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Calendar of Events

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

State Baseball Tournament July 27-Aug 1 - RF&P Park, Glen Allen, Virginia

2009 Leadership College August 7-9 Holiday Inn Koger Center, Richmond (\$89)

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

Happy Independence Day!

By John Kokernak

One of the best days in the year for someone that loves Americanism is celebrating our Independence Day! Not only is it a National Holiday with hopefully a long weekend to have picnics, BBQs, Baseball games, hopefully a parade or two and some fireworks.

In the American Legion, the month of June is the start of the transition from one year to another. In early July, the reports for the previous year have been submitted and at the post has had their election of officers for the coming year. Many posts have already installed their officers so the 4th of July weekend is a nice quiet weekend to relax before the Department Convention that symbolizes the kickoff to the new Legion year.

Speaking of Department Convention, I hope to see many of you there so we can celebrate all the hard work and effort that has gone into make 2009 a big success. After reading all the great and wonderful things that the Posts in the Department of Virginia have done this year, I can't wait share the good news. I'll bet you were hoping that I was going to let the cat out of the bag on who has won the six categories of Americanism Awards for 2009. Well I wish I could! But I can't steal the thunder away from our Department Commander Les Clevinger! So if you really want to see who won, come to the Department Convention in Richmond!



If you have not submitted your reports, it is not too late to get them to have them count in the Department of Virginia submission to National. Please get them in as soon as possible so we can help Commander Clevinger get his 100% reporting! As a last resort, please bring them to the Department Convention!

Thanks for all that you have done and let's celebrate in Richmond! I hope to see y'all there!

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VIRGINIA CAVALIERS
FOOTBALL | 2009

Military Appreciation Day
Saturday, November 14 vs. Boston College

\$25 Reserved
for all active or retired military personnel
ENTER PROMO CODE:
USA
on Virginiasports.com
Click on Tickets > Online Promotions

In honor of your service and commitment to our country, Virginia athletics would like to offer you and your family a special ticket offer for Virginia football. Purchase online at VirginiaSports.com and save \$17 off the single ticket price.

3 WAYS TO ORDER (starting 6/8/09)

Online

- Go to VirginiaSports.com
- Click on Tickets
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- Enter the Promo Code: USA

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Show your Military ID at the Virginia Athletics Ticket Office in Bryant Hall: Monday - Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM

By Phone
Call 800-542-UVA1

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Giles B. Cook Post 53 Awards \$22,000 in Scholarships



Pictured is Giles B. Cook Post 53 Commander Cliff Dick presenting one of 18 scholarships totaling \$22,000 to students of Warren County and Skyline High Schools.

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**Continuing VA Endoscope Contamination Problem Unacceptable,
Says The American Legion**

Legion Leader Calls For Immediate Action To Eliminate Health Risks.

WASHINGTON (June 17, 2009) – The national commander of the nation’s largest veterans service organization is expressing outrage at continuing instances of VA medical personnel exposing their patients to infectious diseases.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General (IG) released a report Tuesday detailing a pattern of failure to adhere to cleaning and sterilization procedures involving endoscopic equipment, despite an earlier campaign to rectify the problem. The report, entitled “Healthcare Inspection – Use and Reprocessing of Flexible Fiber optic Endoscopes at VA Medical Facilities” was aired during a House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation hearing. It documented the results of recent, unannounced inspections at 42 Veterans Health Administration facilities nationwide.

“The report is very disturbing,” said David K. Rehbein, national commander of The American Legion. “It demonstrates a pattern of failure among medical personnel within veterans health facilities to acquire simple knowledge and follow uncomplicated procedures, thus possibly exposing vulnerable veterans to serious health risks.

House Subcommittee members have directed the IG to conduct re-inspections of VA health facilities in 90 days. “But these three months should not be construed as a period of time to work on these deficiencies,” said



Rehbein. “Veterans are being treated at these facilities every single hour of every single day. No matter what the reasons for this laxness in patient safety may be -- inadequate training, poor supervision or lack of accountability -- the problems must be rectified immediately – not tomorrow, but today!

“Traditionally,” he continued, “the VA’s healthcare system has been lauded as the best in the world, and I believe it still is. It is imperative that this issue not be allowed to compromise that standard,” said the commander.

The latest IG report is the result of a nationwide review requested by U.S. Representative Steve Buyer (R-IN) after he learned in March that more than three thousand veterans at the VA Medical Center in Miami, Fla. had been potentially exposed to HIV as well as Hepatitis B and C during endoscopic procedures. Even before the Miami revelation, inspections had revealed faulty reprocessing of endoscopic equipment at VA medical centers in Murfreesboro, Tenn. and Augusta, Ga. Among the Fla., Tenn. and Ga. Facilities, it is reported, approximately 10-thousand patients were exposed to the inadequately prepared medical implements. In February of this year, the VA instituted an education program to implement what they called “stronger procedures and better accountability at VA health care facilities.”

“Apparently, the so-called stronger procedures and better accountability were not strong and better enough,” Rehbein said.

With 2.6 million members, The American Legion is the nation’s largest veterans service organization. The Legion traditionally works hand-in-hand with members of Congress, leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs and other key stakeholders to assure appropriate funding and policy making on measures and issues affecting the military’s active duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel, veterans, and their families.

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The American Legion Lauds Congress and President For Action on Wartime Spending Bill

WASHINGTON (June 15, 2009) -- The American Legion has delivered letters of appreciation to congressional leaders and President Barack Obama for their assertive efforts to pass an emergency wartime spending bill.

Progression of the bill has been blockaded by debate over an amendment introduced by Senators Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and Lindsey Graham (R-SC). The amendment, called the Detainee Photographic Records Protection Act, would ban the public release of photos depicting alleged abuse of Afghanistan and Iraq war detainees. The American Legion has gone on record in support of the Lieberman-Graham amendment and regrets the fact that the objection to it by a few members of Congress has stalled the all-important spending measure.

Last Thursday evening, however, President Obama intervened in House-Senate negotiations, reiterating his pledge to employ all necessary executive powers to suppress release of the controversial photographs. This could lead the way to compromise on the Lieberman-Graham amendment help assure passage of the wartime spending measure The American Legion considers vital to national security.

Letters to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi from David K. Rehbein, national commander The American Legion, expressed gratitude for their leadership roles in attempts to adopt the spending bill. Rehbein’s letter read, in part:



“On behalf of The American Legion, I thank you and your colleagues for taking timely and assertive action on the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for FY 2009. Once again, through your strong leadership, Congress will provide our service members and their commanders with the necessary funding to successfully execute their vital military missions.”

“The American Legion also supports the measure’s additional funding of military construction projects. Completion of these projects will contribute significantly and positively to this nation’s wounded warriors’ and military families’ quality of life. The American Legion applauds the provision to extend GI Bill educational benefits to the children of members of the Armed Forces who are killed while on active duty, as well. This bipartisan effort clearly demonstrates commendable Congressional support for the men and women placed in harm’s way during our current conflicts.”

In the letters to Reid and Pelosi, as well as in a separate communication to President Obama, The American Legion commander praised the president’s firm stand on suppression of the detainee photographs. Rehbein wrote:

“The American Legion also appreciates the pledge by President Obama to prohibit the publication of photographs depicting blatantly improper actions by a few poorly trained service members.”

“It is indeed fortunate that this illegal conduct was identified, investigated, and rectified and that its perpetrators were brought to justice properly. As military leaders and the president himself acknowledges, public dissemination of damning photographs would benefit only the propagandistic efforts of our enemies and, thus, embolden them. We believe that not only would our men and women in uniform be threatened by publication of these images, but civilians at home could be placed in jeopardy as well. As we have learned most painfully in recent years, violent extremists are not discriminating in their choice of targets.”

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Pictures of Department Commander Les Clevinger's Participation at The Giles B. Cook Post 53 American Legion Birthday Party in Front Royal, VA. On Saturday 28 March.



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