



California LEGIONNAIRE



VICE COMMANDER p.6



FOX DYNASTY p.8

OCTOBER 2021

Official Publication of The American Legion Department of California

CALEGION.ORG



An American Flag flies where American Legion Indian Valley Post 568 once stood.

CALIFORNIA VETERANS MOBILIZE FOR DIXIE FIRE SUPPORT

By Jared Morgan Editor

As fires rage in the north of California, an outpouring of support for its survivors continues. Shortly after Indian Valley Post 568 reported its building had been destroyed in the Dixie Fire, The

American Legion's Department of California rallied to support.

"We know that our post in Greenville was destroyed by fire, but more importantly the community of Greenville was destroyed," said Department Commander Autrey James. "Members and non-members lost homes,

veterans and non-veterans lost homes. We had to follow through on our mission to help veterans, families and our communities, so for me it was just matter of 'how can we help?'"

The Dixie Fire is currently the largest active fire in the country and the second largest in

California's history, with the blaze having devastated more than 635,000 acres of land and an estimated 630 homes, according to Cal Fire.

After hearing about how the Dixie Fire "hit closer to home" with the destruction of an American Legion post, James put out a call to arms and leadership from across the state began collecting donations in the form of gift cards and goods.

In a matter of days, U-Haul trucks across the state were rented and loaded with supplies.

In addition to local staging sites across the state, Santa Monica was one of the major hubs from which trucks were deployed.

While loading one of the trucks in Santa Monica on Monday, Los Angeles County Council Commander Jere Romano was asked by a passerby where he was going with all the camping gear. He explained it was for the victims of the Dixie Fire and the man followed up with "why?"

"I told him we can't

See SUPPORT page 12

DIXIE FIRE DEVASTATION

LEGIONNAIRES LOSE THEIR HOMES, BUT NOT THEIR HOPE

By Marj Goosey Indian Valley Post 568

By now you are no doubt aware that Indian Valley Post 568 no longer exists except on paper. Most of the town of Greenville is gone; also gone are Indian Falls at the bottom end of Indian Valley and Canyon Dam at the top end. Crescent Mills and Taylorsville remain — at least for now. Many of the members of Post 568 who lived in Greenville, Indian Falls or Canyon Dam, have lost their homes.

Most of downtown Greenville is gone, including the bank, drug store, fire station, pizza restaurant, Masonic Lodge, Cy Hall Museum, the Library, the Post Office, the old Hotel, Hunter Hardware, the Chamber of Commerce building, the Rancheria, Wellness Center, AND the LEGION HALL.

This may well have been the last year that the Post Honor Guard [which is also the post color guard] could perform Honors ceremonies on Memorial Day at all of the Community Service District Cemeteries – Greenville, Crescent Mills and Taylorsville and four private cemeteries: The Gorman Family Plot off Pioneer Road, the Merino Family Cemetery across from and above the Taylorsville Cemetery, The Native American Cemetery on North Valley Road, and as near as be can get to where

See HOPE page 12

HOW YOU CAN HELP GIVE HOPE TO FIRE VICTIMS

When the members of American Legion Post 568 in Greenville returned to the location where their Post had stood on Aug 5, their response was powerful.

Return Old Glory to her proper place of honor.

It was more than an act of defiance in response to the loss of their Post, it was a sign that The American Legion would never abandon their community or anyone who needs the Legion Family during such a traumatic time.

Legionnaire Marj Goosey and the California American Legion take action for the people of Greenville.

All 1,100 residents were forced to evacuation centers throughout the area, finding sanctuary from California's

See DONATE page 12

Donate Today

By generously donating to The American Legion California Fire Relief Fund, you provide critical aid to those who have lost so much due to the fires across our state. When you make a gift of support for The American Legion California Fire Relief Fund, you make a real difference that is felt immediately by those who desperately need it.

Checks should include the memo "Fire Relief Fund" and can be mailed to:

California American Legion
1601 7th St.
Sanger, CA 93657

Donations can also be made online:
calegion.org/fire-relief-fund



Want a hard copy mailed to you?

Go online

bit.ly/calegion-newsletter2

or

Call HQ
559-875-8387

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**

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

☎ 559-875-8387 ✉ admin@caLegion.org

— LEADERSHIP —

Department Commander Autrey James commander@caLegion.org	Department Adjutant Barbara Lomrano adjutant@caLegion.org
---	--

California LEGIONNAIRE

— PRINT & DIGITAL —

Editor / Web Team Lead / Page Designer Jared Morgan editor@caLegion.org 310-750-9782	Web Team Member Rick Pushies
Staff Writer Christian Southards	Facebook Manager Lillian Moss facebook.com/caLegion
	Photographer Fred Shacklett



**For Sponsorship
Opportunities:**
contact the editor

PUBLICATION POLICY

The California Legionnaire (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 Legionnaire
1601 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657-2801
559-638-2244

SUBMISSIONS:

- Submissions can be made via email, online and mail
- Email print articles to: editor@caLegion.org with the words "California Legionnaire" in the subject line of your email so that it will not be overlooked
- Submissions to The California Legionnaire must be made by the 6th of the month prior to the issue month (Example: To submit material for the February issue, submissions must be received by Jan. 6)
- Submissions to the Department website can be made at any time by visiting caLegion.org/ugc (please email the editor to let them know you've submitted online)
- Photos should be sent at the highest resolution possible
- Do not embed photos in a Word.doc. Send photos as email attachments with photo captions either typed in a word document or in the email body. Images that are pulled off of websites will not reproduce well, if at all. PDFs must be saved as high resolution from their original document
- All submissions become the property of The American Legion Department of California. All submitted material is subject to edit, rework and omission. We are not responsible for lost items or misplaced material
- Please send "Change of Address" and "Deceased Notifications" to: admin@caLegion.org or mail to headquarters (See address above). To publish an obituary, please copy the editor on your email or mark letters "ATTN: California Legionnaire Editor - Obituary"



California senator Ryan Hanho Jung, Adams Section, Nationalist. Taken on Jul 23, 2021.

CALIFORNIA STUDENT ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE 2021 AMERICAN LEGION BOYS NATION

By The American Legion

Two prominent leaders emerged from The American Legion Boys Nation program July 27.

Ryan Jung, of Irvine, Calif., was elected President of The American Legion Boys Nation at Marymount University for the 2021 program.

During the election, which was run as a mock presidential campaign, Jung won against the delegate from Virginia,

Dimitrios Owen.

Boys Nation, a signature program of the nation's largest veterans' service organization, provides an intensive week-long, hands-on education in American politics and the legislative system for a select group of high school students each year.

An incoming senior at Portola High School, Jung plans on attending Harvard University to pursue a

career in law or teaching. "I thought that I wouldn't be able to go to sleep at night at the end of the week if I just didn't go for high office and I didn't really put 110 percent effort. And I think that (being elected) president, it's a testament to all that," Jung said.

Also elected Tuesday night was Boys Nation Vice President Cameron Cummings of Madison, Ala. He defeated Aiden Sanders, also of Alabama. Both vice presidential candidates represented Michigan at Boys Nation. The COVID-19 pandemic forced some departments to cancel or delay their Boys State programs this year, resulting in some delegates randomly selected to represent other departments. Normally, two representatives from each of the 50 Boys States represent their home state or, in the case of the District of Columbia, their district as a senator.

The senators caucus at the beginning of the session, organize into committees and conduct hearings on bills, allowing delegates to learn the proper legislative procedures according to the U.S. Senate. Activities include mock party conventions, legislative elections, debates, speeches and visits to Capitol Hill and other historical sites. Delegates will also visit the offices of their state's respective members of Congress and present bills of their own creation.

Since Boys Nation began in 1946, a number of its graduates have been elected to public office, including presidents, congressmen, state governors and state legislators.



Sign up for American Legion
Department of California
email updates:
bit.ly/calegion-emails



BOYS NATION MEMBERSHIP LESSON: California. Leadership. Service.

By **Jeff Daly**
Membership Director

September 11th was not just a day infamous for the attack on the United States.

It is also now the “National Day of Service”. It is a day celebrating the best of America.

With that day behind us, (but always in our minds), we must look forward to more opportunities to give

back to our communities.

I envision Legionnaires leading the way and I hope every Post and District will work to organize more days of service surrounding Veterans Day on Nov. 11.

That service can be hosting a blood drive, cleaning a park, or partnering with other organizations in support of a bigger mission.

We can make a visible and significant impact and

that’s what our service is all about. If you need further inspiration, I have a story to tell.

I was recently at Boys Nation 2021, in Washington D.C., and I was impressed on many levels.

I was impressed with the work that Tim Aboudara is doing with California Boy’s State, along with the Newport Harbor Post.

They have managed to have two of the last three

Boys Nation Presidents.

That’s a big deal, and should be celebrated, bragged about, and honored. I was impressed with the Boys Nation staff that was chock full of leaders.

There was no shortage of leadership, guiding the experience both in direct contact and behind the scenes.

Finally, I was impressed with the students.

These were all high caliber young men with resumes that make it seem like I barely showed up in high school.

More than their credentials, these young men were polite, humble, and called to service.

Many of these students are applying to military service academies or ROTC programs at fine universities.

More than a few also have ambitions of elected public service.

All of that is commendable, but what struck me most were moments when we were off campus at places like the Lincoln Memorial.

These young men were not so self-consumed that they ignored the world around them.

I saw them helping tourists take photos. Some of them were sharing their knowledge of the monuments. They were serving their immediate community, and they were doing so, instinctively.

There are some recurring keywords with my experience: California. Leadership. Service.

This is a program that falls under Americanism, but crosses over into Children and Youth, and as an organization we should be proud that it, along with the Auxiliary-run Girls Nation, is so well managed.

The high level of the program got me thinking about the high level I want for California membership.

The exact lesson, however, didn’t become clear until we visited Arlington.

There was the sobering experience of seeing the

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the work that the known, but mysterious Old Guard Sentinels do, in protection of the tomb.

That was awe inspiring, but the membership light bulb went off while viewing the everlasting flame at the site where President Kennedy and family are resting.

What came to mind was his most famous quote:

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

Those young men of Boys Nation seem to constantly seek out what they can do and they can contribute.

That program of The American Legion might just be illuminating the path of our resurgence.

Perhaps our message should be less about the benefits of membership and more about the opportunities to serve that membership affords.

The fastest growing veterans groups are doers: Team Red, White & Blue; Team Rubicon; Merging Vets & Players; Veterans in Media & Entertainment.

These groups are all active because they are actively engaged with their members and a mission.

In fact, they do less “talking” and more “showing” and THAT might be ingredient we want more of in our membership recipe.

I’ve preached broadcasting the work that we do, especially in service.

It is with that in mind, that I am calling on the entire Department of California to schedule days of service on and around Veterans Day.

I am looking for the veterans of this great state to come together and make a significant contribution to their community, which collectively serves the state, which with our leadership will inspire other Departments, serving the nation.

Let us know what events you have planned for Veterans Day: editor@caLegion.org

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRANSPORTATION COMMUNICATIONS IN THE AMERICAN LEGION

By Kevin Burns
Chair, Aerospace
Commission

Radiotelegraphy was the first means of radio communication.

The first practical radio transmitters and receivers invented in the late 1800s used radiotelegraphy.

It continued to be the only type of radio transmission during the first few decades of radio, called the “wireless telegraphy era” up until World War I, when the development of amplitude modulation (AM) radio allowed audio sound to be transmitted by radio.

Beginning about 1908, powerful transoceanic radiotelegraphy stations transmitted commercial telegram traffic between countries.

In the late 19th century there had been amateur wired telegraphers setting up their own interconnected telegraphic systems.

When Amateur radio came into being magazine articles showed how to build a simple system based on early experiments.

In the US the first commercially produced wireless telegraphy transmitter / receiver systems became available to experimenters and

amateurs in 1905. This technology was important to transportation for ship to shore communications and in maintaining railroad schedules and communications.

Every railroad station had a telegraph office.

By the 1930s, radio beacons would provide navigation for pilots flying long distance flights and create a means of regular commercial air service.

By 1917, World War I had put a stop to amateur radio. In the United States, Congress ordered all amateur radio operators to cease operation and even dismantle their equipment.

These restrictions were lifted after World War I ended, and the amateur radio service restarted in October 1919.

Shortly after, the American Legion realized that radio communications was an important resource for national defense and supported the spread of amateur radio.

Today, American Legion amateur radio operators are referred to as “Hams.”

Many publications refer this moniker as having come from early “ham handed” operators; but the term was first used among railroad telegraph operators, in reference to the inexperienced students



BC-AE-230 radio transmitter.

coming out of the questionable telegraphing schools that were popping-up to fill the demand for telegraph operators.

An article in the “Railroad Telegrapher” (volume 26, 1909) was published with the title “How I Came to be a Ham.”

Written by a member of The Order of Railroad Telegraphers working in the Hagerstown, Maryland station, explained that as he went through a so-called telegraph college,

he learned alongside other students who “Hammered” on the telegraph key.

A previous article in the same magazine also berated these schools (Volume 12 Issue 19, 14 December 1895) with the headline of “Evolution of a Ham.”

Today, amateur radio operators in The American Legion Amateur Radio Club (TALARC) volunteer countless hours of community service in providing emergency

communications and proudly call themselves “Hams” as it was applied to amateur operators shortly after WWII.

The American Legion was instrumental in the development of aviation navigation through the use of radio beacons with their lobbying efforts in the 1930s, and continued to promote the development of aviation communications and technology through the Aerospace Commission.



● ● ●
● ● ●
● ● ●

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

AMERICAN LEGION PODCAST LAUNCHES SPECIAL SERIES DEDICATED TO 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11

By The American Legion

The American Legion Tango Alpha Lima podcast has launched several of 20 memorable, inspiring and captivating stories related to the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

One episode of the special podcast series was published each weekday from Aug. 16 to Sept. 10.

Here's a snapshot of some of the episodes:

- Former POW Jessica Lynch reported to basic training a week after 9/11.

Eventually she deployed to Iraq, where her unit was ambushed, she was captured and held prisoner by Iraqi forces for nine days. Jessica shares the emotional story of her captivity and rescue, as well as how she persevered through the aftermath of the experience, and became a motivational speaker to help others.

- "It really felt like I was surviving Dec. 7, 1941."

Past American Legion National Commander Ric Santos was on Capitol Hill that morning, ready to present the organization's

priorities to Congress at 10 a.m. "We heard a loud boom that sounded like a sonic jet," he says, describing the plane that hit the Pentagon, just miles away.

- "I just felt this concussion wave go right through me." Jimmy Brown, a New York City firefighter who escaped before one of the towers collapsed. Brown, a Marine Corps veteran, heard the first plane and the explosion, then saw "debris raining down" as he emerged from the firehouse and headed to the scene.

- "All of a sudden my life

changed."

Army Sgt. Major Clifford Lovejoy recounts the "loud boom" and his subsequent, harrowing escape from the Pentagon on 9/11. It was the day before what "was supposed to be the biggest day of my life" when he was scheduled to meet the president and visit Capitol Hill.

- "We froze right there in our tracks."

Retired Marine Lt. Col. Darling reveals what it was like to spend the day with President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney as they prepared

the U.S. response. Darling, who retired from the Marine Corps in 2007, flew attack helicopters in Desert Shield and Desert Storm. After his service, he was chosen to work for the White House Military Office, Airlift Operations Department, which is what led him to the unique experience on 9/11.

Visit legion.org/tangoalphalima to download each episode in this special series in audio format or watch on The American Legion YouTube channel, youtube.com/c/americanlegionHQ.

California American Legion receives check from Amazon

The American Legion Department of California received a check for \$171.83 for its participation in the Amazon Smile program.

Many purchases you make online through Amazon can help fund The American Legion CA Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Foundation, which funds the department's veteran service officers, who help veterans file their disability and education claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

To learn more, visit

<https://calegion.org/amazon-smile>

STEINSTUECKEN
A Little Pocket of Freedom
by DONALD SMITH

Now in production... When the Cold War split Berlin in half, between East and West, one neighborhood was trapped in the middle. The West Berlin neighborhood of Steinstuecken, isolated in Communist-held territory, became a symbol of Cold War tensions. For more than a decade, American soldiers stood watch over the hamlet. This book tells this hamlet's story—and the stories of the determined Americans and Berliners who worked together to keep it safe and free.

"Any student of the Cold War, Berlin, or Germany needs to read this well researched and grippingly told book." —John B. Emerson, US Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, 2013-17

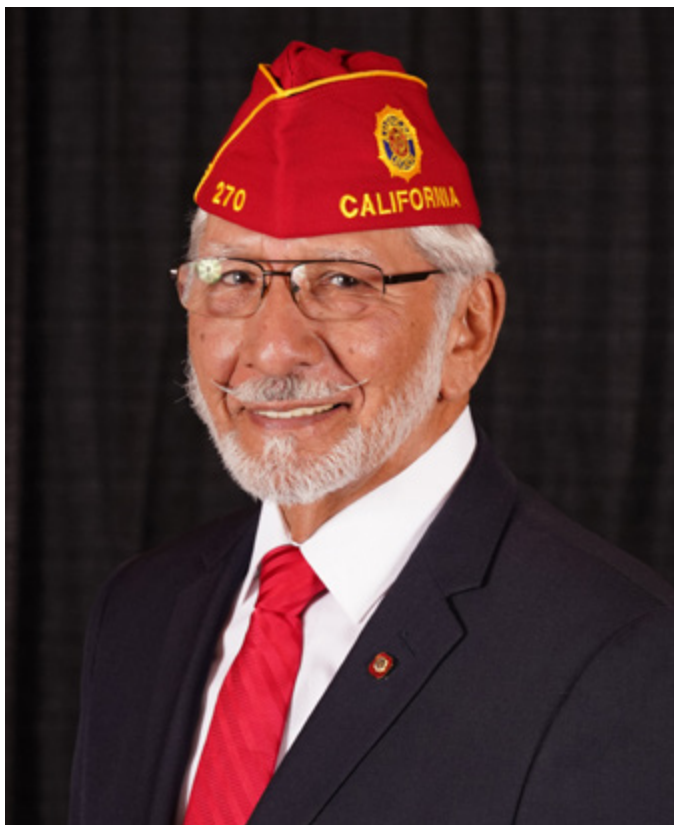
"An engaging study of what a few brave people can do to preserve their freedom against overwhelming odds." —Victor Davis Hanson, The Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Author—*The Second World Wars*

Donate this book—customized with your name and message—to your local library! Visit steinpocket.com for additional details.

WWW.ACCLAIMPRESS.COM
Acclaim Press • P.O. Box 238 • Morley, MO 63767 • 573.472.9800

6x9-inch, hardbound • 336 pages

California's first national vice commander in over 20 years



James T. Higuera of Downey, Calif., was born in Los Angeles and enlisted in the Army in 1963.

Upon completing his training and security clearances, he was assigned to the U.S. Army Security Agency, 12th Special Operations Unit Kuma Station, Japan.

He was honorably discharged from the service in January 1966 as a specialist five. Higuera has been a member of The American Legion since 1966.

He is a Paid Up for Life member of Downey Post 270 where he has served as commander. Higuera has served his district

as chairman of various committees, elected and appointed offices, and was elected commander in 1994.

Followed by his election as commander of the Los Angeles County Council of The American Legion in 1999. He was elected department vice commander in 1996.

He has served as department chairman of many commissions and committees and serves as the Ritual Chairman.

In 2015, he was inducted into Pasadena Post 13 Hall of Fame for the Sons of The American Legion. At the national level, Higuera has served on the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonial

Committee and since 2008 has served on the National Convention Commission.

In 2005 he served as president of the former National American Legion Press Association. Higuera also served as national historian in 2010.

Higuera has two daughters, Valerie and Hilary, and six grandchildren.

Jim's number one sweetheart Denise Conrad is a past Department of Ohio American Legion Auxiliary president, and is currently ALA National Community Service chairman 2021-22. Higuera's hobbies include woodworking, photography, and collecting American Legion memorabilia.

OPINION: THE FIRST VICTIMS OF JIHADISTS IN AFGHANISTAN WILL BE ITS PEOPLE

By Doug Woodhams

Editor's note: Doug Woodhams has served several tours in the Middle East and offered his personal thoughts on the Aug. 30 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

As I write this, 12-year-old girls are being seized to become sex slaves for Mujahid ("holy" warrior) fighters. Throughout Afghanistan, women have essentially been placed under house arrest. Education for females has been suspended indefinitely.

Believe it or not, there are Christian pastors in Afghanistan, asking for prayer because they are afraid to leave their homes — for the sake of their families' lives much less their own.

Men will be beaten or killed if their facial hair appears to be newly grown, indicating they have not till now been maintaining full beards in accordance with the Taliban's brand of

Shari'a law.

After 20 years almost to the day, the group that provided shelter to the 9/11 terrorists is now back in control of an entire nation. They did not arrive there by popular election.

The Taliban is, in fact, a small minority establishing a grip of terror over the populace, empowered and emboldened by the sudden retreat which involved no coordination with the existing Afghan government.

Countless weapons and vehicles have been needlessly abandoned to the Taliban mujahideen. It is all very reminiscent of the sudden and uncoordinated withdrawal from Iraq in 2014, when tons of war materiel were abandoned to ISIS who opportunistically filled the vacuum, and "surprised" everyone (not really) by rolling boldly into Mosul with American made Humvees brandishing the black Jihadist flag.

We will eventually pay

our own price for this current folly in terrible ways, but as always, the first and greatest victims of jihadists are their own local populations, where the brutality is about to commence in earnest.

For the brave men and women who served in Afghanistan, all the way from Operation Rhino in 2001 to yesterday's Kabul evacuations: I have never been so convinced of the moral rightness of what we did over there. We provided a glimpse of what freedom looks like to a population that has known centuries of suffering.

Day after day, the man in the photo above provided the best bread I have ever tasted to tired men on patrol. He kept a small U.S. flag hidden in the back of his bakery as a symbol of hope. To those who have never truly experienced living abroad, you will never know how much others throughout the world yearn for just a



chance at the opportunities we have in America.

We laughed with the Afghans. We trained with them. We shared risk, hardship, and loss with them to defeat a common enemy... and defeat them we did.

In the way President Lincoln described the hallowed ground at Gettysburg, there has been a consecration of the land in Afghanistan. Its soil was literally soaked by the blood of my friends.

But all good things can be undone by cowardice and betrayal. As Edmund Burke pointed out: "The

only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Right now, there are demons dancing on rooftops when they otherwise would be hiding in shadows, and that is not meant figuratively.

The true impact of all that has happened is known only to the Lord above. At least I know that Christ sees all, and He will return to judge the quick (the living) and the dead.

Till then dear God, give us wisdom and strength to act rightly, and provide comfort and protection to the persecuted Afghans.

PARTICULATE MATTER EXPOSURE VA CLAIMS TO BE PROCESSED ON 'PRESUMPTIVE BASIS'

By **Christian Southards**
Staff Writer

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that it is now processing disability claims relating to particulate matter exposure.

Specifically, the VA says disability claims for chronic asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis will now be processed on a "presumptive basis" for veterans who served in a qualifying location and developed symptoms within ten years of their service.

This basis essentially means that veterans suffering from these airborne conditions who served in a listed country during a specified time frame will be given the benefit of the

doubt.

Qualified tours include Southwest Asia after Aug. 1, 1990, and Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, or Uzbekistan after Sept. 19, 2001.

The VA notes that Southwest Asia theater includes tours in "Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations."

The VA also notes that it will be reaching out to victims or surviving spouses. Or, anyone who believes they are eligible can reach out to the VA on their own to expedite the



U.S. veterans suffering from conditions such as chronic asthma due to particulate matter exposure in qualified locations such as Afghanistan, pictured here, may be eligible for new VA benefits. (U.S. Army Photo by U.S. Army Capt. Charlie Emmons, TAAC-E Public Affairs)

process.

The American Legion can also assist veterans with obtaining VA benefits.

ABOUT PARTICULATE MATTER EXPOSURE

The VA defines particulate matter or airborne hazard exposure as an instance where "any sort of contaminant or

potentially toxic substance" is breathed.

Common examples include sand and dust, but also smoke and other chemical inhalation from burn pits, mechanical fumes, aircraft and vehicle exhaust, fuel, and even "general air pollution" native to the aforementioned qualifying locations.

According to the

Environmental Protection Agency, exposure to particulate matter of any kind can also lead to premature death, nonfatal heart attack, decreased lung function, and more, especially for those who have preexisting conditions such as lung disease or heart disease.

The VA already offers disability benefits for some of these conditions.

Help support our veteran service officer program and others

By **Janice Somers**
Chair, Ways and Means

The Ways and Means Commission is in full force working on a new **fire relief campaign** to help veterans and their communities. You may have received an email asking for a donation.

Visit caLegion.org/fire-relief-fund to learn more.

We lost the community of Greenfield and three American Legion Posts

So much damaged and the fires are still going strong as I write this.

100th Anniversary Challenge Coins sales are doing great. There are about 350 numbered coins left to sell out of 4,000. The Coins are \$5 each. Our goal is have them all sold this year.

We need your help to promote and purchase these coins. They are a great membership tool.

Coin a Veteran who just joined the Legion. It's a great talking point!

If you have a birthday, anniversary, unit or regiment use that number for memory sake. Purchase that number coin.

A good friend of the department was thrilled to have 0707, which is her birthday.

Visit caLegion.org/coins

There are nine direct mailing campaigns this year to support veterans and programs of the Department. Please promote and thank your post members for their support. If you are not on

the mailing list email: Cheryl@calegion.org.

Watch Out for the Fall Sweepstakes in the mail. Good Luck! Drawing will be at the Department on Nov. 10.



The Four Goals of the Ways and Means Commission (WAMC) this year:

1. The WAMC has full understanding of what the Commission tasks are for the Department.
2. The Commission Area representatives report at all District and Area meetings.
3. WAMC works with Media and Communication committee to promote the fundraising campaigns.
4. WAMC will have an article in all publications of the California Legionnaire.
5. Helmets for Heroes sub committee will give the WAMC a report quarterly and all all commission meetings. Jeff Freeman is Chair of Helmets for Heroes. Bill Bryant, Chris Yates, John Durkin, David Brambilla,

and Paul Rodrigues are on the sub committee. Several others have volunteered as well.

The Department supporting Veterans and Programs only works with your support. Thank YOU!!!

Thank you all who worked this campaign for the year 2020-21. The donations came to \$49,801 dollars to support our veteran service officers.

We need to KNOW:

How many helmets do you have either at your post or out in the community? Are you storing any helmets?

We need a head count of where they are all.

Email: Jeff.Freeman@District11deptca@gmail.com



Ned Fox caps his son, Michael, elected National commander of the Sons of The American Legion. (Photo: Bill Towns)

Father caps son National commander of Sons of The American Legion

By Jim Yocum
Press Relations
Detachment of California

An unprecedented capping ceremony took place at the Sons of The American Legion National Convention in Phoenix on Aug. 29.

Ned Fox, the outgoing national vice commander for the Western Region proffered the gold cap to his son, Michael Fox, the newly elected SAL national commander.

It was the first time that a national SAL officer had presided over the capping of his son as national commander.

For Ned and Michael, this ceremony was a unique culmination following decades of service to veterans by the Fox family.

This service journey started in 1960 when Edgar Fox, a World War II veteran, moved to the Sacramento area and joined the Haggin Grant Post 521 in Rio Linda, California. As Ned reminisces, “Back in those

days, it was truly a Legion Family. egionnaires, Sons, and Auxiliary members were all enjoying joint activities every month.” With the Sierra Nevada (mountain range) nearby, “We were all skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and camping and managing a 16 team Legion baseball league in the Sacramento region.”

Squadron 521 not only led the Legion Baseball effort in the Sacramento region, they also had the teams’ members visit the Yountville Veteran’s Home of California each year for a two-week excursion of volunteer activity.

The Yountville Veteran’s Home is the country’s largest residential facility for veterans with nearly 1,200 residents.

This Legion Baseball/Service program started over 50 years ago, running through 2019.

The Fox family was the driving force of this program, delivering donated goods, spectator sports, games and social activities for the home’s

residents.

All of the Legion Baseball team members participated in the activities and many returned to the event even after aging out of the league itself.

The main emphasis was to provide care, compassion, and activities for the Yountville veteran residents and it was one of the highlights of the year for them.

Michael started attending the Yountville events in 1980.

Being one of the younger Fox siblings, he was often spending time with veterans in the recreation halls, learning critical billiards and ping pong skills.

As Michael recounted, “as a 14-year old, I was once skunked three games of ping-pong by a one-armed, one-legged, legally blind resident veteran.”

Later on, he took on more responsibility for the program, including planning and logistics.

While the Yountville/Legion Baseball annual event was special,

Michael’s perspective was that the Legion Family was part of his everyday social fabric.

The Fox family’s social activity centered on service to veterans not just at the CalVet Home, but in the community.

“It wasn’t until I was nearly an adult that I realized that we were doing something out of the ordinary by helping veterans”, said Michael. “We were active in the community, making the Legion Post a community hub of activity and getting beyond the Post’s four walls”.

It was this formative experience that has been the impetus for Michael’s major effort during his upcoming year as National Commander – **Flying Flags for Heroes. (flyingflagsforheroes.com)**

Michael’s vision is to place a million flags at the gravesites of American veterans, extending into community memorials and cemeteries, in a program that echoes what occurs at National Cemeteries on Memorial Day and to a lesser extent, on Veterans Day.

Michael wants the program to foster direct engagement between the Legion Family and the communities in which they reside, “literally opening the doors of the Posts” as Michael put it, using the flag placements as the vehicle to hold open house events at each Post.

Last year, Michael reached out to Preston Sharp, an SAL member from Redding, California who was honored for his own flag placement efforts by President Trump.

Michael realized that

this was the perfect opportunity to bring the Legion Family, and its message of veteran service, back into the community. Since then, Michael and Preston have combined their efforts under the Flying Flags for Heroes banner, with Preston acting as the program’s national spokesperson.

As Michael recounted “Everyone knew who the Legion was and what they did in and for the community.”

Today, more often than not, Legion Family organizations are far less engaged in the life of the community and Michael sees providing the program, with its concurrent media outreach, as the means to re-connect the message of the Legion to their neighbors.

Lastly, Michael says that his experiences serving veterans made him a firm believer that service activities must be fun to be sustainable. What he means is “that sometimes a common goal is difficult to achieve if the completion of the goal is seen as a slog”. He added that “Combining the Flying Flags for Heroes program with community and social outreach will make the tasks more fun and deliver the message more broadly.”

The program can be accessed via the website link and requests for either Michael or Preston to attend your Legion Family flag placement event can be made there as well.

Members are encouraged to track their flag placement progress and upload photos and other social media mentions of their local activities.

American Flags 4 Less
is a proud supporter of veterans
and The American Legion

www.americanflags4less.com

VA TO AWARD OVER \$116 MILLION TO ORGANIZATIONS COMBATING VETERAN HOMELESS

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

The Department of Veterans Affairs last week announced that it will be awarding over \$116 million to over 200 community organizations as part of its Grant and Per Diem, or GPD program, including nearly \$12 million to organizations in California.

The grants are broken down into three categories, all of which relate to combating veterans homelessness: capital awards, which fund general renovations; special needs awards, which cater to specific groups; and case management awards, which allocate funds to organizations that help veterans with housing stability.

The VA says that the funds will start being dispersed on Sept. 30, with the timetable ranging

between 18 months and three years, depending on the type of award. The VA also notes that because the capital awards grants are authorized by the 2020 CARES Act, these funds must be mostly used to create single-unit housing rather than shared spaces to limit the spread of disease.

BREAKING DOWN GRANT FUNDS TO CALIFORNIA ORGANIZATIONS

As part of the GPD program, California will receive approximately \$3.7 million in capital awards, \$3.9 million in special needs awards, and \$4.4 million in case management awards starting Sept. 30.

The California organizations receiving capital awards funds include The Salvation Army in Rancho Palos Verdes and Good

Samaritan Shelter in Santa Maria, among others. In total, these funds will provide 90 single-housing units within 18–24 months.

The special needs grants awarded to California organizations like Vietnam Veterans of San Diego include three VA-designated categories: “women”, “chronically mentally ill”, and “frail elderly” veteran groups. These funds are expected to produce 35 units within three years.

And finally, the case management awards are expected to fund VSOs in California with housing assistance for two years. However, it is not clear how many units will be provided with these funds, if any.

Readers can see the full list of organizations receiving GPD grants here:

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/gpd.asp>



American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard (left) and Sons of The American Legion National Commander Michael Fox. (Photo: The American Legion)

California is back on the National stage

The Department of California now has two members serving in national leadership roles.

Jim Higuera of Downey Post 270 has been elected National Vice Commander for the Western Region.

Michael Fox was elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion in Phoenix during the national convention of the Sons of The American Legion. Michael is a member of the Sons of The American Legion Haggin Grant Squadron 521 in Rio Linda, CA.

this year. Among them is a “plan that ensures no residents of the home are involuntarily discharged without being provided alternate placement options,” “options for expansion of the home’s skilled nursing facility,” as well as plans for continued operations should the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic worsen.

More notably, the report also references an “option for full closure of the home” but does not elaborate on the context.

However, the report also says that it is not intended to relay “specific recommendations for the future of the Barstow Home.” Instead, it is only meant to supply policymakers with actionable data.

CalVet previously reached out to VSOs like the California American Legion last September to discuss ongoing issues affecting the veteran community in Barstow.

The meeting revealed that CalVet has a shortage of backup vendors

in the area that supply “supplemental services” like psychiatric treatment and does not possess data relating to the number of veterans in the county whose needs are not being met.

It is currently unclear if either of these issues will be addressed by CalVet and the California Legislature once the final review is submitted.

Currently, the Barstow Veterans Home can house 220 veterans. Regular medical treatment is provided by Jerry L Pettis Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Loma Linda, another point of contention for some veterans in the VSO stakeholder meeting. Concerned parties note that the travel time between the Barstow Veterans Home and the medical center in Loma Linda may be inaccurately portrayed, possibly to the detriment of patients.

CalVet notes that stakeholders can offer their input here: stakeholderinput@calvet.ca.gov.



CALVET SEEKS INPUT FOR IMPROVING BARSTOW VETERANS HOME

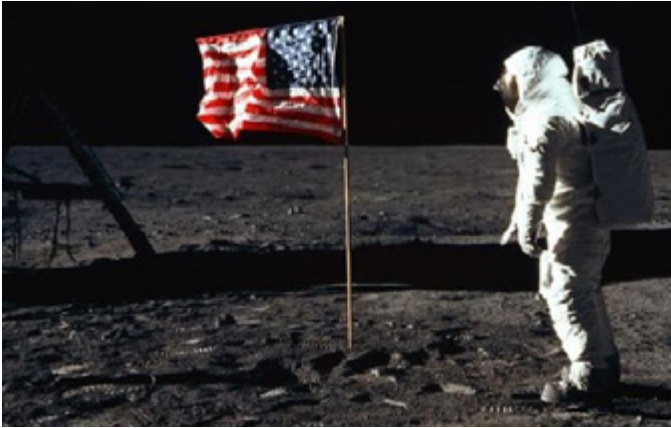
By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

The California Department of Veterans Affairs is looking for input from veterans in San Bernardino

County and veterans service organizations on how to improve operations at the Barstow Veterans Home, according to an internal stakeholder email.

CalVet’s 2021 Barstow

Report, which was originally published Feb. 1, currently provides data for several new policies and general improvements it will deliver to the California Legislature later



Astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon July 20, 1969. (Photo: NASA)

WE LANDED ON THE MOON 52 YEARS AGO

By Michael Toschak
District 26

In commemoration of the first U.S. moon landing in 1969, members of District 26 toured the recovery ship USS Hornet Museum in Alameda, California.

The Hornet was the primary recovery carrier for the Apollo 11, which transported astronauts Neil A. Armstrong, Edwin E.

“Buzz” Aldrin and Michael Collins back to Earth in a splashdown some 950 miles southwest of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean.

The tour was led by Allan Hirsch and lasted about five hours.

Most of the attendees said it was the best tour they had ever been on.

The tour consisted of the hangar deck, flight deck, engine room and tower, including the CIC.



President Nixon welcomes the astronauts home on board USS Hornet. (Photo: Milt Putnam, HS-4)



The USS Hornet at present day. (Photo: Michael Toschak)

LEGION POST SUPPORTS TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE FISHER HOUSE

By Jeff Jewell

We had another successful delivery of an evening meal for 20 residents of the Travis, Air Force Base Fisher House recently.

This is something our Legionnaires started doing about three months ago at Post 165 in Vacaville.

Thus far, we have delivered meals to 57 residents on the first Monday of every month at the Fisher House on Travis, AFB.

Thank you to American Legion Member Michelle Hammer-Coffer.

Michelle paid for the food and the meal was prepared by American

Legion Member “EE” who is a retired Army chef and former chef at VA Medical Center in San Francisco.

I washed all the dishes at the Veterans Memorial Hall kitchen where the meal was prepared. I also delivered the meal to the Fisher House.

The meal was grilled/baked pork chops in a special sauce with butter, garlic and brown sugar, fresh greens beans with onions and bacon, au gratin potatoes and homemade pineapple up-side-down cake.





U.S. Reps. Salud Carbajal, D-CA (pictured here), and Lloyd Smucker, R-CA reintroduced the Home for the Brave Act on Monday. (Photo: Carbajal.house.gov)

BILL REINTRODUCED TO EXEMPT VA DISABILITY BENEFITS FROM BEING COUNTED TOWARD HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

U.S. Representatives Salud Carbajal (D-CA) and Lloyd Smucker (R-PA) reintroduced a bill in July that bars VA disability benefits from being counted as income when determining eligibility for housing assistance

from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The bill, now known as the Home for the Brave Act of 2021, was previously introduced in 2019 but did not receive enough support.

Rep. Carbajal says, “It is wrong to deny veterans access to housing assistance programs due to

disability benefits they receive for service-related injury or illness ... I am glad to work across the aisle on this legislation to assist our veterans experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity on the Central Coast and across the country.

They stepped up to defend our nation and now Congress must step up for them by ending this egregious housing discrimination against our disabled veterans.”

National Commander of The American Legion James W. “Bill” Oxford said, “The American Legion is proud to stand with Rep. Carbajal in support of the Home for the Brave Act, which would close the loophole that counts service-related disability benefits as income for consideration of housing assistance programs.”

The bill comes at a time when veterans homelessness and housing insecurity are on the rise, especially in California where over 30% of the nation’s homeless veterans live.

Secretary Denis McDonough has previously noted that tackling veteran homelessness is a top priority for the VA.

The department extended an eviction and foreclosure moratorium for VA home loan borrowers to July 31 with additional assistance being offered through September.

REPORT: VA DOESN'T DO ENOUGH TO INFORM VETERANS WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES OF THEIR EDUCATION BENEFITS

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

The Government Accountability Office published a recent report noting that many veterans with service-connected disabilities are unaware of all their VA education benefit options.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has two major programs in this area, the GI Bill and the Veteran Readiness & Employment, or VR&E, program. The GAO report notes that the GI Bill is by far the most popular choice, largely because many veterans with disabilities are unaware of the VR&E program’s extensive benefits, or that the program exists at all.

The GAO says, “many may not know that the VR&E program can help pay for education as part of its employment services, as well as provide assistive equipment and access to a career counselor.” For veterans who anticipate struggling with choosing their courses on their own, the VR&E program provides free access to a counselor who can help veterans with disabilities create career goals and identify relevant coursework or training that suits

them best.

The GAO report says most veterans opt for the GI Bill instead because the VA generally does not supply enough information about the VR&E program’s benefits. In particular, the report says “on the agency website, VA.gov, few web pages devoted to VR&E explicitly mention that it can help pay for a college degree. In addition, the letters that VA sends to veterans when they receive their disability rating do not specifically mention that VR&E can cover education costs for a college degree.”

According to the report, six veterans service organizations, including The American Legion, were interviewed by the GAO and four testified before Congress in 2019. Between the six parties, the consensus was clear: veterans do not “have adequate information to make an informed choice about which program to use for their education benefits.”

VA ASSISTANCE

California veterans can reach out to The American Legion for help selecting and obtaining VA benefits. Email DSO@caLegion.org to be connected with a local veteran service officer.



Sign up for
American Legion
Department of California
email updates:
bit.ly/calegion-emails

Dixie Fire: hope springs eternal

From HOPE page 1

former post Commander Leland Washoe is interred in a private plot.

We do the ceremony from the Manual; before we begin we lower the cemetery's flag to half-staff and raise it up again when we are done.

We pray, we honor those called to their final post, we fire three volleys and play Taps. It is very moving. This year, despite the lack of publicity — only word of mouth — we had more people at the Greenville cemetery than we usually do. This was not true of the other places — but we did the ceremony even if no one else was there. We have been doing this for as long as any one can remember and the post was chartered in 1941.

Now, after the Dixie Fire had her way with Greenville, I don't know what will happen. We did the July 4th parade in Taylorsville that we couldn't do in 2020 and the Gold Digger Days parade in Greenville — both events somewhat reduced from normal years. We actually did a small version of the Veterans Day parade in 2020, with a car parade afterward.

This year there's no main street left to Parade down. Many of the members are out of the county. My house is gone, my church is gone — almost everything that made Greenville HOME is gone, including the Legion Hall and the Post Office, the Library, drug store, both thrift

stores, all of the places to dine out, the hotel, the hardware store [owned by a post member who was also a volunteer firefighter — and he also lost two homes], the Chamber of Commerce, the Rancheria medical and dental clinics and administrative offices where I worked when I first moved to Greenville.

So much of the town's history was wiped out in less than 30 minutes as the fire roared through town, exploding propane tanks and buildings alike. There are videos and you may have seen some of them. I couldn't watch after I saw the first one — and it didn't show my house or the Legion Hall or my church — not that I recognized a lot of what was burning.

The one thing we are all grateful for — NO DEATHS. A few injuries, but no human casualties that we know of.

There are a couple of people crews are still looking for but I'm hoping they are safe. People who left early might not have "signed out" from anywhere, they just left. They may not have told anyone they were leaving.

I pray that all got out safely and I pray for rain because the fire is still burning and still threatening communities in Plumas and Lassen counties. It is now the largest fire in California this year and still growing.

Commander James and Vice Commander Williams are organizing some help for us up here.



Mobilizing for Dixie Fire support

From SUPPORT page 1

depend on the government for everything," Romano said. "Sometimes volunteers have to close the gap between what the government provides and what the community needs, especially in the 'right now' moment. Donations such as these help the recovery effort to remind those impacted by the disaster that they are not alone. There are others who care and support enough to bring these items to them as a morale booster to help in the psychological process of dealing with the emergency"

"I can tell you that we

provided nearly \$5,000 in Visa gift cards so people can buy things they need," said James. "We provided two 10-foot U-Haul trucks, a pick-up truck and an SUV full of blankets, sleeping bags, tents, and 100 cots, tarps, ice chests and personal hygiene items"

Another 26-foot truck full of camp stoves and fuel will be heading up north this week, in addition to another truck full of supplies from Fortuna, James said.

"Money is still coming into the Department from all over the state and the nation in support of fire

victims," James said.

The supplies were ultimately caravanned up to Elks Lodge #1884 in Quincy to be stored and disbursed.

"What Autrey and his crew accomplished is something memorable to the Dixie/Beckwourth Fire victims here in Plumas County and possible neighboring Lassen County, depending on the Dixie Fire expansion," said Bill Cook, a Plumas County veteran service officer. "On 2-3 day notice the Legion arrived here ... with items in need by the fire victims."

Your Dixie Fire donations help our relief efforts

From DONATE Page 1

second largest wildfire ever. They had little time before the fire swept in and most fled with just the clothes on their back.

Marj Goosey, a long time Greenville resident and Vietnam veteran, asked her fellow Legionnaires to help those who had lost everything.

Immediately, her fellow veterans sprang to action, working with county officials to deliver truckloads of cots, tents, blankets,

and thousands of dollars in gift cards to help support the community of Greenville. Marj's call to the American Legion Department of California activated a powerful network of volunteers and resources that eased the suffering of the displaced residents of Greenville.

Have you been impacted by this year's fires?

If you have, we are here to help you. Simply email our Fire Relief team at LegionFireRelief@calegion.org or call us at 559.875.8387.