California American Legion backs multiple bills

By Seth Reeb
Legislative Advocate
Reeb Government Relations

The Legislature adjourned for the 2019-2020 legislative session on Aug. 31.

Bills that passed that process were sent to Gov. Newsom. We have submitted letters to the governor requesting his signature on these bills on behalf of The American Legion. If you would like to contact the governor and voice your individual support for a particular bill or bills, there are four ways you can do it:

1. Email: https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/ There is a drop-down menu where you can select the bill number.
2. Call: (916) 445-2841
3. Fax: (916) 558-3160
4. US Mail: Governor Gavin Newsom, 1303 10th Street, Suite 1173, Sacramento, CA 95814

For more information on legislation, contact American Legion Department of California Legislative Commissioner Don Harper: govia@comcast.net

For more information on these bills such as the language, amendments, votes, history, and committee analyses, go to: https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billSearchClient.xhtml

[More on pages 4-5]

WINNERS PICKED IN KIDS ART CONTEST

View art entries from the contest winners • Pages 8-9

World War II

Veterans remember victory over Japan

By Christian Southards
Contributing Writer

Veterans and others celebrated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Bakersfield, California on Sept. 2. The event was held at the Kern Veterans Memorial and was closed to the general public due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19.

In addition to six veterans who served during the war, many prominent veteran services organizations were present, including the Sons of the American Legion.

Organizers held the event to commemorate the end of the Pacific theater of the war and in hopes of

[See VICTORY, page 3]

Korean War

Memorial breaks ground in Fullerton

By. Brian L. Johnson
Adjutant, District 29

On Aug. 14, 2020, Orange County District 29 Commander Sandy Schneeberger, District 17 Commander George Aguilar, Fullerton Post 142 Commander Marylin Harris, and Korean Bunker Post 829 Commander Tony Pak joined by Legionnaires from his post represented The American Legion at the ground-breaking ceremony.

[See MEMORIAL, page 6]
Let’s set ourselves up for success in 2021

LEADERSHIP –

Department Commander

Ed Grimley

Department Adjutant

Paul Brown

commander@caLegion.org

adjutant@caLegion.org

Editor / Web Team Lead

Jared Morgan

editor@caLegion.org

760-570-9742

Advertising Sales

Debra Leuk

sales@caLegion.org

559-638-2244

Postmaster:
The California Legionnaires

1607 7th St., Sanger CA 93657-3114

www.caLegion.org

facebook.com/caLegion

midvalleypublishing.com

Facebook Manager

Lillian Moss

socialmedia@caLegion.org

facebook.com/caLegion

760-570-9742

Notice:

• Submissions to The California Legionnaires must be submitted by the due dates published in The California Legionnaires. All submitted material is subject to editorial discretion.

• The California Legionnaires is the official organ of The American Legion Department of California. All submitted material is subject to editorial discretion.

• Photos should be no less than 300dpi. If emailing from your smart phone, send at the highest quality. Do not embed photos into your Word doc. Send photos as separate images, use a naming convention with your photo’s description, include their appropriate copyright statement which can be typed in a watermarked document. Images that are pulled off of websites will not reproduce well, if at all. DECs must be saved at a high resolution from their original document.

• Email articles to editorial@caLegion.org with the words "California Legionnaires" in the subject line of your email so that it will not be overlooked.

• Articles must be submitted by The American Legion Department of California. All submitted material is subject to editorial discretion.

• Please sign off telephone messages and "Deadlines and Announcements" to editorial@caLegion.org or mail to:

The American Legion, Department of California

1607 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657-2801

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Jan. 6 (Feb. issue) | March 6 (April) | May 6 (June) | July 6 (Aug.) | Sept. 6 (Oct.)

PUBLISHED: February, April, June, August, October, December

PUBLICATION POLICY

The California Legionnaires is the official organ of The American Legion Department of California.

The California Legionnaires (PP 167) is published 6 times a year in February, April, June, August, October, and December by:

Mid Valley Publishing Inc.

740 N. St., Sanger CA 93657-3114

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to:
The California Legionnaires

1607 7th St., Sanger CA 93657-3114

559-638-2244

NOTICE

The American Legion Department of California has the right to reject any advertising which is, in the opinion of the publisher, not in the best interests of the Legion.

DEC meetings moved online, once a month

In early September, Commander Ed Grimley sent out an email to leadership calling for the DECs to move their meetings moving online, once a month each second Thursday at 6 p.m. starting in October. The commander wants to make use of the skills we have developed during this pandemic, and continue to get the Department closer to each other. The meetings will be kept to 30 minutes. The provided training will target assistant district commanders.

An agenda and associated materials will be distributed two weeks prior to the meetings.

VETERANS CLAIMS

Veterans Claims

Oct. 18, 1989

The long-standing objective of the Legion to improve adjudication procedures for veterans claims is achievedthrough the VA. With the U.S. Court of Veterans Claims online, and with the Department of Veterans Affairs manual operations optimized. Most of the provisions contained in the law creating the court were originally included in the Veterans Reorganization Act, written by the Legion and introduced in Congress in 1988.

Family Support Network

Oct. 11, 1990

The Legion creates the Family Support Network to assist families of servicemembers deployed for operations outside the United States. The service is available in the Middle East and Central Europe. Through local posts, the network offers a wide range of assistance, including financial assistance, moving, baby-sitting and more. Today, FSN continues to assist families affected by military activation and deployment.

In this light, the community is about and answers questions about what we do.

We all have experienced a lot of change this year, some good, but mostly of the sort which makes our eyes rove and how to create a lot of work to create a solution. A great example of the latter is the steps all of the posts are having to take to communicate with their members and keep the post operations going.

Especially for those posts dependent on lounge or local operations to generate revenue, this is turning out to be very trying. Not having a convention this year has caused a lot of revenue and also when’s used for the purpose of giving answers and other year-end culminating activities.

On the good side, these events have forced us to use virtual communication to make our benefits. Through this process, the department realized it is a good tool for us to communicate effectively more frequently throughout the year to keep the business of the Department moving forward.

In this light, the commander will be holding a monthly Department Executive Committee meeting the second Thursday of every month, at 6 p.m. starting Oct. 8. His intent is to conduct an hour of business, followed by 20-30 minutes of training focused on district operations. As we move forward with this and possibly some other changes, please be patient and let us know how we can help.

100 Miles for Hope

By Paul Brown

Department Adjutant

Michaela Brandon

100 Miles for Hope is a virtual 100-mile walk/run/ride challenge that started August 3 and going through Aug. 31. The goal is 100 miles for hope. Each person can choose what they walk, ride, or run and for the “community, even tedious work,” he said. “We can still partner with our Facebook team and our posts are finding ways to meet. Riders are still there doing good for the community. Even tedious challenges like updating bylines and getting reports completed are happening. I truly commend all the great work being done out there in California.

Now that Autumn is upon us, we will have new challenges and opportunities and I’m confident that California will lead the way. We want to enlist the entire American Legion Family to make an impact this year.

We are all looking forward to a fresh start in 2021. To that end, we will have a big turnout. Let’s work to affect this new year with positive action and leadership.

Let’s do this together, “for the good of the Legion” and for the “community, state, and nation.”
Key legislative dates:
- Nov 3: General election
- Dec 7-20: 2021-22 Legislature convenes
- Jan 1: Statutes signed into law in 2020 take effect (unless they were urgent bills, which take effect immediately)

Going forward:
- The COVID-19 pandemic severely curtailed the legislative activity this year.
- Many good (and bad) bills were shaved to make time to address legislation relating to the pandemic.
- Since a lot of the work was done putting the bills together in early 2020, there is a good chance a lot of those bill ideas will come back in 2021.

Barstow Veterans Home:
- The State budget that was passed in June provided a process that must be followed by CalVet in determining the fate of the Barstow Veterans Home.
- Part of the process called for stakeholder input.
- We have notified CalVet that there is an organizational desire to be part of that process. It’s possible that a tele-meeting soon between CalVet and vet org leaders.

AB 408 (Frazier D) Vehicles to accept as proof of receipt of disability compensation:
Location: 8/28/20-A ENROLLMENT
SUMMARY: Would require the Department of Motor Vehicles to accept as proof of receipt of disability compensation, when applied for and adopted by a vehicle owner, any license plate or special license plate that is available by law.

SB 88 (Archuleta D) Child abuse or neglect investigation:
Status: 8/30/20-Read third time. Passed. Ordered to the Senate in Senate Concurrence in Assembly amendments concurred on. (Ayes 39. Noes 0.) Ordered the Senate to concurrence in Assembly amendments concurred on.
Location: 8/30/20-S ENROLLMENT
SUMMARY: Would require the county child welfare department to conduct a child abuse or neglect investigation if a report of child abuse or neglect is received.

AB 240, Irwin. Veterans’ homes: lease of property.
Existing law establishes the California Veterans’ Home.
New law sets forth the duties of the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding the administration and regulation of veterans homes.

AB 408, Frazier. Vehicles disabled veterans.
Existing law authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue special license plates or placards to disabled veterans for purposes of parking privileges.
Existing law requires that the Department of Motor Vehicles to accept as proof of disability the certificate issued by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that the applicant is a disabled veteran.
This bill would require the report to include information on the counties of residence of the veterans, and would authorize the report to include additional information.

Legislative Advocate
By Seth Reeb
Legislative Advocate
By Seth Reeb

The Veteran business program.
Existing law requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue special license plates or placards to disabled veterans for purposes of parking privileges.
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AB 3371, Committee on Veterans Affairs. Veterans suicides: report.
Existing law requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue special license plates or placards to disabled veterans for purposes of parking privileges.
Existing law requires that the Department of Motor Vehicles to accept as proof of disability the certificate issued by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs certifying that the applicant is a disabled veteran.
This bill would authorize the report to include information on the counties of residence of the veterans,
Future home of the Fullerton Korean War Memorial

Participants break ground for the Orange County Korean War Memorial (left to right: Fullerton Mayor Pro Tem Jan Flory, Committee member Kang, Pasto Ki Hong Han, Grace Ministry, Fullerton, Member of Congress Gil Cisneros, Republic of Korea Consul General Park Kyung-jae, Fullerton Mayor Jennifer Fitzgerald, Member of California State Assembly Sharon Quirk-Silva, Honorary member of this committee, President of Committee Myong Soo Roe, Commander of the 40th Infantry, Mayor General Laura Tyler, Committee member Ki Ho Pa, Orange County Supervisor Doug Chaffey, City Councilman Ahmad Zahra (Photo courtesy of Gaston Castellanos, Indivisible CA39)

As is well known to Americans, the war was brought to an end by the armistice signed on July 27, 1953.

While every state, the District of Columbia and five US territories are represented on the memorial, 2611 of those names belong to Californians who answered their country's call.

Among the notable attendees were Commander of the Republic of Korea, the Orange County Korean War Memorial Committee Chairman Ro Myung-soo.

The Memorial Committee is an IRS approved non-profit organization and is seeking assistance from the community through individual donations through the Go Fund Me page: (www.gofundme.com/of-korea-territorial-war-memorial-monument) to meet their construction funding goals.

Construction of the memorial will coincide with a revitalization project for Hillcrest Park being undertaken by the City of Fullerton.

The two projects are planned for completion in June 2021.
The 2020 Patriotism & Purpose Youth Art Contest reflects the positive impact our veterans are making in communities across the country and was open to California kids ages 5-17. Artwork was judged on its positive representation of military veterans and their impact on children.

The Department of California had 26 art entries for the contest. Entries were submitted from the following cities: Alta Loma, Bakersfield, Borrego Springs, Danville, Dublin, Pleasanton, San Diego, Sanger, Serrano Valley, and Stockton.

The judging was done by numbering the entries, so no names or cities were used to identify the artist. The judges were from The American Legion and were from Post 23 in Sanger, Post 147 in Clovis, and Post 509 in Fresno.

Category B: 13 - 17 years old
1st Prize: Aria Delgado, 16 from Sanger
Honorable Mention: Skylar Ruby, 13, from Dublin
Katharina Hass, 17, from San Diego
Honey Ornelas, 13, from Bakersfield

Category A: 5-12 years old
1st Prize: Claire Lu, 10, from Dublin
Honorable Mention: Aaditya Raja, 12, from Pleasanton
Claire Campbell, 9, from Pleasanton
Pritika Premkumar, 12, from Pleasanton

First prize of $500 was given in each of the two categories. The kids will receive a framed copy of their artwork along with a certificate. Congratulations to all who entered the contest. They made it very difficult for the judges to select the winners as all the entries represented the very best from the kids of California.
CalVet will make its report to the Legislature in February 2021 and commentary from the stakeholder calls and your written input will be included.

VA awards S1.3 million for suicide prevention

The VA announced on Sept. 14 it recently awarded S1.3 million to 11 regional homeless and housing programs to bolster suicide prevention services for Veterans who are experiencing or at increased risk of harm to themselves.

Through this initiative, VA is continuing efforts to address the growing crisis of suicide among our nation’s veterans.

VA offers debt relief after natural disasters

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced Sept. 16 its commitment to extend debt relief to VA-backed veterans who are severely impacted by natural disasters.

"Veterans and their families should be focused on their safety and securing their futures during the natural disasters," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA is taking action to give those with pending debts greater flexibility during these challenging times."
Vaccaville community gives birthday drive-by to WWII veteran

By Nestor Aliga Post 603 Historian

On September 12, over 100 vehicles rolled through the city of Vacaville to wish WWII Veteran Red Moak a happy 100th birthday. The celebration was organized by the Vacaville community and supported by the local American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 603.

According to the Reporter.com article published on Sept. 13, Red took basic training at Camp Roberts, California, and then in March 1945, he crossed the Rhine River towards Berin, serving as a German surrendering. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge, then to the Battle of the Bulge, before returning to the U.S. in July 1945.

As soon as I heard about it, I looked at my dad's photo album of the nearly 2,000 Veterans that my American Legion Post 603 has honored in December 2010 on the 70th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, and in December 2016 (our invitation for "World Peace II" was announced in the California Legionnaire's October 2016 edition). According to his daughter Sharon Barr, Red could not attend both events and never received his certificates of appreciation.

However, Post 603 kept scanned copies of the certificates from federal, state, county, and city elected officials which were reprinted for our humble WWII Veteran. Like most of the generation WWII Veterans that I've met, I found out from Sharon that Red has not applied for his Veterans Affairs (VA) compensation and pension benefits nor CalVet benefits nor CalVet pension. Our Defender Bracelet fundraiser continues and bracelets can be purchased at the VFW Hall, 1175 Old Stage Road, for only $5. These bracelets make great gifts at a reasonable price. You can also order by calling the Post Commander. Phone orders incur a shipping charge. (Details below)

Fallbrook Legion Family volunteers at food bank

By Marti Sonnksen Commander Fallbrook Post 776

As the world cycles toward Fall 2020, members of American Legion Post 776, in Fallbrook, are challenged to find a new normal in the face of COVID, fires, smoke and ash. While forced to cancel many wonderful activities, members remain busy.

New officers were elected in May, Marci Sonnksen is the new Post Commander, Jeannine Domenguez is Post Adjutant, Joseph DiMento is Finance Officer, Michael Bermudez is the Chaplain, and Thomas Lester is the Post Historian of the Arm's. Membership meetings are currently held, socially distanced, on the first Saturday of the month, 8 a.m. at the VFW Hall, 1175 Old Stage Road. Those not comfortable attending in person, are linked in via Zoom. Members are advised that voting will take place at the October meeting to change our meeting date and time to the first Thursday of the month, at 6 p.m. We’re adapting.

On Patriot Day, Sept. 12, everyone encouraged those comfortable so, to have dinner downtown and wear red, white and blue in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attack and subsequent wars on terror. Several members also helped distribute food at the Fallbrook Food Pantry in September and participate in a blood drive in October. With precautions and masks, we remain dedicated to our community.

We hosted a successful Salmon Dinner Fundraising event earlier in the year and decided to do it again. Our delicious blackened salmon and blue in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attack and subsequent wars on terror. We hosted a successful Salmon Dinner Fundraising event earlier in the year and decided to do it again. Our delicious blackened salmon and blue in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attack and subsequent wars on terror.

Thank you for your support.

Contact the Commander

In American Legion History

Disabled Veterans Tax Act Oct. 4, 2010

American Legion efforts on Capitol Hill break the deadlock on the Disabled Veterans Tax Act to promote the interests of disabled veterans, who received military retirement pay and VA disability compensation without subtraction from either. Legislation also redefines “disability” for tax purposes (H.R. 3484, 111th Cong.). The joint committee to analyze the needs of disabled veterans, which was mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (P.L. 109-163), will meet for the first time. (H.R. 3484, 111th Cong.)

Legacy Scholarship

Oct. 6, 2020

President Obama signs the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform Act of 2010, guaranteeing “advance funding” for VA appropriations. The new law sets funding for VA one year in advance.
The Legion remains non-political through November and beyond

By Ed Goresky
Department Commander

As we approach the upcoming presidential election, I am compelled to speak again about the stance we have to take as members of this great veterans nonprofit.

We are a very political organization, in regards to the issues which directly affect our veterans and their families. We are not, nor have we ever been, an organization which supports political candidates, political parties, or participate in partisan activities or events.

The American Legion as an organization has been non-partisan since its inception in 1919. It is a unique organization with a unique mission. The American Legion is a non-profit veterans’ organization. The organization constructed its mission statement, values and motto to assure that all members have a clear understanding of what the Mission of The American Legion is and what the American Legion values as a whole.

Here are some excerpts of what The American Legion values:

"Veterans Strengthening America."

"The American Legion strengthens our communities, states and nation with programs and services for our veterans, the military and their families." (Values)

"As veterans, our focus should be somewhat different so that we can bring a new generation of Americans into our communities."

As we approach the upcoming November election, we can employ whatever means to serve our community and our nation. We should be removed so as to not give any impression of endorsement.

Hosting a political candidate at your Post

When using post facilities to host candidates, post should remove emblem and flag to avoid any impression of endorsement.

It is not an individual Legion member’s decision on the appropriate usage of the cap and emblem.

The problem is the assumption of endorsement by those who see the emblem or name worn at an improper location, such as a partisan rally.

Accepting these contributions may be perfectly legal, but The American Legion must avoid any perception of supporting any candidate or political party.

The American Legion values its independence and effectiveness on veteran’s issues.

This stance is best maintained by neutrality on individual candidates or political parties.

The American Legion also strongly recommends members not to contact their members of Congress on almost any recent topic – Law Enforcement, Sanctuary Cities, Flag Code, etc. – as it is believed that these topics are being resolved by the leaders of our communities. We must always remember that our focus is on the future.

As we approach the upcoming November election, we should be highly recommended that local Legion leadership apply the same lens as National does and comment on issues pertinent to improving the lives of veterans, the military and their families.

We hope this information is helpful, and thanks for all you do on a daily basis to improve the lives of our veterans, the military and their families.
Jones Awarded Legislator of the Year

By Kerry Cortinas  
Historian, District 22

Department of California Commander Ed Grimsley presented the Legislator of the Year Award to Sen. Brian Jones on Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2020, the 101st anniversary of the charter and incorporation by Congress of The American Legion as a patriotic veterans organization.

Jones shared some of his experiences with Boys State and the American Legion and joked, saying although he finished second place, he still realized his goal of becoming an elected member of Congress who continues to work hard for America’s veterans.

The senator was elected in 2018 to serve the people of California’s 38th Senate district.

He is Chair of the Senate Republican Caucus.

Prior to serving in the Senate, Jones was a Santee City Council Member for eight years from 2001 to 2010 then again from 2017 to 2018.

Jones was the representative for the 71st Assembly District from 2010 to 2016.

Jones grew up in the district and attended San-tee Elementary, Cajon Park Middle School, and Santa-na High School.

He continued his education at Grossmont College before earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration at San Diego State University.

Some of the legislative priorities during his Assembly years were lowering taxes, improving the economic development for small businesses, supporting our Armed Forced and veterans, removing unnecessary red tape, and protecting the 2nd Amendment right.

Jones’ legislative achievements include the introduction and co-authorization of ‘Made in America’ legislation, which makes it easier for manufacturers to do business in California, legislation to support the expanding craft beverage industry in California, and legislation allowing non-motorized vehicles such as scooters, bicycles, and wheelchairs in skate parks.

He became well known for his annual 2nd Amendment Awareness event, which educated his constituents on the Second Amendment rights and related state legislation and gave attendees opportunities to learn how to control a firearm safely or improve their accuracy.

Earlier this session Senator Jones introduced Senate Bill 1177, a measure responding to a State Auditor’s Report about some properties at State Veterans Homes be leased out for long periods of time under terms that didn’t always prioritize the best possible benefits for the Home, the state taxpayers and the veteran residents of the Home.

SB 1177 easily cleared the Senate and helped clear the way for a final similar measure – AB 240 – to pass the Legislature and get recently signed into law by the Governor.

Also this session Senator Jones hosted 101-year-old WWII Veteran Sidney Walton at the California State Capitol.

Walton was on a tour to visit all 50 state capitals.  
https://jones.cssrc.us/content/101-year-old-wwii-veteran-sidney-walton-visits-california-state-capitol

Additionally, Senator Jones worked with local veterans and law enforcement on the “Back the Badge” motorcycle rally in July.

Jones rode his own motorcycle in the rally in which riders visited several law enforcement agencies in the San Diego region to demonstrate support for the men and women in law enforcement.

‘Communication Toolkit’ will help Legion Family

By Rick Pushies  
Technical Adviser  
Media & Communications

More than a few of our local posts have gotten in trouble over the years with the IRS and lost their non-profit status because they were not aware that their American Legion post was required to report IRS Form 8822B annually.

Posts are also not always comfortable marketing their good work to their Legion Family and the local community.

These and many other communication topics our Legion Family leadership must face each year.

They can be especially challenging to those new to their post leadership role.

That is why we developed the Communications Toolkit.

The Media & Communications (M&C) Commission has put the critical communications challenges our Legion Family may encounter each year into a single document to make them easier to find.

The Toolkit’s contents are divided into two broad categories: Operational and Marketing Communications.

The Toolkit’s “Contents” page will quickly show the topics covered.

Please take the time to read each of the topics that interest you the most. The Toolkit contains links to webpages and materials on our caLegion.org website and The American Legion national website. There are also some informative videos.

When searching for information on the internet, sometimes there is almost too much information available; this makes finding what you need confusing and challenging.

We have filtered through a large quantity of internet data for information on communication for the Toolkit.

We tried to find information that would help our Legion Family leaders the most.

As an example, we viewed close to a dozen videos on the topic of press releases before we found the one we were comfortable with sharing.

The video we chose to share is in clearly spoken English (no heavy accents). It is short, and it covers the topic of press releases rather well.

Legionnaires with decades of marketing experience in the business world also produced the Post Marketing & Communication PowerPoint presentation specifically for the Toolkit.

The Media & Communications Commission has many responsibilities to improve communications throughout our Legion.

Effective communication is an especially important and challenging leadership skill. We believe the communications that take place within our post and Legion Family are some of the most important.

https://calegion.org/mc-commission/