

VIRGINIA LEGIONNAIRE

Official E- Newsletter For The Virginia Department (.pdf version)

March 2009

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Upcoming Events!

2009 Spring Conference March 20-22 - VA Beach Resort, VA Beach
\$83

2009 State Convention July 9-12 - Sheraton Richmond West, Richmond
\$94

2009 Fall Conference October 30-November 1 - Holiday Inn, Hampton
\$71.00

2010 State Convention July 8-11 - Sheraton Richmond West, Richmond
\$99

2010 Fall Conference October 29-31 Holiday Inn, Hampton
\$74

2011 State Convention July 14-17 Roanoke Plaza Hotel & Holiday Inn, Roanoke
\$109

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Filmmakers to Document Story of The American Legion

-Portion of proceeds will benefit Legion programs

INDIANAPOLIS (Jan. 29, 2009) – The American Legion has signed a contract with a California-based production company to produce a documentary on the history of the nation’s largest veterans service organization.

“The American Legion not only wrote the original GI Bill, we have been a leading voice for veterans and the military since 1919,” American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein said. “From the elevation of the Department of Veterans Affairs to cabinet-status to the administration of some of the most successful youth programs in the country, The American Legion has too many noteworthy accomplishments for me to mention here. Moreover, we continue to be as relevant and influential as we have ever been. I am pleased that we have reached an agreement with Blackhorse Productions to document the illustrious history of The American Legion.”

The National Executive Committee passed Resolution 6 during its October 2008 meetings, which authorized The American Legion to negotiate an agreement with Blackhorse Productions, a 10-year-old film production company that specializes in military documentaries. The project will be completed at no cost to The American Legion and is expected to be completed by the end of the year. It will then be available for purchase on DVD, with a portion of the proceeds being allocated to The American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, Child Welfare Foundation and National Emergency Fund. Members will be able to purchase the DVD at www.legion.org or at the 2010 National Convention. Information will be provided in The American Legion Magazine and in other publications when the product is available. "Preserving history and teaching viewers about the contributions and sacrifices made by our veterans is a passion for Blackhorse Productions," said Jason Heit, CEO of Blackhorse Productions. "We are very excited about this project and can't wait to meet Legionnaires during the filming. We want to raise awareness so people everywhere can know the fascinating story of The American Legion."

With a current membership of 2.6-million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and the welfare of children. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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A Message From The VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network

Dear Veteran:

The VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network cares about you and your health. We want you to know about an important tool that's available to you. It's My HealtheVet, an online Personal Health Record just for you.

On this site you can monitor your vital signs, fill your prescriptions, track your diet and exercise, graph your health readings, record your family's medical history and much more!

We hope you will visit www.myhealth.va.gov to learn more. If you have questions, please contact your local VA facility which will be glad to assist you.

Thank you for allowing us to provide for your health care needs.

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American Revolution (1775-1783)

Total U.S. Servicemembers ¹	217,000
Battle Deaths	4,435
Non-mortal Woundings	6,188

War of 1812 (1812-1815)

Total U.S. Servicemembers	286,730
Battle Deaths	2,260
Non-mortal Woundings	4,505

Indian Wars (approx. 1817-1898)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (VA estimate)	106,000
Battle Deaths (VA estimate)	1,000

Mexican War (1846-1848)

Total U.S. Servicemembers	78,718
Battle Deaths	1,733
Other Deaths (In Theater)	11,550
Non-mortal Woundings	4,152

Civil War (1861-1865)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Union)	2,213,363
Battle Deaths (Union)	140,414
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Union)	224,097
Non-mortal Woundings (Union)	281,881
Total Servicemembers (Conf.) ²	1,050,000
Battle Deaths (Confederate) ³	74,524
Other Deaths (In Theater) (Confederate) ^{3,4}	59,297
Non-mortal Woundings (Confederate)	Unknown

Spanish-American War (1898-1902)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	306,760
Battle Deaths	385
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	2,061
Non-mortal Woundings	1,662

World War I (1917-1918)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	4,734,991
Battle Deaths	53,402
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	63,114
Non-mortal Woundings	204,002
Living Veterans	1

World War II (1941 -1945)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	16,112,566
Battle Deaths	291,557
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	113,842
Non-mortal Woundings	671,846

Global War on Terror (Oct 2001 -)

The Global War on Terror (GWOT), including Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), are ongoing conflicts. For the most current GWOT statistics, visit the following Department of Defense Website:
http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/gwot_component.pdf

6. Covers the period 8/5/64 - 1/27/73 (date of cease fire)

7. Department of Defense estimate

8. Covers period 11/1/55 - 5/15/75

9. Excludes 150,341 not requiring hospital care

10. VA estimate, as of 5/08, does not include those still on active duty and may include veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Source: Department of Defense (DOD), except living veterans, which are VA estimates as of Sep 2008.

Living Veterans ⁵	2,306,000
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NOTES:

1. Exact number is unknown. Posted figure is the median of estimated range from 184,000 - 250,000.
2. Exact number is unknown. Posted figure is median of estimated range from 600,000 - 1,500,000.
3. Death figures are based on incomplete returns.
4. Does not include 26,000 to 31,000 who died in Union prisons.
5. Estimate based upon new population projection methodology.

Korean War (1950-1953)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	5,720,000
Battle Deaths	33,739
Other Deaths (In Theater)	2,835
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	17,672
Non-mortal Woundings	103,284
Living Veterans	2,307,000

Vietnam War (1964-1975)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide) ⁶	8,744,000
Deployed to Southeast Asia ⁷	3,403,000
Battle Deaths ⁸	47,434
Other Deaths (In Theater) ⁸	10,786
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater) ⁸	32,000
Non-mortal Woundings ⁹	153,303
Living Veterans ^{5,10}	7,125,000

Desert Shield/Desert Storm (1990-1991)

Total U.S. Servicemembers (Worldwide)	2,322,000
Deployed to Gulf	694,550
Battle Deaths	147
Other Deaths (In Theater)	235
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	1,590
Non-mortal Woundings	467
Living Veterans ^{5,10}	2,269,000

America's Wars Total (1775 -1991)

U.S. Military Service during Wartime	41,891,368
Battle Deaths	651,030
Other Deaths (In Theater)	308,800
Other Deaths in Service (Non-Theater)	230,279
Non-mortal Woundings	1,431,290
Living War Veterans	17,456,000
Living Veterans (Periods of War & Peace)	23,442,000

<p>American Revolution Last Veteran, Daniel F. Bakeman, died 4/5/1869, age 109 Last Widow, Catherine S. Damon, died 11/11/06, age 92 Last Dependent, Phoebe M. Palmeter, died 4/25/11, age 90</p>	<p>Mexican War Last Veteran, Owen Thomas Edgar, died 9/3/29, age 98 Last Widow, Lena James Theobald, died 6/20/63, age 89 Last Dependent, Jesse G. Bivens, died 11/1/62, age 94</p>
<p>War of 1812 Last Veteran, Hiram Cronk, died 5/13/05, age 105 Last Widow, Carolina King, died 6/28/36, age unknown Last Dependent, Esther A.H. Morgan, died 3/12/46, age 89</p>	<p>Civil War Last Union Veteran, Albert Woolson, died 8/2/56, age 109 Last Confederate Veteran, John Salling, died 3/16/58, age 112 Last Union Widow, Gertrude Janeway, died 1/17/2003, age 93</p>
<p>Indian Wars Last Veteran, Fredrak Fraske, died 6/18/73, age 101</p>	<p>Spanish-American War Last veteran, Nathan E. Cook, died 9/10/92, age 106</p>

VA estimates the number of living World War II U.S. veterans will be:*

9/30/08.....2,306,000	9/30/09..... 2,024,000	9/30/10.....1,761,000	9/30/11.....1,517,000
9/30/12.....1,294,000	9/30/13.....1,092,000	9/30/14.....911,000	9/30/15... ..750,000
9/30/16.....611,000	9/30/17.....490,000	9/30/18.....388,000	9/30/19.....303,000
9/30/20.....233,000	9/30/21.....176,000	9/30/22.....131,000	9/30/23.....96,000

* Estimates have changed based on new population projections.

**U.S. Veterans and Dependents on
 Benefits Rolls as of
 September 2008**

	VETERANS	CHILDREN	PARENTS	SURVIVING SPOUSES
Civil War	-	2	-	-
Indian Wars	-	-	-	-
Spanish-American War	-	94	-	90
Mexican Border	-	15	-	60
World War I	-	3,169	-	4,873
World War II	274,052	14,403	117	223,895
Korean Conflict	156,842	3,170	257	60,948
Vietnam Era	1,015,151	8,843	2,932	165,376
Gulf War ¹	896,288	13,688	926	15,945
Non service-connected	315,763	18,103	2	182,236
Service-connected	2,951,587	28,016	5,385	320,979

¹ For compensation and pension purposes, the Persian Gulf War period has not yet been terminated and includes veterans of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

Six More Weeks of Winter?

I am sure many of you followed the winter weather forecast of Punxsutawney Phil where the groundhog saw his shadow signifying six more weeks of winter. However, things have been heating up here in Virginia with all the many successful Americanism activities that were held in February and there are more planned for March. It seems to me that our American Legion Family is doing a lot to end the cabin fever of winter and welcome the warmer spring weather.

Many posts, districts, regions have completed their Oratorical contests and if the caliber of the speakers that I witnessed at the Northern Region Oratorical contest are representative of the young men and women around the Commonwealth of Virginia, we can look forward to a very exciting competition at the State Finals at the Department Spring Conference in Virginia Beach.

The same holds true for JROTC Drill Team competition. At the Northern Region JROTC Drill Competition, there were many young men and women from area high schools who obviously had put a lot of time and effort into practicing and working together as a team. I can't wait to see the State Finals at the Department Spring Conference in Virginia Beach with the best of the three regions strutting their stuff.

While these very visible competitions have been going on at many of our legion posts and high schools, many legionnaires have been working very diligently with the elementary schools to have the students write their essays for the Middle School Essay Contest. Some entries have started coming in but a quick reminder that the essays are due in by March 1, 2009. The forms for the contest are available on the Department web site under "forms and downloads." The winners will be announced at the Spring Conference in Virginia Beach.

There are also many posts sponsoring Boy Scout, Cub Scout and Explorer groups that are very active in our communities year round as well as Junior Shooting Sports Teams practicing for their upcoming competitions in March and April. Please come out and support these outstanding youths and future leaders.

If you haven't noticed a theme building here, there will be a number of great examples of today's youth present at our Department Spring Conference at Virginia Beach. I hope that you will consider attending the conference to see the outstanding young men and women compete. In addition, you will be able to learn what we have coming up in the next few months. The Spring Conference runs from Friday, March 20, 2009 through Sunday, March 22, 2009

With the warmer weather coming soon we can look forward to American Legion Baseball starting, and interviews being for the Boys State and Junior Law Cadet programs.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes by many legionnaires, auxiliary and SAL members. If you have not already started, please gather the volunteer information that your post members are putting in to make our programs so successful. If you have not already received your reporting forms from our Department Headquarters, please watch your mailbox for these important documents.

I would like to thank everyone for all their time and effort in making our Americanism program so successful this year. Please keep up the good work and we will see you in Virginia Beach!

John Kokernak
Department Americanism Chairman

American Legion Extends Operation Comfort Warriors

INDIANAPOLIS (Feb. 6, 2009) – The nation’s largest veterans organization will continue its fundraising to purchase comfort items for hospitalized troops recovering in U.S. military hospitals around the world after doubling its \$50,000 goal for the holiday season.

“The American Legion family and its friends have raised more than \$115,000 that we have used to purchase sweatsuits, DVDs, puzzles, portable electronics and other gifts for the wounded heroes recovering at Walter Reed, Bethesda and numerous other military hospitals,” said American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein. “We delivered many of the items before Christmas. But even though the holiday season has long passed, the war continues. The military does a good job of taking care of its own at these facilities, but we want to do more. The need continues so therefore Operation Comfort Warriors will continue.”

Donors can make online contributions by visiting www.legion.org/ocw or by sending a check to Operation Comfort Warriors, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Administrative and promotional costs for Operation Comfort Warriors are paid by The American Legion, allowing 100 percent of the donations to be spent directly on the troops.

With a current membership of 2.6 million wartime veterans, The American Legion was founded in 1919 on the four pillars of a strong national security, veterans affairs, Americanism, and mentoring youth. Legionnaires work for the betterment of their communities through more than 14,000 posts across the nation.

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The American Legion Champions re-Introduction of Vets Health Care Reform Bill

WASHINGTON, DC (Feb. 12, 2009) -- The Chairmen of both the Senate and House Veterans’ Affairs Committees have today re-introduced bills designed to streamline the funding of Department of Veterans Affairs health care programs and initiatives.

At an afternoon press conference, Senator Daniel Kahikina Akaka (D - HI) and Congressman Bob Filner (D - CA) announced the advancement of identical bills entitled the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009.

Among the provisions of the bill is long sought-after advance appropriations for military veterans’ health care administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The advance appropriations mechanism allows Congress to vote on funding levels a year in advance of the current budget cycle.

“Advance-appropriations of VA health care funds will have a couple of great benefits for our constituency,” says David K. Rehbein, National Commander of The American Legion. “Knowing what money will be coming to them well ahead of time will facilitate the VA’s acquisition of the personnel, equipment and facilities needed to provide the best care possible. It will also facilitate better Congressional oversight of the funds’ disposition,” he continued, “thus helping assure that the monies will be spent as they should be.”

Similar legislation was introduced by Senator Akaka and Congressman Filner this past September, but it was too late in the legislative season to gain favor. Considering that now-President Barack Obama was a co-sponsor of the original Senate bill, it is hoped that the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 will be adopted in a timely fashion.

For years, veterans service organizations had argued in favor of mandatory veterans health care funding,

as it is for Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare. “While this newly introduced legislation might not have the ultimate benefits of automatic funding, it is a very fine proposal nonetheless and, on behalf of our nation’s veterans and veterans-to-be, we applaud Chairman Akaka, Chairman Filner and their many co-sponsors for it,” concluded Commander Rehbein.

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 has been a bi-partisan product. Though it has been introduced by Democrats -- Senator Akaka and Congressman Filner -- chief co-sponsors include Republican Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine as well as Senators Mark Begich (D-AK), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Russell Feingold (D-WI), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), John D. Rockefeller (D-WV), Bernard Sanders (I-VT), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), John Thune (R-SD) and David Vitter (R-LA). On the House side co-sponsors include Republican Congressmen Walter Jones of North Carolina as well as Representatives Phil Hare (D-IL) and Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin (D-SD).

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Visit Our Website: www.thelegionnews.com or the Virginia Department Website: www.valegion.org and have your newsletter delivered directly to your inbox. An email newsletter is convenient and practical.

Racing fans can sign up for the Legion Racing Team e-newsletter coming soon. Simply visit www.legioncar.com and sign up now!

Look for the Legion News table at the Department of Virginia Spring Conference at Virginia Beach.