



California LEGIONNAIRE



JUNE 2021

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CALEGION.ORG



National Guardsman Sgt. Hannah Fors, 28, of Northridge shows a challenge coin awarded by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III during her visit to Cal State LA on Feb. 24. (Spc. Simone Lara/Army National Guard)

Legion Baseball is back

By Judy Leonardi
California Spokesperson
American Legion Baseball

The American Legion, Department of California Baseball program has been partnering posts and local high school teams to play competitive baseball across the state for over 90 years.

This partnership supports the values of the American Legion and promotes youth sports, family, community and patriotism. Bringing together veterans and youth athletes and their families has proven to be extremely successful in educating the public at each game about the many services The American Legion provides for local communities.

The California State Championship Baseball Tournament has been held for four decades in a quiet, rural community in Napa Valley on a pastoral diamond located adjacent to a VA Veterans Home and Medical Center.

The veterans from the Home and the Medical Center annually enjoyed in their own backyard "The Best Show on Dirt." This year brings great promise in the opportunity to host the State Championship Tournament at a major metropolitan city and raise the level of awareness across all aspects of the community as to the value, benefits, and the pure joy of the highest levels of youth baseball that the State Championship Tournament brings out of the dugout and onto the field. The mandate of

See **BASEBALL** page 7

Legionnaires in uniform fight Covid-19

By Michael Hjelmstad
Area 6 Vice Commander

The parking structure on the campus of Cal State Los Angeles had been quiet through the pandemic, but in February became abuzz with activity

as young service members prepared to conduct several thousand COVID-19 vaccinations in a single day.

The music playing in the background ranged from heavy metal like Quiet Riot to the Small

World song from Disneyland.

"People just get the biggest kick out of it," said an Army officer.

The mission was important and the atmosphere of the joint environment was clear: safely vaccinate as many people as possible.

The mission began when state and national agencies established two large-scale, state-led, federally supported vaccination centers in Oakland and Los Angeles.

This effort to vaccinate large numbers

of people quickly and efficiently was a successful joint service model that included Legion members still serving in the military, and has now been replicated across the country in cities like Cleveland, Atlanta and Detroit.

The goal of establishing these joint federal pilot sites was to continue to expand the rate of vaccinations in California in an efficient, effective and equitable manner, with a focus on ensuring that communities at high risk for Covid-19 exposure and infection were not left behind.

The site locations in Oakland and East L.A. were chosen because they embodied some of the most diverse and socio-economically challenged communities in the country, and could be reached by those most in need of their services.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Ca.,

a member of Sons of The American Legion, visited the Los Angeles site as the model was being implemented.

"I just can't tell you how impressed I am with everything that's going on at this site," Schiff said. "It's an incredible joint effort and the result is that every day thousands and thousands of people are getting safely vaccinated here through both a walk-up site, and a drive-up site.

"The fact that through this partnership, this site that was stood up so quickly and so effectively run, it's just a tribute to all of the men and women here are doing the work.

"So, I just want to express my gratitude to all of those involved, and in particular to our wonderful guard and active duty who are out here as force multipliers helping us get

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**THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**

1601 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657-2801

☎ 559-875-8387 ✉ admin@caLegion.org

— LEADERSHIP —

Department Commander Edward Grimsley commander@caLegion.org	Interim Adjutant Barbara Lomrano adjutant@caLegion.org
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California LEGIONNAIRE

— NEWSLETTER & DIGITAL —

Editor / Web Team Lead / Page Designer Jared Morgan editor@caLegion.org 310-750-9782	Web Team member Rick Pushies Webteam@caLegion.org
	Facebook Manager Lillian Moss socialmedia@caLegion.org facebook.com/caLegion



Photographer
Fred Shacklett

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contact the editor

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Boys State to 'kick off' June 19

**By Tim Aboudara, Sr.,
Chief Counselor
California Boys State**

The American legion California Boys State Program will "kick off" its 83rd Session on Saturday, June 19.

The 83rd Session will be unique.

The pandemic has presented many challenges and opportunities for Boys State Programs across the country.

This year, eight Departments have cancelled their programs entirely.

Fifteen Departments, including California, made the pivot to a virtual program to ensure that we would not go two years without a Boys State program.

Twenty-seven Departments will be conducting their Boys State Programs "in person."

In late February, The American legion California Boys State program learned that the Department of Nevada had cancelled their program because the venue was not available due to the pandemic.

The California senior staff reached out to the Department of Nevada to offer the opportunity

to have Nevada delegates attend our 2021 virtual program.

For the first time ever, two Boys State programs are working together, under unique circumstances, to ensure that Nevada delegates would have the opportunity to attend a Boys State program.

Members of the Nevada Boys State staff will be working on our California staff, as well.

At the conclusion of the joint program, two delegates from California and two delegates from Nevada will be chosen to attend American Legion Boys Nation in July.

In addition, one California delegate and one Nevada delegate will be chosen as Samsung Scholarship National Finalists.

In a normal year, The American Legion California Boys State typically hosts approximately 1,000 delegates.

We are excited to announce that for the 2021 virtual session, we will have approximately 850 California delegates. This has been made possible by the tremendous work done at the post level to raise the funds necessary to sponsor delegates.

In August of last year, the California Boys State senior staff recognized that we had to be prepared for not having our venue for an "in person" Boys State session in 2021.

This year's pivot to a virtual platform would not have been possible without the tremendous support of our Boys State staff, in particular, the leadership of the American Legion California Boys State Virtual Task Force.

Under the direction of Tim Aboudara, Jr., Nathan Rice, Dan Rummel and Lee Haley (all members of SAL Squadron 338), all younger but very experienced members of the Boys State team, they have put together a framework that replicates everything we do at the "in person" program, with the exception of our band, our trip to the California State Capitol and our athletic program.

For those attending the Department of California convention, plans are in place to have the 2021 American Legion California Boys State governor deliver the annual address.

A full report of the success of this year's program will appear in the post-convention issue of the California Legionnaire.

EDD awards nearly \$5 million to California-based organizations that help veterans gain employment



(EDD website screenshot)

By Christian Southards
Contributing Writer

The California Employment Development Department recently announced that it had awarded \$4.9 million in grants for 11 organizations

participating in the Veterans' Employment-Related Assistance Program.

The program, which is ultimately funded by the Governor's discretionary funds, provides grants for organizations that offer job training (including

credentialing), career counseling, and recruitment services for veterans.

"These grant recipients provide veterans with access to employment opportunities, while supplying high-growth industries with dedicated

and highly skilled applicants for fields such as: advanced manufacturing, construction, educational and health services, logistics and transportation, aerospace, and information technology," EDD said in an April 6 press release.

The 11 organizations, almost all of which are located in Southern California, participating in the VEAP program include:

- American Aerospace Technical Academy
- Asian American Drug Abuse Program, Inc.
- Goodwill Industries of Orange County
- Interfaith Community Services
- JVC SoCal
- Managed Career Solutions, SPC
- Mendocino Private Industry Council, Inc.
- NPower, Inc.
- Orange County Workforce Development Board Community Investment Division
- Stanislaus County Workforce Development
- Swords to Plowshares: Veterans Rights

Organization
Participating VEAP members include government, private, and nonprofit organizations.

Readers can find the contact information for each member in the aforementioned press release.

Veterans Are Among the Most Financially Vulnerable Since the Start of the Pandemic

While exact numbers are hard to find as authoritative sources on veteran employment usually do not publish data on a given year until the following year, the Department of Veterans Affairs recently extended financial relief on the grounds that veterans, nationally, have been one of the hardest-hit groups financially since the pandemic began.

It is unclear if veterans in California have been affected on the same scale as those across the country, but the EDD's new grant promises to improve veteran employment prospects in the state.

South Korean actress Kim Ji-mee donates \$20,000 to Korean War Memorial in Fullerton

By Christian Southards
Contributing Writer

South Korean actress Kim Ji-mee donated \$20,000 on March 26 to the Korean War Memorial being constructed in Fullerton.

It's the first memorial that will display the names of all 36,492 American soldiers — to include 2,611 from California — who were killed during the conflict.

Kim, now 81, was one of South Korea's most famous actresses in the 1960s and 1970s, with a prolific career until she retired in 2000. She now resides in Pasadena.

The Korean War Memorial is Expected to Be Finished in September

According to the Orange County Korean War Memorial Committee, the monument is expected to be completed sometime in September.

The memorial held a groundbreaking ceremony last August and is currently seeking public funding.

Organizer Joe Pak has been a leading force in the memorial's development.

He started the project after realizing that no memorial in the United States — including the monument in the nation's capital



Kim Ji-mee, right, with Joseph Pak, secretary-general of the Orange County Korean War Memorial Committee, at the planned site for the memorial in Fullerton, Calif. (courtesy photo)

— honored Americans who fought in the war by name.

Since 2009, Pak has been pushing for the memorial's approval

and has won over assistance from the government of South Korea, the California American Legion, and more.

American Legion Member Recognized by U.S. Congress

By **Michael Toschak**
Web Team member

Redwood City American Legion Post 105 member William Jackson Jr was recognized by Rep. Ro Khana, U.S. 17th Congressional District, as a Vietnam Veteran.

Mr. Jackson has been an active member of Post 105, holding many key positions on the Executive Board.

Besides being on the Board, Mr Jackson is also

the President of the Post 105 Charitable Foundation, supporting many community organizations through the years. In May 2015, President Barack Obama, cited Mr. Jackson with over 4,000 hours of volunteer Service as a member of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

Mr. Jackson's participation is not limited to the American Legion, he's also a member of Redwood City Sunrise Lions Club.



Legionnaire awarded for 75 years of membership

By **Randy Reid**
District 9 Commander

Commander Don Davis of Louis Hagen Post 340 received a letter from The American Legion about Robert E. Seymour stating that he has been a member of the American Legion for 75 continuous years.

Included in that letter from National was a 75 continuous year Membership Award for Louis Hagen Post 340 to present to Robert E. Seymour.

However, after much effort to locate Mr. Seymour it was not going well.

Then I got a call from Commander Don Davis that he had an idea. He said he would send a letter to the last current address along with the copy of the award. Several days had passed when he received a letter from Mrs. Martha Seymour. Don Davis called Mrs. Seymour and they had a great conversation and he learned that Robert was in a rest home in

Richmond. It also turned out that Mrs. Seymour had been in the hospital for some time and that is why it took so long to hear from her.

Martha Seymour suggested to Commander Davis that Robert's memory was so that he would not realize what the award was and suggested that Commander Davis should mail the award to her and she would take care of it for Robert.

California representative co-sponsors bill allowing VA to prescribe medical marijuana to veterans

By **Christian Southards**
Contributing Writer

California Rep. Barbara Lee and Ohio Rep. Dave Joyce recently introduced a bill that would allow Department of Veterans Affairs healthcare workers to prescribe medical marijuana to veterans.

If passed, the Veterans Medical Marijuana Safe Harbor Act would federally legalize the possession and use of marijuana by veterans, provided that it is prescribed by a VA physician in compliance with state laws.

Currently, it is illegal for VA doctors to prescribe or discuss medical marijuana even in states that have legalized marijuana, like California, because the drug is federally classified as a Schedule 1 controlled substance.

Beginning in 2022, the bill would also grant the VA \$15 million to conduct additional research on the effects of medical marijuana on pain management and reducing opioid abuse through support programs.

Representatives Lee and Joyce claim that existing scientific evidence for the

benefits of medical marijuana is well documented.

Previous studies have suggested that marijuana may help fight symptoms of PTSD, including chronic nightmares and depression.

California Bill May Also Legalize Psychedelic Drug Treatment for PTSD

In California, U.S. Army veteran Jose Martinez petitioned state lawmakers to legalize psychedelic drugs like LSD and psilocybin mushrooms due to their alleged benefits in treating

PTSD.

The receiving committee approved the initial bill, which is now waiting for a California State Senate vote.

The VA has been researching these claims for several years with some success, but new legislation has not been passed outside of Oregon, which voted to legalize all "hard drugs" last November.

The bill is currently opposed by several prominent law enforcement groups like the California Narcotic Officers' Association.



Cannabis leaf and medical symbol
(Illustration: David Kovaluk, St. Louis Public Radio)



(Photo: Azwatchdog)

The American Legion's 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona

By **Barbara Lombroso**
Department Adjutant

The 102nd National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona is planned **Aug. 27 – Sept. 2.**

The Sheraton will currently serve as The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion Headquarters Hotel.

The Hyatt will serve as The American Legion Auxiliary Headquarters hotel.

Color Guard Competition

Friday, Aug. 27 at 4 p.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center.

Please spread the word: Rules and applications are on the website at www.legion.org/convention and www.legion.org/convention/contests.

Applications must be

received no later than July 23.

The Competitive Concert Band Contest and Exhibition Concert Band will not take place this year.

Patriotic Memorial Service

Sunday, Aug. 29, starting at 11 a.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center. The Phoenix Boys Choir is scheduled to perform.

The National Convention Parade will not take place this year.

National Commander's Banquet

Tuesday, Aug. 31 – Your National Commander has selected Craig Morgan as the Banquet Entertainment. At this time the Banquet is SOLD OUT.

Tour Opportunities

- AZA Events will offer many tour options. Please

visit our website for more detailed tour descriptions.

The Arizona Diamondbacks are in town and at this time we are working to have an American Legion Family Night at Chase Field on Monday, Aug. 30 where the National Commander may potentially throw out the first pitch.

Discounted tickets may be available.

ANAVICUS- NO Breakfast this year

This will be an invitation only beverage reception for inductees on **Sunday, Aug. 29**, tentatively at 4 p.m. at the Sheraton.

PDCC (Past Department Commander's Luncheon)

Monday, Aug. 30 - at the Sheraton. Due to physical distancing measures, this event will be at a maximum of 400. Rounds of

4 currently. More information forthcoming from National.

** all convention related events are subject to change.*

(No Walk-Ins Make sure you pre-register)

There are other useful items on the national website, from alternative parking options, scooter rentals, airport shuttle options, RV parks, a list of Posts that desire to host functions, etc.

Please check the website often for updated information regarding notable items, events, etc. for Phoenix at www.legion.org/convention.

In addition, The American Legion focuses on creating a safe national convention experience for all who desire to attend.

As part of that effort, please see attached for current safety measures and

protocols to keep in mind.

We will be providing you additional information for your delegation in the coming weeks.

A "Know Before You Go" document will be produced after Aug. 1 so you can share with your delegations.

The liability waiver is forthcoming.

As we progress toward August, we will keep you abreast of the latest information due to the fluid situation.

We are confident our American Legion Family members will still enjoy all events planned thus far as well as the business sessions of The American Legion, while keeping each other safe during these times!

We thank each of you for your continued support, assistance and flexibility.

Department Convention will be online

The American Legion Department of California Convention will be held virtually from June 24-27.

More information on how to join will be sent

out once everything is in place and the agenda is finalized.

Be sure to check the Department website, caLegion.org, for updates.

PANDEMIC ASSISTANCE

Mission Blue Post Assistance

National's program is intended to help posts whose revenue was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Blue Cap Assistance Program

Department of California's new program. Posts can apply for assistance for utilities, repairs, mortgage payments, etc.

Visit caLegion.org or call Department Headquarters to learn more: 559-875-8387

HELMETS for HEROES



Photos by Legionnaire Bill Bryant, pictured left, who visits gun shows and partners with local businesses to raise money for The American Legion's Helmets for Heroes program.

By Charles Camarato

In 2017, the Department of California generalized the eventual demise of their decades-long staple Ways & Means programs. A continuous steady decline in revenues for their VA&R Division forced the department to explore new avenues of fundraising, certainly no easy task given today's competition in the veterans-fundraising world.

Long-standing programs such as Address Labels, Calendars, Christmas Cards and Sweepstakes have played themselves out, and California has seen steady declines that clearly project their eventual closures.

California had counted on the huge revenue streams for their programs for decades from these staple programs, and being creative for a program that could replace these seemed a very daunting task.

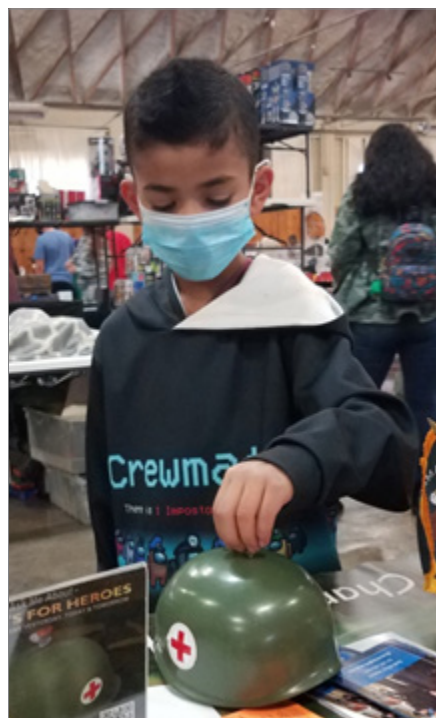
In 2017 an idea was brought forth through a project team for a coin bank made out of a WWII GI helmet. The project team outlined a program by where members and veteran-friendly businesses could both participate. The project was unanimously adopted by the Department of California Fall DEC with an initial investment of \$100,000 as seed money for development and production of a first order of 10,000 helmets.

In the pursuit of development, California's CALVAR Foundation patented three patents for the WWI, WWII and Kevlar-style helmets, along with trademarking "Helmets for Heroes" and "You Bet Your Change Will Help a Vet."

With a production run in early 2018 of 10,000 helmets, California was able to distribute approx. 2,000 helmets three months before the June department convention. California's VA&R Division received a total of donations of approx. \$45,000, and clearly the Helmets for Heroes project was off the ground and running.

California has a lot of work to do to build the program, but with declining revenues from other programs California sees that a NEW beginning must start somewhere, and hopefully before the other fundraising programs collapse.

California recognizes that without their VA&R Division, a major pillar of Veterans Helping Veterans will catastrophically cripple the main mission of The American Legion and its relevancy for future generations of veterans.





American Legion Baseball (Photo: The American Legion)

American Legion Baseball experiencing a local revival

By Bill Slane
The Coast News

ENCINITAS — Among the many things Peter-Rolf Ohnstad, the post commander for American Legion Post 416 in Encinitas, is passionate about is the American pastime: baseball.

One of the first things Ohnstad looked to do when he took over the post was bring back American Legion Baseball, which has been missing in San Diego for decades.

American Legion Baseball was established in 1925 to give young, amateur players, mostly high school players, another opportunity to play baseball and further develop their skills and leadership abilities.

Post 416 Commander Peter-Rolf Ohnstad has been instrumental in reviving American Legion Baseball in San Diego.

In other parts of the country, American Legion Baseball is a good alternative to the expensive prospect of travel baseball. Until the 1980s, San Diego was part of American Legion Baseball and produced some major league talent, like Hall of Famer Ted Williams.

The first year of its reincarnation,

in 2018, Ohnstad and his partners in the initiative thought they would be lucky to get four teams.

“It exploded to 13 teams that first year,” Ohnstad said. “We were digging into our pockets saying we’re going to make this happen. We made this commitment, and these kids want to play.”

At the end of the first season, they had \$35 left over in their funds.

The following year they were able to raise funds for 22 teams, still holding to the commitment that no player must pay to play in the league. Ohnstad now has committed to raising \$100,000 every year for American Legion Baseball, which pays for everything from the umpires to the uniforms.

“It’s tough but we’ve taken on that task,” Ohnstad said. “Sometimes it’s tiring when you’re always out there trying to find the next donor. But we have had some very gracious donors.”

In the first year they received donations from the Lake Elsinore Storm, a minor league affiliate of the San Diego Padres, and some major league baseball scouts.

Ohnstad was interested to hear from the scouts, who said they were happy to help the group get

Can’t stop Legion Baseball

From **BASEBALL** page 1

the commander of the Department of California is to establish an annual rotation of tournament sites where an elite level diamond is co-located with VA facilities across California where the Championship visits and promotes and grows the bond between the community and veterans through youth sports.

Elite high school age teams, representing each of the six regional American Legion areas across California, come together each year under the warm summer sun to compete for the State Championship title and represent the hundreds of Posts, thousands of Legionnaires, Auxiliary members, Sons and Legion Riders that comprise the Legion Family.

For the first time ever, they will compete under the bright lights of a modern stadium, on television, and their families will enjoy the complete support of the community in which the tournament is being hosted. Each athlete who competes in the championship will be shown an opportunity

in their athletic future, to play the game against the toughest opponent in the most pristine of conditions, in stadiums and on fields that could be realized in their collegiate or professional baseball careers.

75% of American Legion players went on to play collegiate baseball

51% of Major League baseball players played American Legion baseball

Over 80 American Legion baseball players have been inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame.

In 2021, the strong and vibrant veterans’ community of Clovis, California will be the championship host. The thousands of veterans who live in Clovis, and the multitude of veterans’ service organizations that they are members of and support

American Legion Baseball back in San Diego because they were not fans of travel baseball.

“And I know the reason why,” Ohnstad said. It’s because all of those kids have already paid their way into the game. And scouts are looking for those gems that nobody else is looking at.”

According to Ohnstad, having the Legion teams to look at gives major league scouts that many more chances to look at talent while at the same time giving kids who may not have had another chance to showcase their abilities an opportunity to do so.

Ohnstad’s budget for this year is up to \$113,000 but fundraising is not something he ever expected to do after his time in the service.

During the Vietnam War, Ohnstad served aboard several ships in the U.S. Merchant Marines before beginning flight training with the Navy in 1970. After finishing his Navy service in 1978, Ohnstad came to San Diego to work for General Dynamics, helping on what would become the Tomahawk cruise missile.

Ohnstad returned to the Merchant Marines in 1981 until his retirement in 2004, serving as captain and delivery master for

several ships.

Taking what he learned from those years of service, Ohnstad now is hoping to deliver San Diego a national championship team in American Legion Baseball.

“We haven’t even had a national champion from the state of California since 2000,” Ohnstad said. “That’s ridiculous. I know we have better baseball players here than any other place in the country.”

For more information: ald22baseball.org

Article originally published on thecoastnews.com



Peter-Rolf Ohnstad



(Photo: VA)

VA offering walk-in COVID-19 vaccine appointments

By Christian Southards
Contributing Writer

The Department of Veterans Affairs is now offering walk-in COVID-19 vaccine appointments for eligible veterans, spouses and caregivers at all VA medical facilities equipped for vaccination.

Eligibility as outlined by the SAVE LIVES Act allows virtually all veterans, regardless of their enrollment status with VA

health care, to be administered a vaccine, the agency announced in a May 10 press release.

All spouses of veterans and most caregivers (such as those taking care of veterans at long-term care facilities not associated with the VA) can also get vaccinated without first scheduling an appointment.

The announcement comes despite a March 31 Government

Accountability Office report suggesting significant progress, but also key flaws in the VA's ongoing vaccination efforts (See page 7).

For one, the GAO says that the VA has not done an adequate job at tracking reasons for missed vaccine appointments, making it harder to create and plan outreach efforts for veterans that are unwilling to get vaccinated.

Additionally, the now

months-old report says that the VA does not have a concrete method for monitoring vaccination progress nationally.

However, the announcement that the VA is now offering walk-in appointments throughout the country suggests that the department is keeping pace with its previously outlined timetable.

As vaccine supplies have become more stable, vaccine hesitancy and

logistical issues in rural communities appear to be the only major remaining barriers.

According to the LA Times, approximately one in four Californians is reluctant to get vaccinated; though that number is believed to be higher in most other states. Regardless, the VA anticipates fulfilling its role in President Joe Biden's July 4 goal of vaccinating at least 70% of the United States.

VA creates 2 new taskforces to enforce more inclusive access to VA services and curb sexual harassment at VA facilities

By Christian Southards
Contributing Writer

The Department of Veterans Affairs is taking steps to become more inclusive.

Two separate working groups have been created since early April in an attempt to curb bias and unequal access to VA services.

The first group was announced in an April 14 press release: Secretary Dennis McDonough established a 120-day task force

that would investigate how the VA approaches issues of "diversity, equity, and access" before creating actionable recommendations.

The VA says that the task force will, among other requirements, review all policies and training programs to identify areas where the VA can improve access for underserved groups.

The VA also notes that the task force was created in direct response to a 2019

Government Accountability Office report that exposed substantial barriers to accessing VA services, including race, sex, and gender identity.

A separate GAO report also reported on numerous instances of gender bias towards female veterans and servicemembers.

For example, the GAO found that female servicemembers consistently pay more for uniforms.

The VA announced on May 6 that it is seeking

nominations to head its Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment Working Group.

The appointments are to last for one year and the group is expected to review and develop new policies aimed at reducing and eliminating sexual assault and harassment at VA facilities.

A 2020 study co-authored by the Department of Defense and the VA found that female servicemembers are less likely

to seek VA medical care due to a lack of "gender sensitivity" and rampant "unwanted sexual attention" during military service.

The DoD and VA also found that women who had experienced some form of sexual abuse during their military career were significantly less likely to enroll in VA services.

Federal report on CARES Act shows VA's vaccination progress and flaws

By **Christian Southards**
Contributing Writer

The Government Accountability Office released a sixth report on the federal government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, including analysis of the Department of Veterans Affairs' ongoing vaccination efforts.

The GAO revealed in March that while the VA has made significant progress vaccinating its roughly 10 million enrolled veterans, three key areas could be improved.

First, the GAO notes that the VA does not track the reason a vaccination appointment is missed, which means the "VA

may miss opportunities to better target outreach to individuals not showing up for appointments." In other words, the VA currently has no way of knowing, on a large scale, why specific groups of people may be missing appointments and how to address potential problems.

Second and third, the GAO reports that the VA does not have concrete markers for moving from one phase of its vaccination efforts to another, nor does it record vaccination progress by phase. The GAO says that this prevents the VA from having a clear picture of overall vaccination progress, what phase different facilities

may be in, and how to properly allocate resources to facilities that may be lagging behind.

The GAO says the VA has committed to improving all three areas but has not outlined a timetable for when new strategies will be implemented.

The report also notes that numerous other issues have occurred. For example, 75% of the VA health care facilities evaluated by the GAO reported logistical issues that required sudden improvisation by staff and causing significant delays to appointment scheduling. Another problem, some facilities in more rural communities have had trouble delivering

vaccines because they do not possess the advanced refrigeration required by two of the three vaccine options.

The GAO report acknowledges that the VA is not at fault for many of these logistical concerns, like shipping delays, insufficient time to plan, or receiving too many or too little vaccine supplies.

On a more positive note, the GAO report says that as of March 10, the VA had administered 86% of the vaccine supply it had received. A March 24 VA press release suggests that pace is being maintained, though the same release also notes that the pace needs to improve

dramatically if the VA is to keep up with new policies outlined in the SAVE LIVES Act.

Additionally, the GAO report says the VA is working with various veteran organizations representing minority veteran groups in an attempt to ensure equitable distribution of the vaccine via appropriate outreach methods.

While the report does not explicitly comment on the success of these programs, cross-referencing GAO data on vaccine distribution based on race and VA race data suggests that distribution is equitable, or at least approaching equitable.



The location for the new Bakersfield VA Clinic is once again in doubt after a veterans organization filed a lawsuit amid health concerns. (Photo: VA.gov)

VA Health Care facilities in Fresno and Bakersfield face possible relocation, challenges

By **Christian Southards**
Contributing Writer

The locations of two separate Department of Veterans Affairs health care clinics in California are in question.

First, the Fresno VA Medical Center may be moving to nearby Clovis.

The exact reasoning has not been made public, but the prospect may come amid concerns that veterans of underserved

rural communities may be unable to travel to Fresno for care.

As of yet, the VA has not commented on what specific operations, if any, would be moving.

Clovis City Councilmember Drew Bessinger reportedly made comments that a determining factor of the move is whether it would cost more to retrofit the current VA facility in Fresno or to build a new center

in Clovis. The Fresno VA facility is part of the VA Central California Health Care System, which serves approximately 28,000 veterans across six counties.

Second, the Bakersfield VA Clinic is facing yet another set of delays after veterans organization Progress for Bakersfield Veterans filed a lawsuit against the city because the location for the proposed new clinic is not zoned for medical services.

The veterans organization, which is also run by the owners of the existing Bakersfield VA Clinic, claims that city officials neglected to conduct environmental tests in line with the California Environmental Quality Act and that the location for the new clinic contains hazardous materials that could adversely affect the health of future patients.

Progress for Bakersfield Veterans notes in its lawsuit that the new site was once used for an oil refinery and that lasting chemical hazards remain. Additionally, the veterans organization contends that existing sources of air pollution surround the proposed facility.

Finally, the organization claims that the VA and city officials would spend less on retrofitting the existing Bakersfield VA Clinic than they would on building a new facility.

The Bakersfield VA Clinic is part of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, which collectively serves an estimated 1.4 million veterans.



Tell Your Story

Whether you've got an interesting military history or a fun story about why you joined The American Legion, we want to read it.

Share your story by:

uploading:
calegion.org/ugc

emailing:
editor@calegion.org

mailing:
Department
Headquarters:
1601 7th St.,
Sanger, CA 93657

*Don't forget photos!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2021

By **Seth Reeb**
Legislative Advocate
Reeb Government Relations

AB 107 (Salas D) Licensure: veterans and military spouses.

Position: Support
Summary: This bill would expand the requirement to issue temporary licenses to practice a profession or vocation to include licenses issued by any board within the department, except as provided.

AB 225 (Gray D) Department of Consumer Affairs: boards: veterans: military spouses: licenses.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law requires specified boards within the Department of Consumer Affairs to issue, after appropriate investigation, certain types of temporary licenses to an applicant married to, or in a domestic partnership with, an active duty member of the Armed Forces who is assigned to a duty station in this state under official active duty military orders. Current law requires these temporary licenses to expire 12 months after issuance. Under existing law, some of the funds within the jurisdiction of a board consist of revenue from fees that are continuously appropriated. This bill would require the temporary licenses described above to expire 30 months after issuance.

AB 291 (Seyarto R) Income taxation: exclusion: military survivor benefits.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law requires any bill authorizing a new tax expenditure to contain, among other things, specific goals, purposes, and objectives that the tax expenditure will achieve, detailed performance indicators, and data collection requirements. This bill, for taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2021, and before January 1, 2026, would provide an exclusion from gross income for all survivor benefits or payments received on or after January 1, 2021, and before January 1, 2026, under the federal Survivor Benefit Plan. The bill would require the

Franchise Tax Board to submit, on or before December 1, 2025, a report to the Legislature on the income brackets of taxpayers who claimed this exclusion, and would provide findings and declarations relating to the goals, purposes, and objectives of this exclusion.

AB 411 (Irwin D) Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2022.

Status: 5/5/2021-In committee: Set, first hearing. Referred to APPR. suspense file.

Position: Support
Summary: Would enact the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2022 to authorize the issuance of bonds in an amount not to exceed \$600,000,000 to provide additional funding for the VHHPA. The bill would provide for the handling and disposition of the funds in the same manner as the 2014 bond act.

AB 837 (Rubio, Blanca D) Collection of tax: deployed military personnel.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law requires the Franchise Tax Board to administer the levy and collection of taxes pursuant to the Personal Income Tax Law and the Corporation Tax Law and establishes procedures for the collection of delinquent taxes. This bill would prohibit the board from imposing a levy on salary or wages payable to or received by, or place a lien on a bank account of, a member of the Armed Forces of the United States on active duty while deployed away from the individual's permanent duty station.

AB 933 (Daly D) Prescription drug cost sharing.

Position: Support
Summary: The Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975 provides for the licensure and regulation of health care service plans by the Department of Managed Health Care, and makes a willful violation of the act a crime. Current law provides for the regulation of health insurers by the Department of Insurance. Current law limits the maximum amount an enrollee or insured

may be required to pay at the point of sale for a covered prescription drug to the lesser of the applicable cost-sharing amount or the retail price.

This bill would require an enrollee's or insured's defined cost sharing for each prescription drug to be calculated at the point of sale based on a price that is reduced by an amount equal to 90% of all rebates received, or to be received, in connection with the dispensing or administration of the drug.

AB 1026 (Smith R) Business licenses: veterans.

Position: Support
Summary: Would require the Department of Consumer Affairs and any board within the department to grant a 50% fee reduction for an initial license to an applicant who provides satisfactory evidence, as defined, the applicant has served as an active duty member of the United States Armed Forces or the California National Guard and was honorably discharged. This bill would authorize a board to adopt regulations necessary to administer these provisions.

AB 1151 (Smith R) Driver's licenses: veteran designation.

Position: Support
Summary: Would direct the Department of Motor Vehicles to discontinue the fee for printing the word "VETERAN" on the face of a driver's licence or identification card by July 1, 2022, and would repeal that fee provision on January 1, 2023. The bill would also make technical and conforming changes.

AB 1520 (Levine D) Health care coverage: prostate cancer: screening.

Position: Support
Summary: Would prohibit a health care service plan contract or a health insurance policy issued, amended, renewed, or delivered on or after January 1, 2022, from applying a deductible, copayment, or coinsurance to coverage for specified screening services for prostate cancer for an enrollee or insured who is 55 years of age or older or is 40 years of age or older and is high risk, as determined by their health care provider.

ACR 5 (Mathis R) AMVETS 75th Anniversary.

Position: Support
Summary: This measure would commend AMVETS Department of California on its 75th year of providing benefits and services to Veterans.

ACR 12 (Seyarto R) Purple Heart Day.

Position: Support
Summary: This measure would declare August 7, 2021, as Purple Heart Day in California.

ACR 13 (Seyarto R) Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Position: Support
Summary: This measure would commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

ACR 21 (Dahle, Megan R) Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge.

Position: Support
Summary: This measure would designate the South Yuba River Bridge over State Highway Route 49 in the County of Nevada as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge. The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost for appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

AJR 12 (Stone D) Veterans' educational benefits.

Position: Support
Summary: This measure would urge the United States Congress to revise the United States Code to remove the requirement that, to be eligible for GI benefits, a law school be accredited by a specialized accreditor and the overly broad restriction that graduates must be eligible to sit for a bar examination in any state.

SB 43 (Umberg D) Veterans cemetery: County of Orange.

Position: Support as proposed to be amended
Summary: Current law requires the Department of Veterans Affairs

to acquire, study, design, develop, construct, and equip a state-owned and state-operated Southern California Veterans Cemetery in the County of Orange at one of 2 possible sites, as specified. Current law requires the department to, after completing acquisition studies on both sites, consult with the Department of General Services to determine which site to pursue based on the economic feasibility, benefits to veterans and City of Irvine residents, and availability of each location. Current law makes honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and dependent children eligible for interment in the cemetery, as specified. This bill would delete those site selection requirements and would instead require the department to acquire, study, design, develop, construct, and equip a state-owned and state-operated Southern California Veterans Cemetery in the City of Irvine, as specified.

SB 363 (Leyva D) Educational equity: government instruction conferences.

Position: Remove Opposition
Summary: Under current law, the sex discrimination provisions of the Sex Equity in Education Act do not apply to any program or activity of the American Legion undertaken in connection with the organization or operation of any Boys State conference, Boys Nation conference, Girls State conference, or Girls Nation conference, or to any program or activity of any secondary educational institution specifically for the promotion of any of those conferences or for the selection of pupils to attend those conferences if the conferences comply with other nondiscriminatory provisions of state and federal law. This bill would repeal the exception to the sex discrimination provisions of the act for those American Legion and secondary educational institution programs and activities.

SB 467 (Wiener D) Oil and gas: hydraulic fracturing, acid well stimulation treatments, steam flooding, water flooding, or cyclic steaming: prohibition: job relocation.

Position: Oppose
Summary: Would revise the definition of “well stimulation treatment” to include steam flooding and water flooding. The bill would prohibit the issuance

or renewal of a permit to conduct hydraulic fracturing, acid well stimulation treatment, steam flooding, water flooding, or cyclic steaming for the extraction of oil and gas beginning January 1, 2022, and would prohibit new or repeated hydraulic fracturing, acid well stimulation treatments, steam flooding, water flooding, or cyclic steaming, except as conducted pursuant to a permit lawfully issued before that date. The bill would prohibit all hydraulic fracturing, acid well stimulation treatments, steam flooding, water flooding, cyclic steaming, or other well stimulation treatments beginning January 1, 2027.

SB 498 (Umberg D) Funds for the provision of legal services to indigent persons: disabled veterans.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law requires an attorney or law firm receiving or disbursing trust funds to establish and maintain an Interest On Lawyers’ Trust Accounts (IOLTA) account in which the attorney or law firm is required to deposit or invest all specified client deposits or funds. Current law directs IOLTA account interest and dividends to be paid to the State Bar of California to be distributed for the provision of civil legal services to indigent persons in a prescribed order, including, after payment of administrative costs, 85% of remaining funds to qualified legal services projects. Current law defines terms for these purposes, including the definition of “indigent person.” This bill would expand the definition of “indigent person” by increasing one measure of income eligibility from 125% to 200% of a specified poverty threshold. The bill would further require, for the purpose of that definition, that the income of a person who is disabled be determined after deducting disability compensation from the United States Veterans Administration paid to a veteran with a service-related disability.

SB 661 (Newman D) Veterans’ farm and home loan program.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs, which is headed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Current law requires the secretary, as head of the department and subject to the policies adopted by

the California Veterans Board, to perform all duties, exercise all powers and jurisdiction, assume and discharge all responsibilities, and carry out and effect all provisions vested by law in the department. Current law defines “veteran” for the purposes of the various programs granting benefits to veterans. This bill would authorize the secretary to designate a deputy, employee, or other official in the department to act for them and to represent them at meetings. The bill would authorize the secretary to delegate powers and duties, as specified.

SB 665 (Umberg D) Employment policy: voluntary veterans’ preference.

Position: Support
Summary: Would enact the Voluntary Veterans’ Preference Employment Policy Act to authorize a private employer to establish and maintain a written veterans’ preference employment policy, to be applied uniformly to hiring decisions, to give a voluntary preference for hiring or retaining a veteran over another qualified applicant or employee. The bill would provide that the granting of a veterans’ preference pursuant to the bill, in and of itself, shall be deemed not to violate any local or state equal employment opportunity law or regulation, including, but not limited to, the antidiscrimination provisions of FEHA. The bill would revise the existing veteran status provision in FEHA to remove references to discrimination on account of sex and to Vietnam-era veterans, and would, instead, provide that nothing in that act relating to discrimination affects the right of an employer to use veteran status as a factor in hiring decisions if the employer maintains a veterans’ preference employment policy established in accordance with the Voluntary Veterans’ Preference Employment Policy Act.

SB 667 (Roth D) Property taxation: disabled veterans’ exemption: claims: executor and administrator of claimant’s estate.

Position: Support
Summary: Current property tax law, pursuant to the authorization of the California Constitution, provides a disabled veterans’ property tax exemption for the principal place of residence of a veteran, the veteran’s spouse, or

the veteran and veteran’s spouse jointly, and the unmarried surviving spouse of a veteran, as provided, if the veteran is blind in both eyes, has lost the use of 2 or more limbs, or is totally disabled as a result of injury or disease incurred in military service, or if the veteran has, as a result of a service-connected injury or disease, died while on active duty in military service. Existing property tax law requires any person claiming the disabled veterans’ property tax exemption to file a claim, which is required to be filed under penalty of perjury, with the assessor giving any information required by the State Board of Equalization, as provided. This bill would authorize the executor or administrator of the claimant’s estate to file a claim with the assessor in the manner described above.

SB 763 (Min D) Sentencing: members of military: trauma.

Position: Support
Summary: Current law requires a court, if it concludes that a defendant convicted of a felony offense is or was a member of the United States military who may be suffering from sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, or mental health problems as a result of the defendant’s military service, to consider that circumstance as a factor in mitigation when imposing a sentence. Current law allows a defendant who is currently serving a felony sentence and meets these criteria to petition for resentencing if those criteria were not considered at the time of sentencing and the person was sentenced prior to January 1, 2015. This bill would allow a defendant meeting these criteria to petition for recall of sentence and resentencing without regard to whether the defendant was sentenced prior to January 1, 2015.

SB 766 (Eggman D) Private postsecondary education.

Position: Support/Sponsor
Summary: Would prohibit private postsecondary educational institutions, commencing with the 2023–24 academic year, from enrolling California residents if, pursuant to that federal law, for the previous 2 consecutive fiscal years or 2 out of the previous 3 fiscal years it derived less than 10 percent of its revenues from sources other than federal financial assistance.



Clockwise: Army veteran Barbara Autin joins Tango Alpha Lima podcast hosts Mark Seavey, Ashley Gorbujalja-Maldonado and Jeff Daly.

Tango Alpha Lima: A veteran's path to Hollywood

The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast welcomes Barbara Autin, a West Point graduate and former Army engineer who served two tours in Iraq.

After her service, Autin received her master's and tried to enter the entertainment industry. Autin wound up volunteering with Veterans in Media & Entertainment (VME) and helped establish the Jobs & Internships Program, as well as being part of the team that developed the

AT&T Veterans Media Fellowship. Without a network in place, she faced an uphill climb into her chosen career field.

"It's really hard to break into the entertainment industry," said Autin, a member of American Legion Post 43 in Hollywood, Calif. "And part of the reason is because of our years of service we haven't been able to develop a network. That's what I was facing as I was trying to get a job."

VME aims to reduce

the gap from the military into the entertainment industry.

It provides resources, contacts and more for veterans who become members.

Since the pandemic began, VME has produced 62 online classes, expanding its student base beyond Los Angeles.

"We have a ton of different classes," she said, noting they range from writing to film production to acting. "We had the top casting directors

come in and our members submitted tapes and 14 were selected to work with individually. Anybody can join these classes."

The American Legion played a critical role in development of VME.

"The American Legion has been instrumental in the growth of VME," Autin said. "From the very beginning, it was meeting at The American Legion Post 43. That space was crucial to meeting and to start those classes and to get to the point where we

could bring it online. I can't overstate the importance of the support from The American Legion."

Each episode of Tango Alpha Lima is released by 9 a.m. Eastern each Tuesday.

To make sure you get access to each episode when published subscribe via iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher and other podcast-hosting sites. You can also subscribe to the Tango Alpha Lima newsletter, which contains links to new episodes. Subscribe here: legion.org/tangoalphalima.



A brisk first walk with family on a sunny day made for a great start to 100 Miles for Hope! Soon - bike cruises and something new ... paddle boarding! Look out, summer!

—Desirae Storey-Smidt

Lace up your walking shoes and get ready to donate your hustle. The American Legion 100 Miles for Hope Challenge on! Go to www.legion.org/100miles to get started.

The rays of the sun form the background of the emblem and suggest the Legion's principles will dispel the darkness of violence and evil.

The wreath forms the center, in loving memory of those brave comrades who gave their lives in service of the United States that liberty might endure.

The star, victory symbol of World War I, symbolizes honor, glory and constancy. The Letters "U.S." leave no doubt as to the brightest star in the Legion's constellation.

The smaller of two inner rings set upon the star represents service to our communities, states and nation. The larger outer ring pledges loyalty to Americanism.

The larger of the two outer rings signifies the rehabilitation of our sick and disabled comrades. The smaller inside ring denotes the welfare of America's children.

The words "American Legion" tie the ring together for truth, remembrance, constancy, loyalty, honor, service, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, children and youth, national security and Americanism.

Image appears in the Officer's Guide: www.legion.org/publications/246556/2020-officers-guide

states and the nation. The larger outer ring pledges loyalty to Americanism.

The words American Legion tie the whole together for truth, remembrance, constancy, honor, service, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, children and youth, loyalty, and Americanism."

The Emblem page, www.legion.org/emblem, features free downloadable versions of all the emblems in the American Legion family, as well as frequently asked questions and how to ask for permission to use the emblem — you do need permission in certain instances.

Copyrighted in December 1919, The American Legion emblem is a closely guarded asset and controlled through the organization's national adjutant or the national Emblem Sales director, appointed by the adjutant.

They can grant permission — on behalf of the National Executive Committee — to use the emblem.

To apply for permission to use the emblem, visit the emblem download page on The American Legion's national website: www.legion.org/emblem/download.

Permission to reproduce the emblems of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion is confined to those activities as listed in the current Post Officers Guide, quoted below:

"The American Legion emblem is fully copyrighted and patented in the name of the National Organization.

"The emblem is also protected by federal legislation which makes it a criminal offense to use, without formal approval of the National Organization, the patented insignia of any veterans' group chartered by Congress, one of which is The American Legion."

Article previously published in part on Legion.org.

What does The American Legion emblem stand for?

The American Legion

The emblem of The American Legion is as old as the organization itself. The emblematic gold and blue seal was adopted by its National Executive Committee on June 9, 1919, only a few short months after war weary members of the American Expeditionary Force convened in Paris for the first American Legion caucus in May of that year.

The national website, www.legion.org,

has a page devoted to the emblem and quotes of the complete emblem: "It stands for God and Country, and the highest rights of man. Of its several parts, each has a meaning."

"The rays of the sun form the background of our proud emblem and suggests the Legion's principles will dispel the darkness of violence and evil.

The wreath forms the center, in loving memory of those brave comrades who gave their lives in the service of the United States

that liberty might endure.

The star, victory symbol of World War I, also symbolizes honor, glory and constancy. The letters "U.S." leave no doubt as to the brightest star in the Legion's star.

The larger of two outer rings stands for the rehabilitation of our sick and disabled comrades. The smaller inside ring denotes the welfare of America's children.

The smaller of two inner rings set upon the star represents service to our communities,



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**



The American Legion Mare Island Navy Yard Post 550 of Vallejo recently honored their Vietnam Veterans with Pentagon commemorative items.

Vallejo honors its Vietnam veterans

By Nestor Aliga
Historian, Post 603

One of the most painful chapters in U.S. history was Vietnam.

As our warriors were coming home and transitioning back to our communities, they should have been appreciated for serving our great Nation. Instead they were often blamed for a war they did not start.

They were sometimes condemned for the wrongs of a few, when the honorable service of the many should have been recognized.

They were belittled, when they should have been thanked for their service, valor, and sacrifice.

It was a national shame and a disgrace that should have never happened, and that is one big reason that we must annually commemorate National Vietnam War Veterans Day on March 29.

Due to covid, ten separate events were held

by the veterans service organizations within the www.VallejoVetsBuilding.org. Over 100 Veterans and surviving family members were presented with Pentagon-supplied commemorative items such as Vietnam Veteran lapel pins, proclamations from Presidents Obama and Trump, "I Served" and "Join the Nation! Thank & Honor Vietnam Veterans and Their Families" bumper stickers, 50th Anniversary tin pin buttons, and California Veteran Resource Guides.

In Vallejo's first event on March 27, Mayor Robert McConnell, a decorated Vietnam Veteran that served with the US Army 9th Infantry 'Old Reliables' Division, had a schedule conflict. So Vice-Mayor Rozzana Verder-Aliga gave the keynote speech. She elaborated on the four reasons for the event.

"The first is to honor the 28 servicemen - with Vallejo as their home of record - who, in President

Abraham Lincoln's words, gave their last, full measure of devotion."

"Second, we recognize those who served, but are no longer among us, as well as their families, who endured untold sacrifices that enabled their loved one to serve."

"Third, is to humbly thank and honor the Vietnam veterans living in our beloved community."

"The fourth reason is that the Veterans Affairs estimates that we lose 557 Vietnam veterans each day - more than 200 thousand annually and it is our solemn duty to locate and honor this generation of warriors, extending to them the nation's long-overdue gratitude before our opportunity vanishes."



Bob Smith and E. Paul Ball of Post 550 presented a generous donation to Executive Director Elizabeth Hoffman in appreciation of Rebuilding Together Solano County's home rehabilitation and food pantry services to local Veterans.

May was Red Poppy Month

By Julio Morales
Holtville Tribune

HOLTVILLE — For more than a century, red poppies have become symbolic of the war dead as the bulbed flowers grew in abundance on the bombed fields of Flanders, Belgium, and northwest France during World War I.

It was two days before Armistice Day was declared in 1918 that an American woman, Moina Michael, was inspired to wear a red Flanders poppy to remember those killed in that war after being moved by Canadian soldier Lt. Col. John McCrae's 1915 wartime poem, "In Flanders Fields."

The final line of McCrae's poem gave birth to a movement: "We shall not sleep, though poppies grow/In Flanders fields."

In 1920, the red poppy would become the official flower of the American Legion family "to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war. In 1924, the distribution of poppies became a national program of the American Legion."

Since then, it's been American Legion auxiliary members across the country who have led efforts to distribute red poppies as a way to generate funds for veterans and their families.

On Monday, May 10, Holtville's Bradley-Keffer Unit 138 auxiliary was recognized in that effort by the Holtville City Council as it declared the month of May as Red Poppy Month.

The council's approval of the proclamation was made in honor of National Poppy Day, on May 28, which pays tribute to armed service members who have served and died in combat since World War I.

HoltvilleTribune.com



(Photo: Stock)

Duck races and fireworks: The history of Arcadia Post 247

By **Ed Barlow**
Adjutant, Post 247

The American Legion post in Arcadia was originally chartered as the Glenn Dyer, Post 247 on May, 1921.

It was named for the first soldier from Arcadia to lose his life fighting in World War I.

Early post members actually constructed the building themselves during the Great Depression.

This first building was located at 724 N. First Street and was dedicated on July 4, 1932. The Glenn Dyer post flourished there for many years supporting the community's youth, war related scrap metal drives, Red Cross efforts, setting out street flags until the city took this effort over.

The main source of funding was the sale of July 4th fireworks. Yes, one

fireworks stand did burn down in what must have been spectacular fashion during an impromptu demonstration.

In November 1990, the post moved to its second location at 615 Live Oak Ave. On March 12, 1951, the post changed its name from the Glenn Dyer post to Arcadia Post 247.

Our primary source of revenue remained fireworks sales and "Duck Races."

Not certain how this was accomplished but live ducks were brought in for racing.

Apparently, the folks at the Santa Anita Race Track didn't feel too threatened by the competition.

The Arcadia Post has kept up our tradition (except for fireworks and duck racing) for 100 years, providing support to families of veterans in financial need. Hospital

visits, veteran stand-downs (providing clothing and assistance for homeless vets), including meals during the holidays, housing support for homeless female veterans, supporting the V.A. Medical Clinic in Arcadia on Foothill Blvd.

We participate with the VFW Memorial Team in providing graveside ceremonies for the families of deceased veterans.

Our Boys State program sends local high school juniors to Sacramento for a week-long program.

Altogether about 1,000 students learn about state politics by fulfilling city, county and state offices and meeting state legislatures.

In 2019, we moved again and are currently being hosted by the Arcadia/Monrovia VFW Post 2070 located at 825 S. Magnolia St. in Monrovia.

VA to readjudicate claims for 'Blue Water' Navy veterans

VA Press Release

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will readjudicate claims for Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

This review is part of the Veterans Benefits Administration's implementation of the November 5, 2020, U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California decision to readjudicate previously denied claims as applied in *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*.

Veterans who were previously denied service connection for an herbicide related presumptive condition due to lack of in-country Vietnam service will automatically have their claims readjudicated.

Readjudication means VA will review the evidence of record and provide replacement decisions in the cases of

Veterans who were previously denied service connection for one or more herbicide related conditions on the basis that military service was not performed on the landmass of the Republic of Vietnam or on its inland waterways. This review will also apply to eligible survivors of deceased Vietnam era Veterans. VA is dedicated to ensuring all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

VA ensures that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of the Veteran community. Eligible survivors of deceased Veterans may also benefit from the policy and may be eligible for benefits based on the Veterans' service.

Veterans who have a condition caused by herbicide exposure during military service can learn more about Agent Orange exposure here: www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure/agent-orange/.



Your post can receive a credit for each dollar spent on the purchase of American Flags from Emblem Sales.

Legion.org/dispatch/flag

Tell Your Story

Whether you've got an interesting military history or a fun story about why you joined The American Legion, we want to read it. Share your story by emailing

editor@caLegion.org or mailing it to

Department headquarters:

1601 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657

*Don't forget photos!

Legionnaires on the front lines in the COVID fight

From SERVICE page 1 ahead of this virus.”

The Los Angeles site included about 450 troops between the guard and active duty.

“There are two incident commanders here,” explained Major Cisneros, a member of Monterey Park Post 397. “One is from FEMA, the other is from Cal OES. So this is a Cal OES mission, funded by FEMA, supported by the national guard and active duty. It’s never been done before.”

On his tour, the Congressman noted the capacity to inoculate about 8,000 people a day.

“There really is light at the end of the tunnel,” Schiff said. “If we can continue to push out these



Rep. Adam Schiff, center, tours the CalState LA Covid-19 vaccination site with Army National Guard Maj. Cisneros, right, in February. Hollywood Post 43 Legionnaire and guardswoman Spc. Simone Lara, left, takes photos. (Photo: Michael Hjelmstad)

vaccines and even accelerate the pace, we can get out ahead of the virus and its mutations.”

Vaccine sites across the nation have increased their numbers dramatically, averaging over two million per day. Many states have already opened

eligibility to all adults.

Alaska, Mississippi, West Virginia and Georgia have allowed all adults or residents older than age 16 to get vaccines starting May 13.

In February, Schiff said he thought that within a couple of months, vaccine

hesitancy would be a bigger problem than vaccine availability.

“One of the things that I think is really important in my job, and my colleagues feel the same way, is we have to do whatever we can do to push out good information to let

people know that these vaccines are safe, they’re effective, and it’s important for people to do for their own health, and it’s important for people to do for their families health, the communities health, and ultimately the country’s health.”

Membership survey helps guide Hollywood’s Squadron 43

By The American Legion

The leadership of Sons of The American Legion Squadron 43 in Hollywood wanted to find a way to engage their members in a more meaningful way.

“A survey was an efficient way to better understand their interests and skill sets,” said John Di Rienzo, the squadron’s first vice commander. “Moreover, we were able to utilize the survey

tool offered through our Constant Contact account, which made it easy to execute.”

Di Rienzo said the survey questions are aimed at gathering details the squadron can use to

gauge members’ interest in leadership roles, event concepts, and preferred social media platforms.

“Much of what we have learned is practical information including which squadron leadership roles they are interested in pursuing and what sort of activities they would like to see the squadron plan,” he said, adding that the survey helped the squadron find its assistant adjutant, Stephen Rinka, and finance officer, Jon Tierney.

Some of the questions on the survey include: *Do you have skills or experience that you would like to contribute to the squadron? Which squadron activities are you most interested in? What is your preferred social media platform? What can we do to improve your membership experience?*

The survey also includes a write-in option which allows members to offer their services in everything from photography to

“A survey was an efficient way to better understand their interests and skill sets”

—John Di Rienzo, Squadron 283 1st vice commander

nonprofit board operations, Di Rienzo said.

Di Rienzo noted that the survey is useful for both new and existing members, as people’s interests and availability can change over time.

“Understanding what a member, new or existing, is hoping to gain from their membership experience is what it’s all about,” he said. “... Asking members about their interests and skills is a simple way to facilitate engagement and plan activities. It lets your members feel heard and helps you find future leaders.”



The Squadron 43 Luau was becoming an annual summer event before the pandemic