor Chairman
BloodDonor@floridalegion.org

This article is not about whom I am, or what I do, but rather the purpose of this writing is to promote awareness and urgency of the American Legion Blood Donor Program.

I was honored with an invitation from District 12 Commander, Al Diaz, to attend and speak at their District meeting held on 11 August 2012 to promote awareness of the Department Blood Donor Program. It was during this meeting that the District 12 Blood Donor Chairman, Tracy Rac, was called upon to give her chairman's report. What a great motivational report she gave. I feel that with her devoted leadership the 12th District will have a very successful year for the Blood Donor Program.

It's only natural that The American Legion, with community service as one of its pillars, be heavily involved in blood donation efforts. The American Legion Blood Donor Program has existed officially since 1942 and each year many members of the American Legion Family have proudly and unselfishly stepped up to donate blood.... Why? To save lives!

Your donated blood is divided into three blood products: red blood cells used to treat trauma and cancer victims, plasma used to treat burn victims, and platelets used primarily to treat cancer victims. Therefore, it is conceivable that every pint of blood you donate could save, or at least make lives more bearable, for up to 3 sick or injured individuals.

According to a report made public by the American Red Cross on 26 June 2012, blood supplies nationwide have dropped to dangerously low levels. Nationwide, 17,000 pints of blood must be collected every day to meet medical demands, but during the month of June alone, 50,000 fewer pints were donated than is required to maintain a safe inventory. Presently, the nationwide blood inventory stands at only half the blood products that were in supply this time last year, resulting in a plea being transmitted nationwide for donors of all blood types; so I ask of all of you, please consider stepping up and make a blood donation to help meet our local and national needs.

In most instances, your blood donation will save the life, or at least help someone you most likely will never know. On the other hand, heaven forbid, you or a member of your family may be in need of a lifesaving blood transfusion before this day is over.

In a worst case scenario, you or one of your loved ones may be rushed to the hospital only to hear a physician say they must forego performing a lifesaving surgical procedure because of a shortage of blood. So hear me folks! We need to do everything we can to make sure it does not get to that point.

Also, think about our young wounded warriors returning from war with serious wounds and unimaginable burns. These young warriors need many pints of blood and blood products every day to give them a chance to recuperate and to survive. And fellow legion members, this supply blood that is so desperately needed today can come ONLY from someone like you. Blood cannot be artificially manufactured.

Throughout the past, the Department of Florida has encouraged and assisted Post's throughout the state to actively promote the Blood Donor Program, and it will be that way again this year. As the Department Blood Donor Chairman, I will promote and provide any assistance possible to make the program a great success this coming year. And, folks, there is plenty of room for improvement.

For instance, according to Department records, out of 289 Posts in the state of Florida, only 75 had a blood donor chairman this past year. Of the 75 Posts with Blood donor chairman, there was 175 blood drives netting 2389 pints of blood. Our heartfelt thanks to the post's that had blood drives, and to those individuals who understand the significance of making a lifesaving blood donation. However, considering that the American Legion family consists of more than 146,000 members at 289 posts throughout the state, surely folks, I know you can, and hope you will improve on last year's record considerably.

Please make a sincere effort to recruit a blood donor chairman at your post, and encourage your membership to participate in regularly scheduled blood drives. Any blood bank in your area will be more than happy to assist you in setting up a blood donor account and scheduling blood drives for your post. If you have any questions, or need any assistance, do not hesitate to contact your District Chairman or myself. We will be there to help you in any way possible.

Only about 5% of the people eligible to donate blood actually donate on a regular basis. In that regard, I ask this question: are you going to just sit back and be one of the 95% who will turn your head and walk away unwilling to make a blood donation to save a life, or are you going to join the 5% who unselfishly and proudly donate blood on a regular basis. Remember, the life you save could be yours or one of your loved ones. Your life saving donation could save the life of a child suffering with leukemia, or one of many cancer patients, or help our wounded warriors to heal and return to a normal life.

I sincerely urge all of you, set up a blood donor chairman at your post and schedule blood drives on a regular basis. To read a great article about the Blood Donor Program, go to the Department home page, click on PROGRAMS, and then click on BLOOD DONOR.



POW/MIA Empty Chair

Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th American Legion National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States.

**The American Legion
POW/MIA Advocacy
Kathryn Boyer, Dept. Chairman
POWMIA@floridalegion.org**

POW vs. MIA/C – Why do we care what a captured service member is called? The first reason is obvious. Neither International Law, nor the Geneva Conventions provides for a Missing/Captured status. DPMO representatives have stated that those listed MIA/C are afforded the same protection as someone listed as POW.

Yet Professor Michael Noone, a former JAG officer and Professor of Law, at the Catholic University, responded to our concerns in a 2004 Press Release: “In response to your inquiry, I would make the same response: that “missing/captured” is not a Geneva Convention term. As you know, the Third Convention is intended to protect captives – POWS -, so it’s not surprising that it’s silent on MIAs. The fact that neither term used by DOD is found in the Convention, doesn’t make the term illegal, but does raise the kind of concerns your organization expresses in the press release.”

Other reasons are more insidious. Eliminating the POW status insures that no Prisoner of War will, ever again, be left behind. With no POWs to look for, DPMO can move toward their stated objective of “rapid post-hostility accounting.” The goal is to insure that the US Government will never again be caught in a 35, 40, or 55 year recovery operation.

We also object to the ambiguity of the Missing/Captured designation. Missing has a very clear meaning, as does captured. The status is an oxymoron, designed to confuse and mislead an unknowing public and a media who can’t or won’t ask hard questions. National Alliance of POW/MIA Families; 22 January 2005.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day



**William C Hoppner III
Department Disaster Preparedness Chairman
Gonepost1@aol.com**

I would like to thank Department Commander Dudley for the opportunity to serve as your Disaster Preparedness Chairman for 2012-2013.

We all know that any disaster is a crisis may it be floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. Each year between June 1 and November 30 is designated as hurricane season.

The expert’s predictions for this year are with the 70% chance of the following: There will be between 14 to 23 named storms; 8 to 14 being hurricanes with 3 to 4 being major hurricanes (category 2, 3, 4, 5) with winds of 110 mph or higher

The questions we should ask ourselves: are we prepared and do I have everything in place before, during, and after a storm. The answer should be YES! If not this is the time to prepare. It’s never too late to prepare. There’s that word again PREPARE. It is vital to have everything in place to make the transition thru the 3 stages of a storm (Pre, During, Post) as easy and comfortable as possible.

I am sending out emails to all Area and District Commanders in the hopes of compiling a rooster of addresses and telephone numbers of all so if and when the time arises we will have a network of people so a smooth transition may be possible.

Remember the key word: PREPAREDNESS.

The telephone numbers I may be reached at are home 305-944-8518 cell phone 305-968-7979. Please feel free to contact me on any issues concerning disaster preparedness.

**NOW AVAILABLE
HALLOWEEN COLORING BOOKS**

By your request, the Department has Halloween Coloring Books available for purchase and distribution to the Elementary classrooms in your area. The order form is on page 12 of the Post Administrative Manual. Supplies are limited—get them while they last! The cost remains \$20.00 per 100 books. If you have any questions, contact Jackie at Department, 800.393.3378x221 or jgonzalez@floridalegion.org.

Children & Youth
Steve Shuga, Department Chairman
C&Y@floridalegion.org

With many of the Post installations completed, your selected Post programs either will be or have launched guiding activities that our Children and Youth will be exposed to, offering the means to excel and become successful through our guidance and support. Our future is in the Youth of today and each Post has the means to encourage positive growth that will assist in the development of our Youth into tomorrow's leaders.

Children & Youth programs include:

Local Children and Youth Programs, Activities, Events

Generous Donations for the Florida Children & Youth Fund

Generous Donations for the American Legion Child & Welfare Foundation, Inc

Child Safety

Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Suicide, **School Safety**, Missing and Abducted Children, Accidents (automobile, drowning, firearms), and Substance Abuse

Make Halloween a Safe and Fun Night

Temporary Financial Assistance

Family Support Network

** I request that Posts refer to their Post Administrative Manual and seek out the Ordering Form for the program materials needed to supplement their local C&Y programs.

Highlighted program areas above should be considered as our Children & Youth are returning to schools across the state and materials focused on their safety can be placed in their hands so their parents or guardians are kept informed.

Department C&Y support and assistance should be reviewed and considered as part of your event planning to ensure that resources are earmarked to successfully market any C&Y program activities for your scheduled activity.

Program Reminders

Monthly Reporting of Post C&Y Program activities

Plan your C&Y activities at least two months ahead

Order your resources, supplies, and materials early

Working together as the Florida Team will showcase our support of The American Legion's Fourth Pillar, promoting our continuing core purpose of "A Square Deal for Every Child".



ORATORICAL
Contest Dates
Must be completed by:
Posts - January 13, 2013
Districts - January 27, 2013
Areas - February 17, 2013
Dept. - March 9, 2013



September Fun Facts

3, 1964 - Youngest person to swim the English Channel—14 year old Lenore Modell of the United States

4, 1833 - First U.S. Newsboy - 10 year old Barney Flaherty hired by New York Sun

16, 1919 - The American Legion was incorporated by an act of Congress

22, 1789 - U.S. Post office established by Congress

Message Points for American Legion Leadership In Advance of the 2012 Elections

The American Legion is deeply interested in candidate positions regarding a number of issues heading into the 2012 general election. High on the Legion's radar are issues residing within the four pillars of the organization:

Pillar 1: National Security

Protection of the DoD and VA budgets, which are threatened by "sequestration" – automatic cuts that are set to trigger in January unless Congress steps in and finds a different solution.

We know that \$500 billion in cuts to the Defense budget are coming through sequestration, if nothing happens between now and January. This was a function of the bipartisan deficit-reduction committee's – the so-called "super committee" – failure to achieve a solution to the problem last winter.

The American Legion does not believe that our economic condition was caused by the Department of Defense. Therefore, the Department of Defense should not be forced to correct the problem.

The Legion has been promised that VA will be exempt from cuts through sequestration. However, we have learned recently that not all of VA will be exempt from cuts. The Legion's position is that VA cannot be cut, especially now that so many troops are coming home and discharging, many of them suffering from multiple combat-related conditions.

The Legion adamantly opposes increased out-of-pocket health-insurance costs for military retirees. TRICARE is a target in the budget deficit reduction movement, and it should not be. We cannot ask our nation's military retirees to cover the cost of failed fiscal management.

A weakened military is not the solution to a weak economy.

The mothballing of companies that specialize in military production – such as the Lima Army Tank Plant in Ohio – will raise the U.S. unemployment rate, cause an economic ripple effect that will be felt in communities nationwide, and leave the United States unprepared to arm itself in the event of a national crisis.

Veterans coming home from war, with unique skills and security clearances, lose opportunities to find good jobs when defense contractors are written out of the budget.

2. Support for the global war on terrorism.

The American Legion opposes the timeline for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. By issuing timelines, Al Qaida, the Taliban and terrorist groups need only wait until U.S. forces are gone to reclaim control.

The American Legion supports U.S. troops and leadership in the war on terrorism. The Legion does not believe you can support the troops without supporting their mission. Therefore, the Legion supports the mission to use military force to defend our national security against terrorism.

Improved transition assistance.

The American Legion's Heroes to Hometowns program was created in response to intolerable treatment of U.S. military personnel recovering in an inpatient facility attached to Walter Reed Army Hospital in 2007. Since then, the Legion has worked with DoD, VA and local authorities to help improve the transition process, particularly for those who have come wounded or sick. The problem, unfortunately, remains.

The Legion's Heroes to Hometowns program connects recovering warriors and their families with Legion volunteers and local forms of assistance. The Legion also has staff offices on Walter Reed, Brooke Army Medical Center and Madigan Army Hospital to assist troops nearing medical discharge. In order for this program to work best, the federal government must do more to ease the military-to-civilian transition.

The Legion supports a more streamlined records transition process from DoD to VA, including shared electronic data.

The Legion supports increased understanding, awareness and alternative treatment for those who suffer traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder as they process out of DoD and enter VA health-care systems.

The American Legion firmly opposes any reduction in the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), which works toward a full accounting of all missing U.S. military personnel in former battle theaters.

Pillar 2: Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

Reverse the VA Disability Claims Backlog.

VA is faced with a daunting backlog and unacceptable delays in adjudicating claims for service-connected compensation benefits. The figure for unresolved claims in process now is more than 920,000, over half of which are in the VA "backlog" meaning 125 days or more have passed since application was made.

According to a June 2012 VA report, 911,450 claims were waiting to be adjudicated at VA regional offices and 255,967 appeals were pending before the Board of Veterans Appeals.

Each of these delayed claims represents a veteran's life. Delays in adjudication prevent veterans from getting the health care they need. Delays prevent veterans from receiving compensation they are due under the law. Delays cause unnecessary frustration for veterans and their families who need to know the benefits they are entitled to receive in order to move on with their lives.

A May 2012 report from the Office of the Inspector General reveals dramatic increases in the inventory of appeals (160,000 to 209,000 in FY 2010). Appeals are disputes between the veteran and VA about benefits decisions. The American Legion assists veter-

ans, free of charge, through the appeals process, but the backlog of cases continues to grow.

According to the 2011 report of the Chairman of the Board of Veterans' Appeals, an increase in appeals filings from 38,606 in FY2011 to an estimated 72,600 can be expected this year.

Accuracy must improve at VA regional offices and by the Board of Veterans Appeals

According to the 2011 report of the BVA Chairman, 73.7 percent of all appeals decided by the BVA were either reversed or remanded. This illustrates either a lack of training or a lack of competency, which must be corrected.

The Chairman's report also admitted to remand (cases turned back to the veteran, requiring further documentation) delays averaging 427 days.

Through site visits around the country, The American Legion's Regional Office Action Review team has found VA claims management to be alarmingly poor in quality at many locations.

The American Legion's prescription for the quality problem includes:

VA needs to change its management system and culture.

VA needs to have an independent quality review of its regional office adjudications.

VA needs to hire more adjudicators and hold these adjudicators accountable for unacceptable quality.

VA's emphasis on quotas and production speed at the VA regional offices contributes to inadequate development of claims, premature denials and incomplete adjudications. Some VA managers and adjudicators are more interested in earning work credit than fairly adjudicating claims for VA compensation benefits, according to American Legion field visits.

Improved screening, diagnosis and treatment for TBI and PTSD

An unprecedented number of service members are returning to civilian life with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – the "signature wounds" of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In FY 2010, VA treated a total of 1,886,386 veterans for mental health illness and of those, 438,167 veterans were treated for PTSD.

The American Legion's Traumatic Brain Injury/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Ad Hoc Committee has been studying the effectiveness of various treatments, other than simply pharmaceutical, to treat these conditions. Among the committee's early findings: VA should recognize alternative treatments, VA needs to hire more mental-health professionals to handle the growing patient load, and entire families must be brought into the treatment program.

Better VA health-care services for female veterans.

An American Legion survey found that female veterans generally find VA health-care services for women to be lacking.

Nearly 25 percent of respondents rated convenience of VA facilities for women as poor.

Only 57 percent said they were satisfied with women's health care at VA, compared to private providers.

Over 25 percent were dissatisfied with security of patient information at VA.

Nearly one third of the respondents were dissatisfied with VA female veteran program managers at their facilities.

Improved access to care for veterans living in rural areas.

The American Legion's System Worth Saving Task Force found that – despite efforts by VA to improve the situation – veterans in rural areas remain under-served nationwide. The distance to VA medical centers, or the difficulty getting there, prevents thousands of qualified veterans from receiving the care they earned and deserve.

The American Legion urges greater attention to the needs of veterans in rural areas, including expansion of tele-health programs, clinical care and delivery of care where veterans live.

Career opportunities for veterans

The American Legion strongly supports aggressive efforts to place veterans in rewarding careers and business opportunities. This is especially important as the troops come home to a weak economy and high unemployment rate, especially among veterans under the age of 30.

The American Legion worked to gain passage of the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act, which accepts military experience and training in the federal licensing and credentialing process. The Legion is working to extend that to private-sector and state credentialing agencies and training programs.

A soldier who drove Humvees through IED-infested war zones should have a training advantage when seeking certification to become a commercial truck driver. A combat medic wishing to become a first responder for a county ambulance service should likewise receive credit toward certification.

The American Legion demands that the federal government live up to the law requiring that no less than 3 percent of federal contracts be awarded to service-connected disabled veterans.

The American Legion urges significant improvement by the federal government to comply with the Veterans Preference Hiring Act. The majority of federal employers, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, do not have a significant percentage of veterans on the payroll. The Legion supports veteran-hiring initiatives by government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and urges others to improve their veteran hiring practices.

Education Opportunities for Veterans

The Post 9/11 GI Bill needs continuous monitoring and improvement in order for education benefits to fit the needs of today's veterans. This includes:

Expansion of benefits to include various on-the-job training programs and credentialing classes for trades
Close oversight of private educators that may exploit the GI Bill and veterans for profit.

Improved outreach to veterans as they are pursuing their college educations, ensuring that campuses have adequate facilities for them. The American Legion is deeply concerned with a reported high college drop-out rate among veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
Help for Homeless Veterans

The American Legion is working locally and nationally to help VA Secretary Eric Shinseki achieve his goal of ending veteran homelessness. These efforts have dramatically reduced the number of veterans without homes in recent years, and the Legion is committed to completing the task.

Pillar 3: Americanism

Protection of the U.S. Flag

The American Legion and over 80 percent of the American people agree that the U.S. flag should be protected from physical desecration.

Every U.S. state has passed memorializing resolutions that support flag-protection laws.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in 1989, ruled 5-4 that flag desecration is a form of free speech. The American Legion considers flag desecration to be conduct, not speech, and therefore should not be protected by the First Amendment.

The American Legion has gained support of both houses of Congress to pass legislation allowing for a constitutional amendment that would read: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States."

Over the past 16 years, The American Legion's efforts have come as close as one vote away in the Senate from the necessary super-majority to pass the flag amendment legislation. The House has consistently supported the measure with super-majority votes. However, the 111th Congress was only the second since the Supreme Court ruling to not bring the flag amendment up for a floor vote.

Citizenship/Naturalization

The American Legion strongly supports legal immigration and the naturalization process for those who choose to live in the United States.

The American Legion strongly opposes illegal immigration and/or amnesty for those who came into the United States illegally.

The American Legion's position on illegal immigration is based on many principles, including:

National security at our borders

Economic opportunities for veterans and other legal citizens that are denied when jobs are taken by illegal immigrants

Government funds that are spent serving illegal immigrants when they could be used to improve services for veterans, the armed forces and communities nationwide

Allowing illegal immigration, or providing amnesty, erodes the integrity of law in America

Religious Symbols in Public

The American Legion opposes efforts by courts and legal activists to remove religious symbols, such as crosses and Stars of David, from public places, particularly veterans memorials and monuments.

Pillar 4: Children & Youth

The American Legion strongly supports programs and initiatives that strengthen America's youth, impart the values of good citizenship, sportsmanship and community service, and to give children who face challenges with opportunities to succeed.

The Legion strongly supports continued access of military recruiters at high schools and colleges nationwide, as well as Junior ROTC and Law Cadet programs.

Among the Legion's major issues regarding young people are:

Strong laws and enforcement to combat child pornography

Support for research and early-intervention efforts to prevent mental disabilities among children

Awareness and availability of immunizations for young people who might otherwise not receive such protection against diseases

Support for laws that regulate and reduce the amount of violence, vulgarity and immorality in the media, including film, television, news, video games and the Internet

Support for the Court Appointed Special Advocate program, which provides volunteer advocacy for young people dealing with legal matters



*Without labor nothing prospers -
Sophocles*