



California LEGIONNAIRE

DECEMBER 2021

Official Publication of The American Legion Department of California

CALEGION.ORG



On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, enabling women to serve as permanent, regular members of the U.S. Armed Forces. A few years later, in 1951, he signs an executive order allowing DoD to force pregnant women from the military's ranks. (Photo: National Archives)

Bill to require GAO review of women involuntarily separated from military

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

A bill advanced by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee would require the Government Accountability Office to review women "involuntarily separated or discharged from the

See **WOMEN** page 14



Want a hard copy mailed to you?

Go online

caLegion.org/newsletter-mail

or

Call HQ
559-875-8387

How to financially protect yourself if you're taken to a non-VA emergency medical facility

By Ernst Larson Jr
Sacramento Post 861

If you receive your medical care through the VA Northern California Healthcare System (VANCHCS), you can now obtain a Non-VA Emergency Medical Card and instructional brochure from the Patient Advocate Office or Eligibility/

Enrollment Dept. of the VA medical facility where you are enrolled.

This card will help you avoid having to pay your emergency medical bills in the event you are taken by EMTs to the nearest non-VA trauma center. The card IDs you as a veteran and instructs EMTs, hospital, ER doctors, and radiologist as to what they

must do, where to send their bills to the VA and not to you.

The brochure gives instructions to care-givers, spouses and other family members as to what to do and what VA agencies in your area you must notify within 72 hours. Both the card and brochure are now available online through

See **CARD** page 9

Newsletter Changes Coming

The DEC in October approved key points in a plan to increase the reach of the California Legionnaire through donation requests and corporate sponsorships.

By Jared Morgan
Editor

When I took over as editor of the California Legionnaire beginning with the December 2019 issue, a few changes came with me to the format of the newsletter.

I wanted to make the publication more closely resemble a professional newspaper.

Using my experience as a journalist and content manager for more than 10 years, I took over the editing and page design of the California Legionnaire, winning the publication first-place recognition from The American Legion Media Alliance in 2020.

The American Legion Department of California's leadership trusted me with its newsletter and I proved

See **NEWSLETTER** page 3

Support the California Legionnaire

The cost of ink and paper is prohibitively expensive.

Please consider supporting with an annual donation.

Your contribution can help spread the word about the good work Legionnaires are doing to strengthen our communities and the nation. To donate a subscription to someone else, see the bottom of page two.

I want to help spread the word 

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Find enclosed my one-time donation of (circle one)

\$10 \$15 \$20 Other: _____

**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 Staff Writer Christian Southards	Web Team Member Rick Pushies 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
559-875-8387

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"



Thank you for your service

Autrey James
Department Commander

By the time you read this, we'll be well into December and the holiday season, but I would still like to wish my brothers and sisters who are Marines a happy belated Nov. 10 Marine Corps Birthday.

This past Nov. 11 Veterans Day was the first after the end of our nation's longest war and many of you served with honor and distinction in that war.

I commend the work you did in Afghanistan, and I sincerely thank you for your service to our nation.

Your service prevented terrorists from reaching the shores of our country and I will remain forever in debt.

Those of you who served in the Greatest Generation, you saved the world from tyranny during WWII. You set the example for those who followed in your footsteps and taught us what it means to preserve democracy in America.

You left a legacy for us all to follow. My hope is that I live up to the legacy you

have set.

Those of you who served in Korea, you defended against the threat of communism in the bitter cold, in a land far away.

Your service is as important to this nation and democracy as anyone in service.

Today, many service members have taken up the mantle you laid down and defend democracy in this ever-changing world. It was your work that helped democracy continue to flourish in our beloved nation. Thank you.

Those of you who served during Vietnam, you served once again to help defend democracy.

You served during a time when many Americans confused the war with the warriors.

It has taken many years, but Americans now see you as the heroes you truly are.

You answered the nation's call like so many before you and you did your duty honorably. The United States can never fully repay you for the treatment you received when you came home but we will continue

to try.

To my comrades who served later in places like Granada, Panama, Bosnia, and the early years in the Persian Gulf: Our service was critical to this Nation at the time we served.

Our time in conflict may not have been as long, but it was equally challenging and necessary to this nation as any other conflict. I am proud to have served alongside you.

Throughout the history of our country, the one constant is that the fighting spirit of America's servicemembers cannot not be denied. Servicemembers don't decide when to go to war, nor do we decide when a war ends, but in every conflict the U.S. has ever been a part of, we servicemembers, have always done our duty with honor.

Finally, I say to each and every one of you, thank you. Thank you for preserving our freedom, thank you for keeping our country safe, thank you for preserving democracy and thank you for your honorable service.

By supporting The American Legion though your continued membership, you help us to continue to honor the service of you and your fellow veterans and the strength and support that we provide to communities across this great nation.

Thank you.

I want to donate a subscription to someone else 

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Find enclosed my one-time donation of (circle one)

\$10 \$15 \$20 Other: _____

Members key to expanding the voice of The American Legion

From NEWSLETTER page 1

to them — I proved to you — that I could improve it. But I didn't do it alone.

Each issue, I've relied on our members to send me articles, photos and even news tips to help fill the pages of the California Legionnaire.

As an officer of your post, district or area, you can update veterans across the state on ways you're successfully executing the mission and programs of The American Legion.

If you're a regular member and want to submit an opinion article on any news of the day, I welcome that wholeheartedly.

Just include your name, city and post number in an email to editor@calegion.org or by mail to California American Legion, ATTN: California Legionnaire, 1601 7th St, Sanger, CA 93657

Upcoming Newsletter Changes

California American Legion leaders have once again entrusted me with more changes to the newsletter, having approved key points in a plan I developed to help once again increase the circulation of the newsletter while also raising money through sponsorships and donations to help offset the cost of production and mailing.

The first phase of the plan will transform the California Legionnaire into a quarterly publication, reducing the number of issues from six to four each year.

This will allow us to shift the production and mailing costs of two issues to our freelance writer's budget, which will give us more quality content for our website, caLegion.org, and the printed newsletter.

This, of course, is pending endorsement by the Finance Committee and a vote by the Department Executive Committee, which by publication date had not yet deliberated on the matter.

We Need Your Support

While operating as a quarterly, we will work to increase circulation by asking members like you to donate a yearly amount to help fund the newsletter. We'll call this optional donation a "Subscription".

What you'll be supporting is an extended reach into the far corners and dense population centers of the Golden State.

At last count, The American Legion Department of California had 48,690 members.

With an estimated 1.8 million veterans living in the state of California, according to the Census Bureau, just 2.7% of them are American Legion members.

We can't begin to reach a larger percentage of veterans in the state if we're not first in touch with more of our own members.

This newsletter helps to spread the word of the good work Legionnaires do on a daily basis to support veterans, their families, and their communities.

We need your support to help us get the message out.

When I took over as editor, the newsletter circulation had already been dropped significantly as a cost-savings measure.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars had been diverted to other programs of the California American Legion.

There's no doubt in my mind that the money is being well spent to support the mission of this great organization.

Currently, the California

Legionnaire is only being printed and mailed to some 1,000 members and 421 posts in the Department of California.

The newsletter used to be mailed to close to 80,000 members.

I'd like to see us get closer to that number in the coming years and we'll need your help to do that.

What Will You Get for Your Annual Donation?

In addition to the satisfaction you'll feel for directly supporting the outreach efforts of this organization to reach more of California's veterans, your annual donation can help us to produce a more robust newsletter, with more color pages where needed and more quality news and feature stories.

With a freelance writer budget, we've been able to get consistent, quality writing about the most important veterans issues.

Regular readers of the California Legionnaire will recognize the name Christian Southards.

Since August 2020, he's written close to 100 articles for the website and the newsletter, at about two articles per week.

Additionally, through my employment at Military Times, I've made an agreement that allows me to use stories from Army Times, Marine Corps Times, Air Force Times and Navy Times in the pages of the California Legionnaire.

More plans are in the works to increase the quality, value and authority of the California Legionnaire and The American Legion Department of California, so keep reading in the coming months for an update on that.

Sponsorships

Some may ask "Why invest so much time, effort and money into paper, when it's eventually going away?"

To that I would say, yes, our website and email list are valuable resources that we need to focus heavily on, however, we still have members who prefer reading their member news on paper.

Some of them can't access the Internet or have a hard time doing so and we can't abandon them.

But I would also add that having a printed newsletter gives an organization the opportunity to demonstrate its authority on a given subject and extend its reach to more of its constituents and to potential donors and sponsors.

The Department Executive Committee also gave me permission to seek out corporate sponsors who we can recognize in the newsletter and on the website. I cannot, however, sign any contracts.

That responsibility belongs to the adjutant at headquarters.

All sponsors will also need to be approved by the DEC.

The bottom line is that businesses want to partner with organizations that have a longstanding reputation for doing good, and likewise, we should partner with businesses whose missions align with our own.

The newsletter can help to build these reciprocal relationships so that when we need to, we can call on our partners to assist in a major way.

With members and sponsors donating to the production of the newsletter, we will be able to extend our reach while simultaneously increasing our authority, which will work

to attract more donors and sponsors.

There will be a tipping point, where the newsletter can be used to fundraise for the many programs of The American Legion.

We've already seen this with the Department's Dixie Fire emergency fund, which has raised thousands of dollars for survivors of the blaze.

The Dixie Fire began in July and ripped through almost a million acres.

As Marj Goosey has written, Greenville was ravaged and Indian Valley Post 568 lost its home.

We published Marj's article and others about the fire and our members responded with their support.

Not only did our members donate funds, but they donated their time to purchase and deliver necessities to the survivors of the fire.

If the Legionnaire were still being mailed to almost 80,000 people as it once was, imagine the mighty support structure we'd be able to nurture and grow.

Spreading the word about the good work this organization does is my primary mission but I can't do it without your help.

A Mailed Copy

Any member in good standing can request a printed copy of the California Legionnaire be mailed to them, but we'd ask that you please donate to help offset the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter.

To request a printed copy, visit: caLegion.org/newsletter-mail

You can also mail your request to Department Headquarters, 1601 7th St., Sanger, CA 93657-2801

If you prefer to pick up the phone, call 559-875-8387.

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!

Sponsors

Do you own a business or know someone who does? We're looking for sponsors for the California Legionnaire. We're looking for like-minded businesses to highlight in upcoming issues and on our website, caLegion.org.

Email editor@caLegion.org

Helmets for Heroes funds our veteran service officers, find out how you can support the program

Supporting the Helmets for Heroes program is as simple as going to a grocery store or other business, then asking a manager if you can leave a helmet on the counter for people to donate. You then only need come back to collect the money deposited into the helmet. The more helmets you deploy, the bigger your impact.

Contact Jeff Freeman — (209) 840-2253 — for information on how to get your hands on some helmets and how to best go about deploying them to your community.



More than \$11,000 for Helmets for Heroes in June — From left: Department Service Officer Sam Flores, Bill Bryant of Placerville SAL Squadron 118, Department Adjutant Barbara Lombrano, and Larry Nydahl of Turlock Squadron 88.

The Sons of the American Legion in California are championing the Helmets For Heroes program that raises money for the department's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation (VA&R) Division.

Bill Bryant from Placerville Squadron 119 has a simple philosophy

when it comes to fundraising: "Just ask." He has hundreds of "helmets" out around where he lives. Patrons of businesses can drop their spare change directly into the helmet piggy bank and that money raised goes directly to Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation.

Read about the national organization's legislative agenda

Visit legion.org/legislative/agenda

Veteran unemployment at a glance

- The national unemployment rate is 4.6%
- Gulf War II veterans' unemployment rate is 3.8%
- Gulf War II women veterans' unemployment rate is 5.5%
- In September 2021, the veteran unemployment rate was 3.9%. The comparable non-veteran unemployment rate was 4.8% in September
- Newly discharged veterans claiming benefits totaled 5,428, an increase of 225 from the preceding week

Veterans employment and education update

Joseph C. Sharpe, Jr.

Director

National Veterans Employment and Education Division

The National Veterans Employment and Education Division attended a meeting with the office of Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) on Friday, November 5th to discuss the Legion's legislative priorities pertaining to small business and government contracting. Relevant issues included:

- **Resolution No. 150:** Expanding Post-9/11 GI Bill for Entrepreneurship Legion staff requested the Senator's introduction and support for a Senate counterpart to H.R. 4433 The Veterans Entrepreneurship Act, which would support a pilot program for allowing veterans to utilize G.I. Bill Funding for entrepreneurial endeavors.
- **Resolution No. 12:** Cybersecurity Protections for Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Origin: Veterans Employment & Education Commission The Legion advocated for the Senator's continued support for cybersecurity initiatives that support small and at-risk businesses.
- **Resolution No. 13:** Mandatory Use of the Veterans First Contracting Program by the Department of Defense The Legion expressed the need for the expansion of VETs First to the Department of Defense and other agencies, and expressed concern with efforts by the Department of Veterans Affairs to move away from the VETs First Program.
- The Legion expressed concern with a failure for USAID to meet its annual 3% SDVOSB prime and subcontracting goals, advocating for greater efforts to increase the number of SDVOSBs within USAID's supplier base. The total value of USAID's SDVOSB contracts is \$185M, but current obligations are at \$71M, which is well below the 3% target. The American Legion seeks to work with agencies and lawmakers to ensure that agencies meet their SDVOSB contracting goals.



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



American Legion Executive Director Chanin Nuntavong joins members of Congress during a press conference at the U.S. Capitol Nov. 3 to urge the U.S. Senate to include the language for the “Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act” in its version of the National Defense Authorization Act.. (Photo: Jason Andrew)

The American Legion calls for a GWOT memorial

By Mackenzie Wolf
D.C. Spokesperson

The American Legion joined veterans’ advocates, lawmakers, wounded warriors and Gold Star families in front of the U.S. Capitol on Nov. 3 to call on Congress to pass legislation authorizing the construction of a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall.

Spearheaded by the Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation, they are urging the U.S. Senate to include the language for the “Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act” in its version of the National Defense Authorization Act.

The “Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act” was introduced earlier this year by U.S. Sens. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and Maggie Hassan, D-N.H. Their bill now has the support of 49 senators.

Chanin Nuntavong, executive director of Government Affairs for The

American Legion, highlighted the sacrifices of the 3 million veterans who have served in the Global War on Terrorism.

The gift of freedom, he said, is preserved by the men and women who fought for something much greater than themselves.

“The warriors, whose sacrifice we admire every day, either laid down their lives or faced overwhelming dangers – not to uphold one moment, but one nation,” said Nuntavong, who served in the Marine Corps. “6,923 faces and names line hallways of military posts, and are etched on marble and granite across the country. They serve as reminders that bear the scars of our fallen. 53,267 gave their blood, parts of their body, and most of them, their spirit. Veterans of the Global War on Terrorism account for more than half of the severely disabled veteran population.”

Approximately 1.8 million veterans live with a

recognized disability from the Global War on Terrorism. And many more live daily with the unseen scars resulting from an entire generation spent at war.

Three million veterans may have served in the Global War on Terrorism, Nuntavong said, but many times that number have paid the cost of war.

“They are the parents, spouses, children and friends. They were the ones left to cope with their loved ones’ absence, mourn their deaths, or greet the person who returned – changed.”

A national memorial for Global War on Terrorism veterans would serve as a place to gather, remember and reflect.

Veterans of past wars often did not live to see the completion of the memorials designed to honor their service and sacrifice.

This does not need to be the case for the Global War on Terrorism generation as it begins to heal.

“The motivation that binds us – those of us who have worn the cloth of this nation – is our respect for, and commitment to, those who have chosen to put their lives before others,” Nuntavong said.

Ernst says she will not rest until this memorial becomes a reality on the National Mall.

“Now is the time to honor the servicemembers, fallen soldiers, their families and all those impacted by the Global War on Terrorism,” she said.

Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation CEO Marina Jackman shared these sentiments.

“As we mark 20 years since Sept. 11, this year has refocused the nation’s attention on our veterans’ service and their stories,” she said. “Now, more than ever, the service community needs a place where we all can come together to reflect, heal, and honor the sacrifices made by this generation of warriors.”

Elderly veterans targeted in \$134 million Medicare, VA medical care fraud scheme

By Rachel Nostrant
Military Times

Two men were sentenced Nov. 5 for their roles in a fraud scheme against Medicare and the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) after submitting at least \$134 million in fraudulent claims, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Florida.

Michael Nolan, 48, of Tampa, Florida, and Richard Epstein, 29, of Aurora, Colorado, were both ordered to jointly pay \$29,020,304 in restitution, as well as \$2.1 million and \$3 million respectively.

U.S. District Judge Virginia M. Hernandez Covington additionally sentenced Nolan to six years and six months imprisonment and Epstein to five years and three months in federal prison. Both Nolan and Epstein will also face three years of supervised release upon completion of their respective sentences.

According to court documents, in October 2016 Epstein and Nolan created and ran a telemarketing company in Tampa called REMN Management L.L.C. that targeted elderly patients by generating thousands of medically unnecessary orders for durable medical equipment — such as orthotic devices like back and knee braces — and genetic testing for cancer.

Epstein and Nolan also created and operated Comprehensive Telcare, L.L.C., a “telemedicine” company prosecutors say they used to bribe physicians to sign medical orders regardless of necessity.



By Paul E. Dillard
National Commander

There is no better time than right now to encourage your members of Congress to approve The American Legion-supported bipartisan legislation for a Buddy Check National Week of Calling. Here's how you can contact your representative.

<https://www.voterve.net/AmericanLegion/Campaigns/87480/>

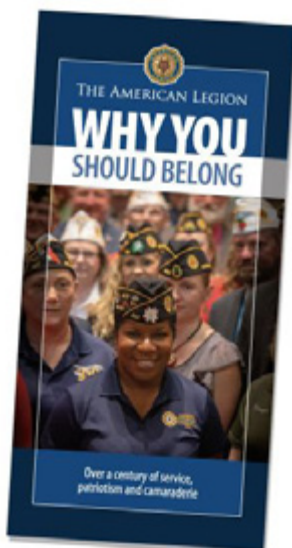
As you know, The American Legion pioneered the Buddy Check concept under Past National Commander Brett Reistad. When we began these wellness checks the intent was for American Legion posts to conduct them twice a year — around American Legion Birthday and Veterans Day.

The initiative demonstrated immediate success. Soon the Buddy Check program transitioned to year round, allowing posts to conduct these whenever it made the most sense on the local level.

And throughout the pandemic, we have seen how important it is to check on our veterans. Posts have used Buddy Checks to help get prescription refills to veterans stuck at home. Others have connected with isolated veterans missing their comrades. In other cases, posts have delivered food, personal protective equipment and other resources to veterans after learning about their needs during a wellness check-in.

The U.S. Senate has approved legislation that would make this a national program. Now, let's prod the U.S. House to follow suit. If our representatives don't act before Congress recesses next month, it could be at least three months before they consider this legislation again. Or it could be dropped altogether.

We cannot let this legislation linger in Congress. Follow this link to join me in reaching out to congressional representatives to voice our support for this legislation. With a week dedicated to Buddy Checks across America, we will be able to reach even more veterans and save even more lives.



National Commander's Renewal Incentive

Membership engagement is a priority for American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard. Whether it's current, expired or potential members, it's important to engage with these individuals and show them the value of

Read the American Legion Annual Report

By American Legion HQ

The American Legion has been publishing its annual report online since 2011.

The annual report provides a concise report of topics of interest to Legionnaires and The American Legion over the preceding year.

Annual reports often contain a written story and a photographic story.

Bright crisp images help tell a more complete story that is difficult to tell with just words.

You might just find a photograph of California Legionnaires walking on the beach near San Clemente in support of the 100 Miles for Hope 2021 Challenge.

Read the 2021 Annual Report at www.legion.org/annualreport

The topics in the annual report quickly cover the activities of the previous year for many of our most popular and important programs. Each selection

provides a concise summary of activities over the previous year, links to additional resources on the topic, and some great photos.

100 Miles, Countless Benefits

Amid the pandemic in 2020, The American Legion launched 100 Miles for Hope, an experimental program intended to encourage members to exercise, improve their wellness and contribute to the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation (V&CF).

Nearly 5,000 participants covered 100 miles or more in 100 days by walking, riding bikes or motorcycles, running, swimming, doing elliptical machine exercises and even riding a mule.

Their registration fees and donations supporting their cause went to the foundation.

Since 1925, V&CF has delivered more than \$30 million in financial assistance in support of

veterans seeking their earned benefits, and military families with minor children at home who are facing financial crises.

V&CF funds training and resources for more than 3,000 accredited American Legion service officers.

They provide free assistance to any veteran seeking help with a VA claim. Donations to the foundation also provide grants as part of the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program, which delivers up to \$1 million annually.

TFA funds enable qualified families to put food on the table, pay utility bills and cover other necessary expenses.

The inaugural 100 Miles campaign was so successful that it was updated, expanded and turned into an annual event in 2021.

Its mission remains the same: encourage healthy activities while driving donations to help disabled veterans and military families in need.



Members of the Department of California walk along the beach of San Clemente. From left: Judge Advocate Chris Yates, Baseball Spokesperson Judi Leonardi, Mike Heckenlaible, Department Commander Autrey James, Clay Baxter, Past Commander Ed Grimsley, 2021-2022.

membership in The American Legion.

Dillard has announced a new membership engagement initiative with members who last paid in 2020 and did not renew their membership in 2021.

Legionnaires are

encouraged to reach out to 2020 members and offer them the ability to continue their continuous years of membership – despite not renewing in 2021 – if they renew for the 2022 membership year. For example, if an expired 2020 member had

five continuous years prior to letting their membership lapse, and they were to pay for the 2022 membership year, their continuous years would be six years.

The veteran can opt to pay for 2021 as well so it's on their record.



From left: Alternate National Executive Committeeman Harley Santos, National Vice Commander James T. Higuera, National Executive Committeeman Mark Foxworthy

National reps to keep California members informed

By Mark Foxworthy
National Executive
Committeeman

National Vice Com-
mander James T. Higuera,

Alternate National Exec-
utive Committeeman
Harley Santos and yours
truly attended and rep-
resented the Department
of California during

the fall meetings and
National Executive Com-
mittee meeting held in
Indianapolis at National
Headquarters during the
first week of October.

The meetings were well
attended and conducted
efficiently and with
purpose.

We were appointed by
National Commander
Paul Dillard to serve on
the Subcommittee on
Resolutions.

An exceptional oppor-
tunity to get involved with
the inner workings of the
NEC and learn from many
experienced Legionnaires.
Overall, we reviewed and
presented 22 resolutions to
the NEC for its consider-
ation and approval.

All were received
and became part of the
history of our great orga-
nization: [https://bit.ly/
legion-resolutions-2021f](https://bit.ly/legion-resolutions-2021f)
Cancellation of the
Washington Conference
was announced at the
meeting. This message
from National Adjutant
Wheeler:

“In lieu of an in-person
Washington Conference,
National Commander
Dillard is encouraging all

American Legion, Ameri-
can Legion Auxiliary, and
SAL members to make
appointments with their
members to meet in their
home offices – more infor-
mation to follow, along
with a list of legislative
concerns. There may also
be a virtual “Know Before
You Go,” but time and date
has not been decided.”

The resolutions and
actions of the National
Executive Committee are
available on the National
website, message points
for six key areas were
distributed along with
commission and commit-
tee reports.

Your appointed members
on these national com-
missions and committees
are charged with keeping
the blue cap members
informed.

Please seek these sources
and help spread the word
on the great work being
done in service to Vet-
erans and our Nation.
AIRBORNE!

Legionnaires help deliver furniture to previously homeless veterans

ABC Channel 10 News
aired a 90-second prime-
time special on Thursday,
March 18 highlighting
Frank Squire, U.S. Army
veteran and member of
American Legion Sacra-
mento Legislative Action
Post 861 in Sacramento,
California, and his Furniture
Program team which picks
up and delivers home fur-
nishings to newly-housed,
previously homeless
veterans.

Also, on Thursday, Jan.
21, Frank received The
Outstanding Member of
the Year Award for the
year 2020, presented by
Cmdr. Don Harper, Ameri-
can Legion Sacramento
Legislative Action Post
861. Observing COVID
restrictions, a group of post
members assembled on
Frank's front lawn for the
ceremony.

Five years ago, Frank
began volunteering at

Mather VA Medical Center
in California by providing
rides to patients in need.
It wasn't long before Frank
found himself being asked
by Volunteer Services
to deliver some items of
furniture to the new living
quarters of enrolled for-
merly homeless veterans at
the request of Mather VA
social workers who were
implementing the HUD-
VASH program The U.S.
Dept. of Housing and Urban
Development-VA Support-
ive Housing (HUD-VASH)
program is a collaborative
program between HUD
and VA which combines
HUD housing vouchers
with VA supportive services
to help homeless veterans
and their families find and
sustain permanent housing.

Frank's furniture delivery
program grew along with
other hospital programs,
and he found himself coordi-
nating the work of several



From left: Ernst Larson, Adjutant; Diana Squire, wife; Dwight Davis, father-in-law and WWII veteran, Lisa Harnett, daughter, Frank Squire 2020 LOTY for Post 861; Don Sparks, 2nd Vice Cmdr; and Don Harper, Post 861 Cmdr.

men and women volun-
teers, paying for as many as
seven storage units himself,
and delivering furniture to
Woodland, Davis, Jackson,
Elk Grove, Del Paso, and
to all cities in the Greater
Sacramento Area. These
home furnishings have been
picked up from donors by
members of the volunteer
furniture team, and were
initially stored in 10'x20'
commercial storage units
and delivered to the new
living quarters of enrolled

formerly homeless veterans
at the request of Mather
VA social workers who are
implementing the HUD-
VASH program.

As the program grew, so
did the storage requirements
that were not donated.
Frank has been struggling
for several years to get help
from Mather VA and local
government to provide stor-
age facilities, and to acquire
some financial support
from local VSOs to help
take some of the load off, so

he wouldn't have to con-
tinue paying for the needed
storage units himself, but
without much success.

CONGRATULATIONS
and THANK YOU, Frank,
and to all of you who have
volunteered your time, hard
work, vehicles, and gasoline
to deliver home furnish-
ings to many hundreds of
grateful formerly homeless
veterans!

Watch the video online:
[https://bit.ly/
post-861-furniture](https://bit.ly/post-861-furniture)

Golf Tournament by the Sea Raising Money for Wounded Warriors and Youth Scholarship



(Tord Sollie, Creative Commons)

It's time for us all to step up and serve our Community, Wounded Veterans and Scholarships for Youth going on to College.

American Legion Post 512, Carmel-by-the-Sea, CA is hosting its First Annual Charity Golf

Tournament on **April 15** 2022 at Pebble Beach's Old Del Monte Golf Course.

We are looking for Sponsors that can help bring much needed funds to this event. There are many ways you can contribute. It is 100% Tax Deductible

and you will receive a letter from the Post with all the Tax ID information for your contribution.

Here are some of the ways you can help:

- **Title Sponsor \$20,000** - Your name will be on the front page of the Web Site

and on all printed material including a large sign at the event.

- **Beverage Cart Sponsor \$3,500** - Your name will be on the cart showing that you contributed all the drinks for the tournament.
- **Hole in One Sponsor's** - There are 4 Par 3's and the first 3 will pay \$10,000 if someone makes a whole in one and the 4th is worth \$50,000. Sponsor fee is \$1,000 per hole for the first 3 par 3's and \$1,500 for the 4th hole.

- **Logo golf balls \$3,000** - You can give each player 3 golf balls with your company logo on them as a tee prize. Great way to get your name out there and it will last for more than just a day.

- **Closest to the Pin Contest \$1,500**

- **Longest Drive Contest \$1,500**

- **Lunch Sponsor \$3,500**
- **Auction Drink Sponsor \$2,000**

- **Hole Sponsors \$175** Your name will be on an individual sign at a chosen tee box
- **Gift Cards** for your business, Hotels, Restaurants, Spas, Retail etc.
- **Any contribution** would be great, you can send your check to the Legion or use our website.

All sponsors will be mentioned in both the Monterey Herald and the Carmel Pine Cone.

Thank you for helping our Legion aid Wounded Warriors and provide Scholarships to local students and services to our own local veterans.

Website:

www.post512golf.com

Contact John Wickham for more information:

johnwvtech@gmail.com
(408)315-5320

Palm Springs Celebrity Golf Classic a Success

By **Amado C Salinas II**
Asst. Adjutant, District 21

District 21 is pleased to report the Palm Springs Celebrity Golf Classic went off with no hiccups.

The Nov. 12 Friday night kick off pairing party had multiple entertainers for the guest to enjoy as everyone got settled in and introduced themselves.

Over 102 VIP guests and golf players attended, coming from across America and Canada, as well as others from the East Coast.

Everyone enjoyed a beautiful day out at Desert Dunes Golf Resort.

Celebrities and NFL alumni greeted the guests and Chris Maulkey got on

stage and sang an original song. Andre Reed thanked all participants and donated his NFL jersey and signed helmet for the auction.

Legion posts entered their golf teams to compete for bragging rights in an attempt to capture the Commander's Award Plaque for Best Team 2021-22.

Post 291 from District 29, baseball commissioner for the Area 5 team, Post 53 from Hemet, Post 742 Corona, Norco Post 328, and Post 519 Palm Springs all competed; but there could only be one winner.

Commander Jennifer Turbin from Norco Post 328 led her team to victory, and will be presented



the Commander's Award plaque at the next district meeting.

Commander of Newport Post 291, Evin Planto, vowed to return next year to secure the award plaque.

I think he will have stiff competition, but all in

good fun for bragging rights.

During the awards dinner back at the host Legion, Owen Coffman Post 519, the participants were provided a great BBQ meal, and purchased opportunity coupons for various gifts, and bid on

auction items.

Regrettably, nobody won the \$1M cash prize, \$10K, or car at the hole in one par 3.

All proceeds will be presented to District 21 Executive Board, with the funds to be distributed where needed most.

ABOUT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE WEST LOS ANGELES VA CAMPUS

By Tess Banko
Project Director, U.S. Vets

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System's (GLA) 388+-acre West Los Angeles (WLA) Campus has a long history of service to Veterans.

First established in 1887 as a home for disabled Veterans on land donated to the United States by Arcadia Bandini de Baker, the WLA Campus evolved over the years and moved away from residential beds to clinical care beds and providing a full continuum of health services to Veterans under the Veterans Health Administration arm of VA. This includes medical care and research, Community Living Centers (nursing home graduated care), and residential domiciliary treatment programs for substance use disorder, severe mental health and chronic homelessness care. Over time, medical activities were mostly concentrated on the southern portion of the WLA Campus (south of Wilshire Boulevard, referred to as the South Campus) and the remaining buildings and open parcels of land on the northern portion of the WLA Campus (north of Wilshire Boulevard, referred to as the North Campus) began to suffer from lack of use, investment and upkeep.

Other non-Veteran focused commercial uses were introduced to the WLA Campus, resulting in a shift from its core and historical mission. A lawsuit was brought forth by various stakeholders, including local Veteran advocates and descendants of relatives of the original land donors, challenging the government's use of the WLA Campus. On January 28, 2015, VA signed the Principles

for a Partnership and Framework for Settlement (referred to as the "Principles Agreement") resulting in the Plaintiff Party withdrawing their lawsuit and outlining initial objectives for engaging with stakeholders, developing a Draft Master Plan (DMP) as part of VA's strategy to address

Veterans homelessness in the region and to expand needed services to Veterans associated with the use of the WLA Campus.

The VA itself may not construct housing per regulation and must contract with developers in order to achieve its monumental

mission at WLA. Rather than continuing with individual Enhanced Use Leases (EUL) under separate developers, VA engaged a Principal Developer (also called 'The West Los Angeles Veterans Collective') to approach the WLA Campus redevelopment holistically

as a neighborhood and a community. The West Los Angeles Veterans Collective (WLAVC) was selected as the Principal Developer in November 2018 pursuant to a competitive Request For Qualifications (RFQ) selection process.

Continued on page 19

Having a VA Emergency Billing Card could save you time down the road

From **CARD** page 1

your patient advocates in Auburn, Chico, Fairfield, Mare Island, Martinez, McLellan, Oakland, Redding/ Yreka, Sacramento, VAMC and Yuba City.

The need for the card and instructional brochure was brought to the attention of the hospital assistant director and department managers at Sacramento VA Medical Center at Mather, CA by a member of American Legion Sacramento Legislative Action Post 861. The assistant director and managers were deeply moved when they listened for 20 minutes while the veteran told of his two-year battle with VA over its refusal to pay for any medical bills related to a perceived medical emergency because he didn't follow all the step-by-step requirements. Like most veterans, he had no prior knowledge of what he or his family needed to do.

Also, the veteran learned that the VA expects

veterans and family members to be expert diagnosticians. If you are taken to a non-VA trauma center when you or another person think you are in serious condition and then the ER doctor determines your extreme chills and difficulty breathing were due to a severe case of the flu, the VA will likely deny your claim because someone in their billing department decides it wasn't a true emergency. In this veteran's case, he was being withdrawn from prednisone by his allergist/immunologist and rheumatologist after being on it for 11 years. Due to concern over a possible adrenal crisis, the specialist advised the veteran to take prednisone and call 911 if he became ill, which he did. The non-VA ER doctor's diagnosis was that the veteran had flu. The VA denied his claim.

After two years of frustration and his credit, the veteran appealed to

Representative Doris Matsui, who intervened, and the VA immediately paid all bills. The veteran learned from a patient advocate while the card was being developed, that she was aware of two veterans who committed suicide over going through a similar experience. It destroyed their lives. Most certainly, there are many veterans in California and across the country, who have had similar negative experiences. The Non-VA Emergency Medical Card and brochure will help prevent this from happening to you. Please get the word out to your VSOs that these cards and brochures are now available in VANCHCS. In addition to arming yourself with the Non-VA Emergency Medical Card and instructional brochure, you need to know what medical people consider to be medical emergencies, so you don't get taken to a non-VA trauma center

for a non-life-threatening condition. Two excellent sources are from the College of Emergency Physicians, and The Mayo Clinic. Also, a letter from your VA doctor instructing you to call 911 under specific conditions will be helpful in the event the VA refuses to pay your bills. Keep a record of everything.

IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT that you position your card in your wallet opposite your driver's license so the police/EMT's will see it in the event you are unconscious. They will want to ID you and will immediately look for your driver's license. Print a copy of the card for your spouse (or others) to keep in his/her wallet/purse. Secure the brochure to your refrigerator door with a magnet.

How do I know that everything that I've told you is accurate and true? I am the veteran who experienced it first-hand.

VA EMERGENCY BILLING CARD	
First Responder / Non-VA Instructions	
Take this Veteran to a VA Medical Center if medically stable and within 40 miles. If you must take Veteran to a non-VA hospital, see next step.	
Inform ER staff that Veteran is a patient of VANCHCS.	
Hospital staff must notify VA within 72 hours at (844) 724-7842 or https://emergencycarereporting.communitycare.va.gov	
For billing related questions, call: (877) 881-7618	
Veteran or Caregiver Instructions	
CALL 911 if Veteran is experiencing a life-threatening medical emergency.	
Show this card to the ambulance personnel and to hospital emergency room staff .	
Notify VA within 72 hours: (844) 724-7842 or https://emergencycarereporting.communitycare.va.gov .	
Notification is not a guarantee of payment.	

Cut out this card and fold it into your wallet or purse. You can print out a higher-quality copy by visiting

Gold Star Family event honors fallen veterans



By Steven Spriggs

I was contacted by the Bob Hope USO Orange County approximately one month ago and I was asked to coordinate an overnight visit by Tribute to Fallen Soldiers.

(tributetofallensoldiers.com)

I contacted the American Legion Orange Post 132 and they were happy to volunteer the use of their main hall and parking lot for the overnight stay in Orange County.

The RV pulling the "flame" trailer and 15 Legion Riders arrived last around 5 p.m.

The post provided pizza and salad for dinner. After listening to karaoke in the post canteen, they slept upstairs in the main hall

where they had already spread their air mattresses and sleeping bags.

Post members prepared breakfast for the team the next morning and the "Tribute team" was escorted by the Orange Police Department to

the home of a Gold Star mother.

After the 10 a.m. ceremony Nov. 3, the team traveled to another Gold Star family event in Dana Point.

Following that, they then traveled to Oceanside to complete the "tribute ride" for the 13 Marines who were killed in action in Afghanistan.

My second cousin was KIA in 2007 while serving with the 1st Infantry Division, so I was honored to make the arrangements.

While they were unpacking their gear, I spent some time reading the names of those whose families had been visited during the recent trip to Washington D.C. from Oregon, I was VERY surprised to see my cousin's name listed as one of the 75 homes that were visited.

It was an unusual coincidence. I had never heard of the Tribute to Fallen Soldiers but I am happy that I was able to help.



Celebrating our Veterans, Past and Present

By Ernie Bille
Adjutant, Sheriff's Post 309

American Legion posts around the world were called to honor veterans during the Veterans Day holiday.

Star Post 309 took the opportunity to honor all our veterans, both past and present.

On Nov. 6, Star Post 309 celebrated a Veterans Day Ball, a gala to honor those who serve and many others who continue to serve.

A black-tie affair, the Ball gave attendees an opportunity to dust off their best formal wear, enjoy the camaraderie, and revel with their fellow veterans, families, and supporters.

A multitude of Star Post members were joined by several other American Legion members who attended in support of the event.

A large number of 309 members donned their mess dress and dress blues for the event. The large contingent of Marines dressed in their blues was truly a spectacle to behold.

We had the honor of having with us that evening Department Commander Autrey James, Department Adjutant Barbara Lombrano, our Area 4 Vice Commander Nick Rosa, and our District 17 Commander Danielle Duffaut.

Joining us from other posts were Los Angeles Post 8, Pomona Post 30, Hollywood Post 43, Ronald Reagan-Palisades Post 283, LAPD Post 381, and Post 731.

We also had the pleasure of hosting the Secretary of the Department of California Veteran Affairs, Dr. Vito Imbasciani.

Regardless of their affiliation, all came together as veterans.

The Guest of Honor for the evening was Air Force veteran and Star Post 309 member Alex Villanueva, the Sheriff of Los Angeles County.

Our Distinguished Guest Speaker was Major General (retired) Peter Gravett, US Army. Both delivered moving speeches about the need for veterans to take care of each other.

Our originally scheduled guest speaker, LTC William Swenson, a Medal of Honor recipient, could not attend due to suddenly being called away on a presidential detail.

We suppose past Presidents carry a bit more clout than Star Post 309. Nevertheless, LTC Swenson recorded a video message delivering his regrets for not being able to attend.

In his message, he reminded all American Legion members that it is our obligation and that we are duty-bound to serve

our veterans.

His words were poignant and direct as he gave us this charge, "I urge you to continue working toward a day where our veterans will never have to worry about being homeless, never have to worry about want or need, and will always have a place where they are loved and appreciated."

Thank you, LTC Swenson. We will live up to our obligation, and never stray from that duty.

Star Post 309 Commemorates the 246th Marine Corps Birthday

Post Commander Oscar Martinez is a Marine Corps veteran who served in combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He made it a point to ensure that our Sheriff's Department commemorated the Corps' 246th birthday in style.

Star Post 309 was happy to sponsor the event and purchase the cake for the cake-cutting ceremony. Star Post members represented the guest of honor, the eldest Marine (Chief Jack Ewell), and the youngest Marine (Jeff Paniagua) in the cake-cutting ceremony.

This was but one of numerous cake-cutting ceremonies held at various units throughout the Sheriff's Department, as Marines came together to celebrate with a traditional cake-cutting ceremony.



From left: Commander Autrey James, L.A. County Sheriff Alex Villanueva, Adjutant Barbara Lombrano, District 19 Judge Advocate Nick Rosa.

Flying Flags for Heroes

The Sons of the American Legion have embarked on a mission to place 1 million US flags in honor of veterans. Squadron 309 accepted that challenge and coordinated a Flying Flags for Heroes event on Veterans Day.

Held at the Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, members of the Star Post 309 family – Legion, Sons, Auxiliary, and Riders – convened with a mission to place flags at the gravesite of veterans.

Star Post was joined by Girls Scout troops, the Southland Young Marines, Legion and Legion Riders from our sister posts, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department personnel, LA

County Council Commander Jere Romano, and veteran advocates who came out in droves to support this cause.

Our Squadron Commander Marc Saunders, 1st Vice Commander and Americanism Committee member Alex Kay, and Squadron 309 member Dennis Kee facilitated a great program.

In all, 2,500 flags were placed at the gravesites of veterans hailing from World War I to the present Global War on Terror including OIF and OEF.

It was truly awe inspiring to see so many from diverse backgrounds come together to unite for one cause.



Howard Klein and Tom Yaeger honoring our veterans by helping repair one of our Veteran's homes in Montebello. This was the site of the veteran home repair project Ronald Reagan-Palisades Squadron 283 Sons of the American Legion donation helped in partnership with Habitat for Humanity. We were out-numbered by the Coast Guard contingent from Long Beach. (Photos: Tom Yaeger)

Supporting the Sons national commander's program 'Flying Flags for Heroes'

By James Eubanks
 Commander,
 California Sons of
 The American Legion

I hope that this finds all in good health and more importantly, ready for the upcoming holidays.

With Veterans Day and Thanksgiving behind us, we now prepare for Christmas. It is this time of year that makes me proudest to be part of this Legion Family.

During these holidays I see so much giving from every entity of this great organization.

You can truly see how much can be done when we all work together for one common cause, giving so much to our veterans, active servicemembers and their families.

As the detachment commander this year, my attentions are by necessity concentrated towards the Sons of The American Legion, but I am also an active member of the Legion and I view myself as blessed.

Because of my involvement in both the Sons and the Legion, I am given the opportunity to be involved with many aspects of this organization.

This is one reason why over the years I have tried to promote and encourage squadrons to get involved with programs that were viewed as "Legion Programs" by many.

Granted we are a program of the Legion ourselves, but it is without a doubt we have been responsible for much of the success of the Legion

programs.

I encourage the squadrons to get involved with programs such as "The Legion School Award", "Oratorical" and "Boys State" as another way to increase our visibility within the community.

I have seen an increase in support for Boys State by many squadrons and our current junior vice commander is pushing the "Legion School Award" this year.

On a personal note, being involved with these programs has been very satisfying and I am amazed with the young individuals that I have had the opportunity to meet.

This year the National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion is from the Detachment of California. Michael Fox

was elected as national commander, the first in more than 30 years coming out of California.

Along with this, the detachment has no less than 12 members who have National appointments to committee/commissions and National Executive Committee positions, putting us back on the National scene.

The National Commander has initiated a new program this year, which is designed to pay respect to our veterans who have passed.

The program "Flying Flags for Heroes" is a vision by the commander to recognize veterans in all cemeteries throughout the U.S.

"Veterans not in national cemeteries deserve recognition as well," and as

a veteran myself I can't agree more.

The National goal for placing flags is 1,000,000 and the Detachment has obligated to place 100,000 flags at veteran's graves.

This program is not limited to the Sons and I would ask that all Legion Family members lend a hand.

To assist, when you place flags all you need to do is to take pictures and go to Flyingflagsforheroes.com and register the quantity.

You can also purchase flags through the site at a very low cost.

If you have any questions you may contact me at commander@casons.org.

I wish all of you a safe and enjoyable holiday and may God bless you all.

Your support helps fund our veteran service officers

By Janice Somers
 Chair, Ways & Means
 Commission

Good news, the 100th Anniversary Challenges Coins are sold out!!!

Since July 1, the coin campaign made \$2,834 dollars.

Thank you to District 21, District 26, and Whittier Post 51 for purchasing the remaining coins.

At the time of writing this article, there are several districts that are sending in their checks for posts' numbered coins.

Please send your checks ASAP.

We need to close out this campaign. (Districts: 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 17, 22, and 25)

Thank you to every member, each district, all the officers and staff who

worked since the August Department Executive Committee meeting in San Jose. You made it possible to end this campaign.

There were 395 coins available at the closing of the DEC. Great job!!!

Helmets for Heroes (H4H) update

We have a new H4H subcommittee and Jeff Freeman will be the chair.

So far this year, we had displays at two IndyCar races, as well as several car shows, and swap meets.

The race at Laguna Sega had over \$1,000 in donations. The donations from local businesses are picking up. Since July, there was \$13, 502 donated.

Please let Jeff know if

you have any helmets out in the community or donations to collect. candjf@future-tek.com

Amazon Smile

The Smile.Amazon.com program gave a check for \$171.83. The time frame for this donation is from May to August.

This means that our members purchased about \$35,000 worth of merchandise.

\$35,000 x .005 = \$175.00 Amazon donates to us a half penny on every dollar spent.

Christmas is coming, so now is the perfect time to sign up.

Please join us to make a bigger difference for all California Veterans.

Visit Smile.Amazon.com, click on Charity

Donations.

Our Charity Name is: "The American Legion CA Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Foundation."

Victory 360

Victory 360 is the department's direct mailing campaign company. The Sweepstakes campaign is complete.

See the winners below. January 2022 mailing will be the label campaign. If you haven't received your donation letter by Feb. 1 please email cheryl@caLegion.org.

Every donation makes a difference.

Joe Casalino, chief executive officer will be meeting the WAMC in Santa Maria on Friday, March 11. Joe will review

the 2021-22 campaigns and prepare the department for what is being planned for next year 2022-23. All are welcome to attend.

There will be another campaign in March 2022 and June 2022.

These donations help the department fund for Veterans and other Programs.

We need Your stories

How did the American Legion or the Department Veteran Service Officers help you and your family?

True heart felt stories — this is what our members (and other potential donors) want to read.

They want to know their donation gift is making a difference.

Nov. 10 Department of California Sweepstakes Winners

1st Prize: \$5,000

Gordon Miller
 Bakersfield Post 1601

2nd Prize: \$1,000

Greg MacMillan
 Castroville Post 593

3rd Prize: \$500

Robert Iverson
 Hilmar Post 88

4th Prize: \$250

Daniel Parten
 Tulare Post 785

5th Prize: \$100

Robert Hurley
 Watsonville Post 121

6th Prize: \$50

Raymond Rubalcaba
 Highland Post 421

7th Prize: \$50

Jose Gonzales
 La Quinta Post 739

8th Prize: \$50

Raymond Enriquez
 Hanford Post 3



Virtual Boys State a success, plans for in-person program developing

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

The American Legion California Boys State Commission held its annual meeting on Nov. 6 at Yolo Post 77 in Woodland.

This was the Commission's first "in person" meeting since 2019. The meeting was opened by Chairman Richard Kearns, who welcomed

the Commission's newest member, Area 6 Commissioner Kris Chase. Kris replaces Barbara Lombrano.

Director Gary Leach and Chief Counselor Tim Aboudara, Sr. provided a report on the very successful 2021 virtual session.

They specifically commended the leaders of the virtual task force: Tim Aboudara, Jr., Nate Rice, Dan Rummel and

Lee Haley, who led the development of the virtual program that replicated every aspect of the "in-person" Boys State program, with the exception of the athletic program and the band. The 2021 program was a first in many aspects:

1. It was virtual and was conducted over a seven-day period averaging 10 hours per day.

2. Nevada Boys State partnered with California Boys State so that their Delegates could attend when their program was cancelled because of COVID-19. Two of the Nevada delegates who attended our joint program represented Nevada at Boys Nation.

3. Because of cancellations in other states, we also had delegates from Arizona, Illinois and Hawaii.

4. California Boys Nation Senator Ryan Jung was elected Boys Nation President. Ryan was California's second Boys Nation president in the last three Boys Nation sessions.

5. California was the largest Boys State in 2021.

Many of the aspects that were done for the first time on the 2021 Virtual

Platform will be incorporated into the 2022 "in-person" program further enhancing the quality of our program.

The Commission adopted the budget for the 2022 Session. The delegate fee will be \$350 per delegate.

Information on the charter bus contract will be released not those districts sending delegates by this method before the end of December.

The senior staff met with the president of California State University, Sacramento, and the key department heads with whom we work.

The university is very anxious and excited to have us returning to an "in-person" program. They are also very happy about all of the new enhancements that will be incorporated in 2022.

The packages to the Boys State district chairs will go out by the end of the calendar year. The annual "Boys State Kickoff" meeting will be conducted virtually on Jan. 8.

Invitations will have gone out just after Thanksgiving to all district chairs.

Because of new changes and enhancements,

every district must be represented.

The commission was also briefed about the Boys State Directors Conference that was held Sept. 24-26 in Indianapolis. California Boys State Chief Counselor Tim Aboudara, Sr. was selected to be this year's Conference Chairman.

The Conference theme was "Rebounding from the Pandemic."

Five Boys State programs did presentations on moving ahead after what all programs have experienced for then last two years. The teams delivering content and facilitating training were California, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

It was truly a team effort that sent the 160 attendees from 41 programs with tools to make a big "come-back" in 2022.

The commission then participated in a study session about the impacts of the passing of Senate Bill SB-363, The Sex Equity in Education Act, that will take effect in 2023.

(<https://bit.ly/SB-363-2021>)

There is a staff group working on the impacts and will be providing more information in Spring 2022.

Sons California Detachment gets new website

By **Alex Brandon**
Asst. Adjutant
SAL California

Sons of the American Legion (S.A.L.) Detachment Assistant Adjutant Alex Brandon's vision for re-branding the Sons of The American Legion in California just happened to match up with what Rick Pushies (Post 66) of the Department Web Team had been trying to promote for a while.

When the two of them started combining their efforts a few months ago, and with the blessings of the commanders and adjutants of their respective entities, they started in earnest to bring their now

common goal to fruition.

The result is caSons.org. This new web presence reflects the colors, design elements, and navigation options of The American Legion and the Department of California websites.

Being able to find what you are looking for on a website is important, so there are three navigation rows and numerous "search windows."

The top navigation row has links to national and department website resources and a link to allow for "Comments and Suggestions." The navigation row that appears below the Sons logo is the main navigation row. It

begins with a link to the "Home" page and ends with a link to the "Contacts" page. Using this main navigation row, you can access most of the information on the site.

The "Footer" navigation, which appears on the bottom of every webpage, provides access to our privacy policy, terms of use, disclaimer and duplicates the "Comments & Suggestions" option found in the top navigation row and, most importantly it has a "Search" window.

The "Forms and Documents" page has many valuable resource links our S.A.L. leaders will appreciate. The "sidebar" linked to the right side of most

of the webpages includes a "search window" and additional links to important Legion and Sons resources.

The new Detachment of California web presence displays a new logo for the detachment that is similar in design to the Department of California logo.

There is also a new logo to help celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the Sons of The American Legion's service to our veterans, their families, and our communities.

A critical development in this new web presence is the plan for how the information will be maintained.

Accurate up to date information is critical to a quality website. Alex

is now a member of the Department Web Team, and he will play a significant role in maintaining the Sons web presence.

Pivotal to this entire process has been the support of Jared Morgan, chairman, Media & Communications Commission. He was immediately excited about the project and deserves thankful recognition.

All those involved believe this joint venture to be a testament to what can be accomplished by The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion members when they work together and are devoted to the spirit of mutual helpfulness.

TrueCar donates SUV to disabled Army veteran



TrueCar gave Greg Gadson a Chevrolet SUV custom retrofitted for his specific service-related injuries. (Photo: TrueCar)

By TrueCar Public Relations

Online vehicle marketplace TrueCar is partnering with DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and AutoNation, America's largest and most admired automotive retailer, to award a much needed new vehicle to Colonel Greg Gadson through its TrueCar Military Driven-ToDrive initiative.

Col. Gadson, a decorated U.S. Army commander who served in the Army for more than 26 years as a field artillery officer

and who is a bilateral above-the-knee amputee, was presented with a new Chevrolet SUV custom retrofitted to his needs due to his service related injuries at a ceremony celebrating him and his achievements at an AutoNation dealership in Phoenix, AZ.

"As I look at my own recovery, the number one thing that made me feel most normal was the first time I was able to drive again after being wounded, so I appreciate the significance of the Driven-ToDrive initiative and what it provides to injured

veterans like myself," said Col. Gadson.

Col. Gadson, a DAV ambassador, has a passion for empowering the disabled veteran community and gives back through motivational speaking, even speaking before Congress.

He is an avid photographer and uses photography as a way to heal and move forward.

Col. Gadson plans to use his new vehicle to continue sharing this passion for capturing life with other veterans.

"Col. Gadson's

contribution to the veteran community is inspiring and we're honored to support vets like him. We're especially pleased that through the Driven-ToDrive initiative we have the opportunity to provide a vehicle to Col. Gadson who we know will put it to good use by giving back to the veteran groups he travels the country to speak to," said Mike Darrow, Chief Executive Officer and President at TrueCar. "The mindset of our military community is amazing, especially the resilience of those who are injured."

TrueCar Military's DrivenToDrive initiative was started in 2016, inspired by Army Ranger and DrivenToDrive ambassador, Cory Remsburg, who was severely injured while serving in Afghanistan.

The initiative was created to help injured veterans, who have greatly sacrificed for our country, regain their independence and get back behind the wheel of a vehicle.

"Our partnership with TrueCar has truly

transformed the lives of the veterans we serve," said Marc Burgess, CEO of DAV. "The sense of independence that comes with driving is something that has an impact on a person's everyday life, and we're so grateful to TrueCar for ensuring veterans can lead high-quality lives with the respect and dignity they deserve."

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 4.7 million, or 26% of veterans have a service-related disability. With independent transportation comes the sense of freedom that mobility provides.

"AutoNation is proud to partner with TrueCar once again, to support veterans through the DrivenToDrive initiative, and we are honored to recognize Col. Gadson for more than 26 years of service and dedication to our country," said Marc Cannon, Executive Vice President and Chief Customer Experience Officer at AutoNation. "With this new retrofitted vehicle, Col. Gadson can enjoy the freedom of the open road."

Bill seeks investigation in female military discharges from 1951 and 1976

From WOMEN page 1

Armed Forces because of pregnancy or parenthood" between 1951 and 1976.

Officially known as the Justice for Women Veterans Act, the bill was first introduced by U.S. Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA) and is now slated

for debate in Congress.

According to Rep. Brownley, and if the act is passed, the resultant investigation would "identify any irregularities in discharges that may have left these women without the veterans' benefits that

they earned...and also make recommendations to restore those benefits." Additionally, the study would evaluate the larger impact of the bill as well as if it affected any demographic disproportionately.

The policy to discharge

women from the Armed Forces due to pregnancy or parenthood, regardless of whether the pregnancy was "planned, unplanned, or the result of sexual violence" was first instituted in 1951 by President Harry S. Truman via Executive

Order 10240. However, the bill was found to be unconstitutional in 1976.

During that time, thousands of women veterans are believed to have been discharged from the military without receiving benefits of any kind.

Military sexual trauma disability claims still not handled properly?

By Leo Shane III
Military Times

Veterans Affairs officials insist they are getting better at processing disability claims related to military sexual trauma, but outside critics say more still needs to be done to restore victims' faith in

the department's systems.

"Because military sexual trauma can affect veterans' mental and physical health, work, relationships and other aspects of their everyday life, it is imperative that VA provide veterans who have suffered MST with the full benefits and services they are

due," said Michael Missal, Inspector General for the department, in testimony before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

"They must do so effectively, timely, and with compassion. Failure to meet these objectives can further traumatize vulnerable veterans and

cause disengagement and serious harm."

Those kinds of claims have been problematic for VA processors for years, in part because those crimes often go unreported in the military.

While veterans who claim post-traumatic stress disorder from combat

are often only required to prove they served overseas, PTSD claims related to military sexual trauma often require veterans to detail their abuse and provide supporting evidence, even in cases where such actions could worsen a veteran's mental health.

Militarytimes.com



Lakiba N. Palmer

Post continues to honor Gold Star Mother and her daughter, who was killed in a terror attack in Yemen

By Wil & Donna Smith
Post 310

It's been a year since Theresa Smith became a member, and despite the pandemic American Legion Auxiliary Unit 310 is still carrying on strong in the name of her daughter.

In 2020, Post 310 was renamed after Lakiba N. Palmer, who was killed in the line of duty when a terrorist bomb detonated along the port side of her ship, the USS Cole, while it refueled in the port of Aden, Yemen, on Oct. 12, 2000. Lakiba was killed, along with 17 other American sailors on board.

Lakiba is always in the thoughts of our post's Legionnaires and Auxiliary members as we plan and manage our various activities throughout the year.

Just last month, the post hosted a big BBQ for Veterans Day.

Before that, our annual Halloween party for the children in the community, which also included some of our veterans' children.

We also provided dinner to the community for Thanksgiving. We will give

out toys to the children next month for Christmas.

The Auxiliary raises money all year to support our Children and Youth program.

We do this in the same spirit of service that prompted Lakiba to join the Navy.

Lakiba enlisted in the U.S. Navy on Nov. 3, 1997, shortly after graduating high school.

After completing Basic Training in Great Lakes, Illinois, on Dec. 29, 1997, Lakiba was a student at Surface Warfare School Command, also at Great Lakes, completing training on Feb. 11, 1998, and then to Transient Personnel Unit in Norfolk, Virginia, on Feb. 5, 1999.

She was stationed at Naval Station Norfolk from April 23, 1999, to July 8, 1999, and then with Naval Support Activity (NSA) Hampton Roads, Virginia, until May 12, 2000.

She reported to USS Cole (DDG67) on June 2, 2000.

Seaman Apprentice Lakiba Palmer was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Unit Commendation, and the

rank of seaman. In 2015, Past Commander Joe Rush started a petition to change the name of the street that Palmer grew up on.

San Diego City Council voted unanimously to change the name; Lisa Avenue was to become known as Lakiba Palmer Avenue in honor of the late sailor.

Post 310 had set up Palmer's Garden at the post with a replica of the ship that Palmer was killed on, along with a photo and information telling her story.

Five years later, Post 310 made a conscious decision to change the name of the Post from Dennis T. Williams to Lakiba N. Palmer.

One year later, Unit 310 voted in Lakiba Palmer's mother as a member of Unit 310.

The Post and Unit presented this Gold Star Mother with a PUFL membership.

May we never forget those who give their lives for our freedom.

Wil Smith is commander of American Legion Post 310 and Donna Smith is Auxiliary junior past president for District 22.

Los Angeles clears "Veterans Row" encampment, veterans moved to temporary housing on VA campus

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

As of Nov. 1, the homeless encampment outside the VA medical center in West Los Angeles, popularly known as "Veterans Row," has been cleared by volunteers from AMVETS and the county.

Another temporary encampment was set up by the VA on the West Los Angeles medical center's campus, with the promise that several dozen "tiny-homes" would soon be established, in addition to the few that have already been built. However, the VA has not produced a public timetable for when construction will be completed or how many veterans will be able to live there.

The Los Angeles Times reports that "tensions were high on moving day at the encampment," with many of the veterans—some of whom have lived at the camp for years—expressing mixed feelings about the change.

The Los Angeles Times notes that many veterans felt the camp should not have been necessary in the first place, while volunteers hope to keep the VA accountable to its promises. Staff at the West Los Angeles medical center say that outreach is a top priority.

In late October, VA Secretary Dennis McDonough announced that the department had plans to house over 500 homeless veterans living in Los Angeles by the end of the year, with expedited plans to house those living on Veterans Row by Nov. 1. Recent estimates claim that as many as 4,000 homeless veterans live in the county, or around 10% of the total number of homeless veterans living in the United States.

CBS Los Angeles reports that "clearing the encampment was not solely about housing, but also about safety," noting that there had been two homicides at the encampment since May 2021.



An estimated 4,000 homeless veterans live in street encampments like this throughout Los Angeles County.



World War II and Korean War Veteran E. Paul Ball, center, was presented with various certificates of appreciation during a www.CALegion.org Area 1, District 5 meeting in Vallejo. From left are John Aldridge - North State Membership Chair, Warlito Moises - 5th Dist. Commander, E. Paul Ball - 5th Dist. 1st Vice Cmdr., Will Williams - Area 1 Vice Cmdr., and Nestor Aliga - Post 603 Life-member who acquired all the certificates.

Post 603 postpones 80th Anniversary Commemoration of Pearl Harbor Day

By Nestor Aliga
Vallejo Post 603

This year, the 80th anniversary of Pearl Harbor will be commemorated around our great Nation on Dec. 7.

Like many TAL posts nationwide, the Manuel L. Quezon Post 603 of Vallejo planned on another event to honor WWII Veterans because according to the

National WWII Museum there are only 240,000 WWII Veterans living today and that 234 are going to heaven every day.

Unfortunately, due to COVID concerns - especially for our elderly WWII Veterans who are likely to be immunocompromised — plus indoor restrictions and the logistics of transporting the non-ambulatory (unable

to walk), Post 603 decided to postpone the event until further notice.

Post 603 in Vallejo have held commemorations starting in 2011. For the 70th anniversary in 2011, 135 out of 200 self-identified WWII Veterans attended the event at Vallejo City Hall. Every one of them received a Certificate of Recognition/Appreciation from

Congress, California Legislature, County of Solano, and the City of Vallejo.

In 2016, 70 out of 125 WWII Veterans attended the event at the Vallejo Veterans Memorial Building at 420 Admiral Callaghan Lane.

They again received similar certificates but with an extra one from then-Consul General of the Philippines in San Francisco, Henry S. Bensurto.

Jun Yamada, then-Consul General of Japan in San Francisco, was one of the speakers that included Congressman Mike Thompson (Vietnam Purple Heart), State Senator Bill Dodd, then-Vallejo Mayor Osby Davis, other elected officials, and the Consul General of the Philippines.

As reported by the Vallejo Times-Herald, Yamada stated, "On behalf of the government of Japan and the Japanese people, I'd like to offer our profound respect and condolences for the souls of all American people that we lost during World War II. It is clear from the peace and security post world war that Japan chose the correct path, the one

that runs alongside of the United States to greater heights.

It is my sincere hope that we strive to carry on our work as peacemakers and peacekeepers. We must always remember the old days carefully along with our war veterans and their loved ones. May we continue to bring peace to the world together."

As evidenced by the teary eyes, most of the WWII Veterans and families were profoundly touched by Yamada's remarks.

Post 603 is now hoping that COVID restrictions will ease up soon so we can honor our remaining Veterans in indoor settings.

Post 603 also planned for Spring of 2021 a 30th anniversary commemoration of Operation Desert Shield/Storm/Saber but that is also postponed as we await word from the Embassies of the Kingdoms of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Post 603 honors Vietnam Veterans all year-round but especially around National Vietnam War Veterans Day on March 29 because the Veterans Affairs estimates that 530 Vietnam veterans go to heaven every day.

Union Soldier's Gravestone Rededicated

By Nestor Aliga
Vallejo Post 603

Union Soldier Jasper C. Voorhees fought with Company D of the 22nd Wisconsin

Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and also worked several years at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo. He passed away on Nov. 4, 1895 and was buried at the Sunrise Cemetery in Vallejo with a temporary marker which has since disintegrated.

Voorhees was also a member of the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR is said to be the forerunner of the Veterans of Foreign Service (now VFW) and The American Legion because the GAR organized into "Departments" at the

state level and "Posts" at the community level.

In March 2021, I received an email from Lola Weber — a family genealogist whose husband, Darwin, is blood-related to Voorhees — asking if I could help get another and more permanent gravestone for Voorhees. I emailed her the pertinent Veterans Affairs forms and begged her to please follow up and not leave it to chance that a replacement gravestone will magically arrive.

Lola - a can-do and resourceful senior - was also concerned about raising funds for installing the gravestone at this privately-owned cemetery.

So I went to the monthly every-first-Thursday 7PM meeting of the Vallejo

Veterans Memorial Building Council and begged for donations. As usual, the officers of The American Legion Mare Island Navy Yard Post 550 and Manuel L. Quezon Post 603 pitched in.

A few weeks later, the beautiful and free granite gravestone from the National Cemetery Administration arrived and it was quickly installed by Chris Cowan and his Sunrise Cemetery crew from Hillcrest Baptist Church who owns the cemetery.

The Webers then requested that we have a gravestone rededication ceremony, so arrangements were planned, including their 650+ mile trip from Washington state.

Since Voorhees is of Dutch descent, we invited



Past Department Commander Dean Enderlin, standing, and Chaplain Stephen Aguirre of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War helped rededicate a new gravestone for Civil War Union Soldier Jasper Voorhees.

the Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in San Francisco. Also, since he was a Civil War Soldier, the Webers were concerned about an appropriate ceremony. We got lucky when Enderlin responded because he is a Past Department

Commander, Colonel Elmer Ellsworth Camp No. 23, Department of California and Pacific, as well as the National Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Records Officer and also a Civil War Memorials Officer, Sons

Continued page 17

Mare Island Naval Cemetery Transfer to VA Starts

By Nestor Aliga
Vallejo Post 603

Readers of the California Legionnaire have probably read my many articles since 2018 urging “Calls-To-Action” while describing our challenges to pass legislation to transfer MINC to the NCA.

I would like to personally and sincerely thank ALL our fellow Legionnaires and our families because you signed our petition which gathered 50,000 signatures in two months, but more importantly, your full and unwavering support were the wind beneath our wings whenever we ran to obstacles – both imagined and real – while fighting for MINC at home in Vallejo and in the six times that I visited Washington, DC as a private citizen.

For a little history... From 2018 to 2020, REP Mike Thompson and SEN Dianne Feinstein introduced H.R.5588, H.R.578, H.R.6039 and S.2881, S.127, S.2983, respectively, but they were not passed by the House nor Senate.

As a last-ditch effort, they included Section 9107 into the FY21 National Defense Authorization Act which became Public Law 116-283 on January 1, 2021. We were excited because we saw the light at the end of a long tunnel.

However, on June 23, 2021, a letter from



The city of Vallejo hosted the 101st Mare Island Naval Cemetery Veterans Day event on Thursday, Nov. 11, 2021. (Nestor Aliga)

VA Secretary Denis McDonough to Congressman Mark Takano, the House VA Committee Chairman, stated that “MINC has never been under VA jurisdiction. VA recommends Congress does not transfer this authority.” We then thought that we’d have to start all over again.

But on August 12, we were jubilant again because we received the good news from Congressman Mike Thompson (CA-05) that the NCA will formally begin the process of transferring MINC from the City of Vallejo.

Thompson stated, “MINC is a vital piece of our nation’s history and is the final resting place for hundreds of brave and honorable service members. Though it’s sadly fallen into disrepair in recent years, I’m glad the VA is taking this critical first step toward the restoration and maintenance of this hallowed ground. This announcement follows guidance

under legislation I authored that was signed into law at the start of the year and is great news as we work to return the space to its rightful honor for both the veterans buried there and those who want to visit for years to come.”

On November 11, the City of Vallejo held the 101st Veterans Day (started in 1920 as Armistice Day) at MINC. Our program subtitled this momentous event as,

“Celebrating the Start of Transfer to Dept. of Veterans Affairs.”

One of our speakers, Glenn R. Powers, stated, “I’m honored to be here with you today, it is an impressive event. It has been said that we die two deaths, the first is our final breath and the second is when no one remembers that we existed. The NCA and the proud stewardship of this cemetery and the things that this community has done is all about making sure that the second death never occurs.

It is truly an honor to be part of this effort. Thank you for honoring Veterans for what they have done and the sacrifices they have made.”

We were also honored to have our Department Commander Autrey “AJ” James and

Adjutant Barbara Lombro among the audience of nearly 200 persons (some leaving early to attend the next ceremony by Post 603 behind Vallejo City Hall).

Other speakers included: Robert McConnell - City of Vallejo Mayor; Duane Sarmiento - Veterans Of Foreign Wars Junior Vice-Commander; Bob Sampayan - former Vallejo Mayor; Karnig Ohannessian - Deputy Assistant Secretary US Navy (Environment); Shelley Berkley - Touro University Chief Executive Officer; and the keynote address was given by Vallejo’s Congressman Mike Thompson, a Vietnam War Purple Heart Medal recipient.

Other participants included: Rozzana Verd-er-Aliga - Master of Ceremonies; RADM

O’Kane Division of U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps - Presenting the Colors; Airman First Class Natalie Angst - National Anthem; Reggie Russell VFW CA District 16 Commander - Pledge Of Allegiance; Bishop Bryan Harris - Invocation; Greg Marro, First Sergeant US Army (Ret) - Taps; Reverend Rey Bernardes - Benediction; and Neil Henderson Post 1921 Scottish American Military Society - Bagpipes.

Video messages were also received from: Neil Frank Ferrer - Consul General of Philippines, San Francisco; Congressman Mark Takano - Chair, House Veterans Affairs Committee; Gavin Newsom - Governor of California; Bill Dodd - California State Senator; Paul Dillard - National Commander, The American Legion; and Ralph Parrott - US Navy Captain (Retired).

of Union Veterans of the Civil War. We also found a blank GAR “Resolution of Respect” certificate from the Vallejo Naval Museum because this is the same certificate that a Civil War

Veteran’s family would have received during that period.

On Oct. 25, we finally rededicated Voorhees’ new gravestone with a GAR ceremony expertly performed by Enderlin and

Chaplain Stephen Aguirre, and officiated by Hillcrest Baptist Church Pastor Chris Cowan. The ceremony included an American flag (courtesy of the Vallejo US Post Office), a Presidential

Memorial Certificate signed by Joe Biden, the GAR certificate, a letter from the Acting Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and a Certificate of Appreciation signed by

yours truly.

It is often stated that Veterans die two deaths, the first is their final breath and the second is when no one remembers that they ever existed.

House Veterans' Affairs Committee advances 18 bills supporting veterans

By Christian Southards
Staff Writer

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs recently advanced 18 bills supporting veterans.

Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) said, "the best way we can honor our veterans is through action—with these 18 bills, we can back up our 'thank you's' with concrete steps to ensure all veterans have equitable access to the care and benefits they've earned.

I thank every Member for their work on these bills and look forward to their passage on the House floor." The bills are not considered law until passed by Congress.

New Bills Aimed at Supporting Veterans

Below, we have provided a quick overview of each prospective bill. Bills introduced by California representatives have been noted where relevant.

1. Guard and Reserve GI Bill Parity Act of 2021

Every day that a servicemember of the National Guard or reservist is paid and in uniform would count toward GI Bill benefits.

2. Burial Equity for Guards and Reserves Act of 2021

Grants awarded by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs would no longer place restrictions on State veterans cemeteries for the interment of reservists.

3. Protections for Student Veterans Act

Student veterans could not be penalized by educational institutions if called to service.

4. VA Electronic Health Record Transparency Act of 2021

The VA would be required to report all costs of the Electronic Health Record Modernization Program to Congress.

The California Legionnaire previously reported on the program in March 2021.

5. VA IT Reform Act of 2021

The VA would no longer be able to start "new major IT projects" without first submitting a proposal to Congress with estimated costs, goals, and a timeframe.

6. Viper Act

The VA Infrastructure Powers Exceptional Research Act of 2021 would authorize the creation of a VA Office of Research in Development to "ensure program continuity," cut down on paperwork requirements, improve the VA's ability to hire and retain scientists from other federal agencies, create new STEM opportunities for veterans at "smaller" universities, afford the VA more transactional authority "in line with 11 other federal agencies," and mandate a GAO study on the VA's ability to retain clinician-scientists as well as their work.

7. VA Medical Cannabis Research Act of 2021

The VA would be required to research applications of medical-grade cannabis as they pertain to covered veterans and servicemembers, and particularly those who suffer from chronic pain or PTSD.

8. Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act

Eligibility for mental

health services for spouses and dependents of servicemembers or veterans who committed suicide would be expanded.

9. Vital Assessment Act

The VA would be required to report on the current state of the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership program in addition to creating new policies, goals, and benchmarking strategies.

10. Veterans Justice Outreach Improvement Act

Improved efforts would be made to ensure that veterans who are either incarcerated or at risk of incarceration are aware of the benefits offered by the Veterans Justice Outreach program, particularly as it pertains to veterans homelessness.

11. To Authorize the Secretary Of Veterans Affairs To Furnish Seasonal Influenza Vaccines To Certain Individuals, And For Other Purposes

This bill would allow the VA to administer seasonal influenza vaccines to spouses, dependents, and veteran caregivers in addition to previously authorized COVID-19 vaccines.

12. Justice For Women Veterans Act

The Just for Women Veterans act would "study the involuntary discharges of women from the Armed Forces between 1951 and 1976" for irregularities. Women veterans who were unfairly discharged could then have benefits restored.

13. To Expand Eligibility for Hospital Care, Medical Services, and Nursing Home Care From the Department of Veterans Affairs to Include Veterans of WWII

Surviving WWII veterans would have easier access to VA health benefits. An accompanying bill has

already been sponsored in the Senate.

14. Commission on LGBTQ Servicemembers and Veterans Act

A commission would be created to evaluate current and past military practices relating to LGBTQ servicemembers and veterans. Accompanying legislation is being sponsored in the Senate as well.

15. To establish the advisory committee on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer veterans

An advisory committee would be created to work with the VA in determining benefits for LGBTQ veterans. The committee would also conduct relevant research.

16. To establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs an advisory committee on United States outlying areas and freely associated states, and for other purposes

A new committee would be created that evaluates the administration of benefits to U.S. veterans and servicemembers from American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

17. Justice for ALS Veterans Act of 2021

Spouses of veterans who died from ALS would receive increased VA compensation "regardless of how long the veterans had such disease prior to death."

18. Col. James Floyd Turner IV USMC GI Bill Transfer Act of 2021

Transfer of entitlement to Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits would occur when an "eligible individual" dies. If more than one transferee exists, benefits would be distributed evenly.

Benefits for military burn pit victims could expand dramatically under White House plan

By Leo Shane III
Military Times

President Joe Biden is directing Veterans Affairs officials to revamp how they evaluate and approve veterans disability claims related to toxic exposure, with an eye towards dramatically expanding the number of veterans and illnesses eligible for compensation.

The move, scheduled to be announced as part of the White House's Veterans Day commemoration, comes just a few months after VA officials for the first time began granting presumptive benefits status to some victims of burn pit smoke at overseas combat posts.

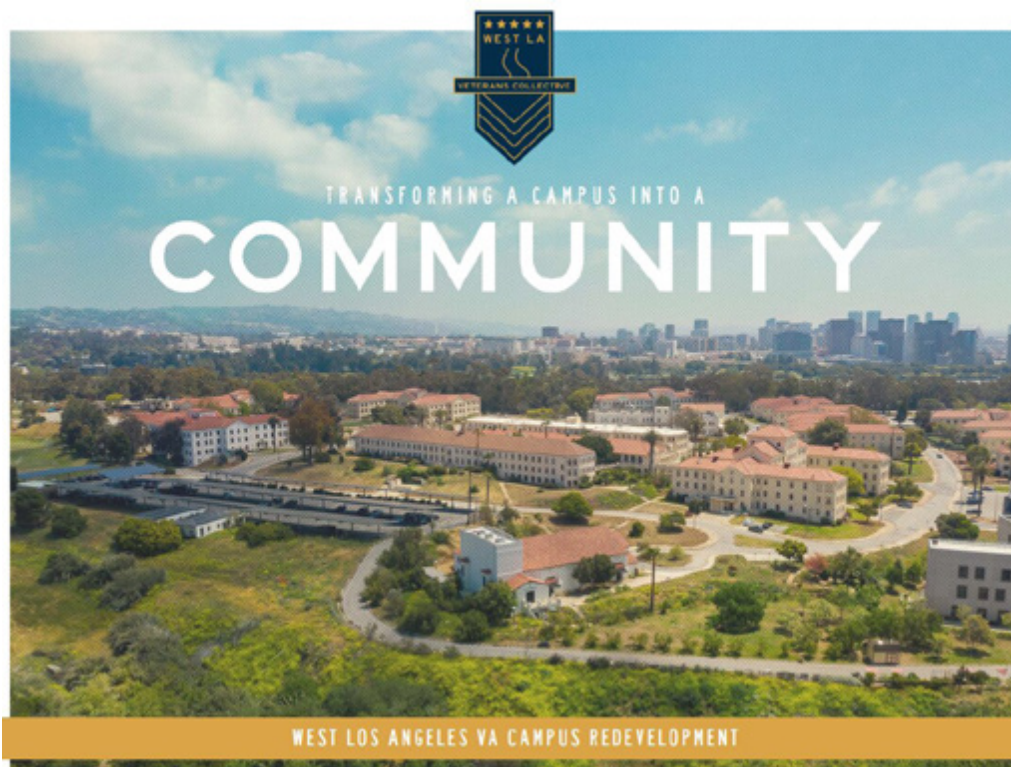
But the new initiative looks to go even further, according to senior administration officials familiar with the plan.

Under Biden's direction, VA leaders have developed a new model for how to add more illnesses to the list of service-connected environmental injuries and will spend coming months using it to see how many conditions — and veterans — could benefit from additional presumptive decisions.

Officials said those decisions would take into account not only available scientific studies but also other sources, including illness trends compiled from veterans claims.

How many veterans could benefit from the changes is unclear. In the past, Veterans Affairs officials have estimated more than 3.5 million troops were exposed to the toxic smoke from burn pits during overseas deployments over the last 20 years.

Militarytimes.com



From page 9

Additionally, the concept of a Principal Developer is considered a best practice in order to maintain community cohesiveness and coordination. Simply put, having fewer land and programming developers increases the ability to coordinate the North Campus in working toward the same vision of quality housing and a comprehensive service model. It also allows for integrated function of the community once it's built, translating to the best quality of life for veterans and families living within the new community.

The WLAVC (also called the Principal Developer Team) is a world class, locally-rooted, and mission-driven team comprised of three agencies: U.S.VETS, Century Housing and Thomas Safran & Associates. Together, we have a deep history of Veteran-specific housing development and service provision. Two of the Collective's agencies are led by U.S. Military Veterans—Ron Griffith, President and CEO of Century Housing (recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge and Purple Heart), and Stephen Peck, CEO of U.S.VETS (recipient of the Navy Commendation Medal). Our team is deeply committed to the

successful housing and care of military Veterans and their families through the provision of service-enriched housing that promotes recovery, wellness, community and a more hopeful future.

In Los Angeles County, there are currently approximately 3,681 Veterans and countless family members homeless on any given night. The West Los Angeles Veterans Collective's mandate is pursuant to the 2016 West Los Angeles Leasing Act and Enhanced Use Lease that governs our work aboard the north campus of the West Los Angeles VA to undertake a sacred charge of restoring the North Campus to the care and housing of Veterans as envisioned in 1887.

The Master Plan and Community Plan

Leveraging the 2016 VA Draft Framework Master Plan, the WLAVC was tasked with creating a Community Plan to support and guide the development of at least 900 additional units of supportive housing for homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families on the North Campus to reach the wider VA Draft Master Plan's broader goal of at least 1,200 homes. The wider VA Master Plan encompasses the plan for the entire West Los Angeles VA campus,

whereas the Community Plan includes only approximately 80 acres comprising the North Campus redevelopment efforts of the Collective. Thus, the WLAVC Community Plan is an integral component of the Master Plan. The VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) West LA Campus's Master Plan 2022 Draft is now available for public review and comment. Please see the Federal Register at https://lnkd.in/gmw_yJqy, outlining where the document is available and how you can leave comments. A direct link to the plan is here: <https://lnkd.in/gTG8R5N3>. There are 60 days for public comment until the Federal Register closes on Friday, December 17, 2021. Please visit and contribute your ideas and feedback in this monumental effort to care for and house homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families.

Who Will Be Housed? What Services Will Be Provided?

Homeless and at-risk Veterans of all backgrounds and service eras will be housed to include specialized supportive housing for subpopulations such as: Senior Veterans, women Veterans, LGBTQ Veterans, Veteran families including single-parent Veteran families, Iraq/

Afghanistan era Veterans, chronically homeless Veterans, disabled Veterans, and Veterans who experienced Military Sexual Trauma. Working with the VA and LAHSA, data regarding current community needs will be reviewed yearly and services for specific populations will be incorporated accordingly.

The North Campus will consist of individual housing developments, supported by a 501(c)3 "backbone" association called The Veterans Collective ("TVC"). TVC will have administrative oversight for community coordination and common areas. Each housing development will be responsible for its own property management; however the 501(c)3 will help to coordinate joint property management standards, whole-campus safety protocols, and community upkeep in shared spaces. Utilizing a "Collective Impact" model, The Veterans Collective will also convene campus stakeholders and service providers around the needs of the community via a campus Veteran and community stakeholder Alliance.

A continuum of services will be available on the North Campus, both for those residing in the housing units and for Veterans and families in the wider geographic area not living on the campus. For instance, each individual housing development is designed to serve Veterans and their families living onsite via HUD/VASH case management onsite as well as dedicated services provided by U.S.VETS, the North Campus's lead service provider. There will also be support from The Veterans Collective's Building 300 (Integrated Service Center) and Building 13 (Town Hall) components for wider regional service needs for all Veterans in need.

What Are Your Biggest Obstacles?

The original 2016 Draft Master plan framework has been encumbered by a range of constraints as planning and development have unfolded, necessitating some changes from previous drafts. These include:

- Necessary additional Veteran, partner, community, and VA engagement
- Additional time to investigate site constraints and opportunities
- Legislative and legal constraints
- Environmental mitigations and hazards
- Financing requirements and constraints
- Necessary infrastructure improvements
- Historic preservation opportunities and building constraints
- Land use considerations to engage and insulate
- Neighborhood constraints and opportunities
- Progressive timelines (ie, action-oriented, funding commitments, plan reviews, due diligence performed on developments)

Other barriers to rapid housing development also include the availability and timing of public and private philanthropic funds. Permanent supportive housing projects require numerous public subsidies to be financially feasible. All of these subsidies are highly competitive, are typically oversubscribed and are on different funding cycles. Housing on the VA campus may depend on availability and timing of public subsidies from the County and/ or the City of Los Angeles. The City of Los Angeles has already substantially allocated its Proposition HHH funds. Future VA housing projects may apply to the County for allocations of No Place Like Home (NPLH) funds, to the extent available. Future projects are likely to be funded through the State Housing and Community Development (HCD)



1ST ANNUAL DISTRICT 6 ARMED FORCES DAY BALL IN SACRAMENTO

By Brian McGuinness
6th District Commander

The 6th District will hold its 1st Annual Armed Forces Day Ball on the evening of Saturday, May 14 at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento.

The proceeds from this black-tie gala will benefit the American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program, which the 6th District has designated

as one its primary programs.

Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) provides items that aid in the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded servicemembers and veterans whether they are recovering in military hospitals, transition units and VA medical centers, or at their home.

OCW grant items have ranged from socks, clothes, video games, arts and crafts, televisions, iPads,

sporting equipment, winter kits and food for homeless veterans, rehabilitation equipment such a recumbent bikes or elliptical work out systems, even tickets to ball games, and much more.

Recently when asked, Past National Commander James Koutz, who was and still is one the driving forces behind Operation Comfort Warriors, "Why do we still need to do this?" His response was "OCW is something we have to do. Because it's taking care of our troops, we are always going to have injured troops and veterans that need help. The VA hospitals are not going to buy them comfort items. But The American Legion can."

The ball will feature mirrored prime rib buffets, live music, a silent auction at the event, as well as a secrete silent auction online prior to the event, which features items to big bring in the front doors. (2) fully stocked bars, and the 6th District American Legion Auxiliary, is working on a Craft Beer tasting table. If you do not feel like dancing, that is ok. The

entire museum belongs to the American Legion and her guests for the evening you are free to wonder the entire facility and check out all the fantastic exhibits.

Tickets for this event will go on sale on December 1, 2021, the price for an individual ticket will be between \$65. & \$ 70. Ea. Reserved tables of 8 are also available for \$ 500.00.

There are also other reserved tables at higher levels, each with special benefits.

You will be able to order your tickets online at www.sacmb.com starting December 1, 2021, as well as make hotel reservations with our partner hotel. If you would like to be placed on the email blast for this event, or would like additional information, please email us at sacmb2022@gmail.com.

About Operation Comfort Warriors

As the war in Afghanistan winds down, U.S. military personnel are coming home where they join other recent veterans who served in Iraq. Many

of these servicemembers have left the battlefield only to be faced with a new fight: a struggle to overcome the mental and physical wounds suffered during deployment.

Those with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are returning home in unprecedented numbers.

In fact, the Army has said that up to 20 percent of the men and women who served in Afghanistan or Iraq have suffered TBI.

Even as the wars conclude, those in the military still face inherent dangers while fighting the global war on terrorism, during training exercises and while performing other dangerous duties.

While the care at many military hospitals and warrior transition units is extraordinary, The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program was created to provide "nonessentials" - items that help wounded warriors' recovery but don't usually show up as a budget line on government spreadsheets.



National Commander's Pin Incentive Program

American Legion National Commander Paul E. Dillard will award his national commander "No Veteran Left Behind" membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who

obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2022 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion

during the 2021 membership year. Transfers do not count as new members.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion

members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national

membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

To download the request form, visit <https://www.legion.org/commander/pin>

Growing our membership is every Legionnaire's responsibility

By Jeff Daly
Membership Director

Jeff Freeman was working membership at a recent Stockton Heat game. Results???

- * 3 members recruited for Post 16
- * 3 members recruited for Post 74
- * 1 member recruited for Post 190

* \$80 collected for "Helmets 4 Heroes" in 2 hours
* The home team won the game 2-1!

Congratulations to the Stockton Heat for their victory. Jeff Freeman also gets a "well done" for his winning results and for being out there, being visible and expanding the brand of The American Legion.

