

PROCEEDINGS

THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

52nd Annual Convention

New Orleans, Louisiana

August 23-25, 2024

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center

The Great Hall, First Floor

Reported by:

Denise L. Hinxman, CSR, RDR, CRC

Jacque Gutierrez, RDR, CRC

Captions Unlimited of Nevada

P.O. Box 20905

Reno, Nevada 89515

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>DAY 1, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Call to Order/Salute the Colors</b> .....	11
<i>Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander</i>	
<b>Invocation</b> .....	12
<i>Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain</i>	
<b>POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony</b> .....	14
<b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> .....	15
<b>Preamble to the Constitution of the Sons of</b> .....	15
<b>the American Legion</b>	
<b>Blue Star Banner Ceremony</b> .....	15
<i>Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander</i>	
<b>Reading of The Convention Call</b> .....	16
<i>Anthony P. Wright (PA), National Adjutant</i>	
<b>Roll Call</b> .....	19
<b>Convention Dedication</b> .....	23
<b>Resolution</b> .....	24
<i>Chuck Gannon (MD), Past National Commander</i>	
<i>Written</i> .....	27
<b>Address</b> .....	29
<i>National Internal Affairs Commission</i>	
<i>Chairman, Robert E. Newman (IN)</i>	
<b>First Report</b> .....	33
<i>National Convention Legislative and Rules</i>	
<i>Committee Blair M. Miles (AL)</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

<u>DAY 1, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Presentation</b> .....	34
<i>Past National Commander Byron Robichaux (LA)</i>	
<b>Report and Awards</b> .....	36
National Convention Membership Committee	
<i>Daryl V. VerStreate Jr. (NY)</i>	
<b>Address</b> .....	46
TAL National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer	
<i>(WI)</i>	
<b>Greetings</b> .....	51
<i>James A. LaCoursiere (CT)</i>	
<i>Leading Candidate for National Commander The</i>	
<i>American Legion</i>	
<b>Greetings</b> .....	57
<i>Dan K. Wiley (KS) Trailing Candidate for</i>	
<i>National Commander The American Legion</i>	
<b>Presentation</b> .....	66
<i>Chuck Gannon Past National Commander Sons of</i>	
<i>The American Legion</i>	
<b>Final Report</b> .....	68
Northeast	
<i>John R. Cook (NH) National Vice Commander</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	75
The Americanism Committee	
<i>Chris M. Casey, Chairman National Convention</i>	
<i>Americanism Committee</i>	
Americanism Awards .....	
78	

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

<u>DAY 1, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Report</b> .....	84
West Region <i>James Fischer, Sr. (CA), National Vice Commander</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	88
National Historian <i>Jeff Thorne (MD)</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	89
Central Region <i>National Vice Commander Robert L. Bristo (MN)</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	100
Children and Youth <i>Chairman Joseph A. Lohman (MD)</i>	
Written.....	109
<b>Report</b> .....	113
Midwest <i>National Vice Commander Terry A. Harris (KS)</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	119
National Veterans Employment and Education Committee <i>James M. Coates (NY)</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	125
Southern Region Report <i>National Vice Commander Linwood A. Moore (VA)</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	130
Credentials Committee <i>Harold Thompson, Jr., Chairman National Convention Credentials Committee</i>	
<b>Adjournment and Salute the Colors</b> .....	136

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

<u>DAY 2, SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Call to Order</b> .....	137
<i>Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander - Midwest</i>	
<b>Salute the Colors</b> .....	137
<b>Invocation</b> .....	137
<i>Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain</i>	
<b>Pledge of Allegiance</b> .....	140
<b>Roll Call</b> .....	141
<b>Opening Remarks</b> .....	144
<b>Report and Certificates Detachment Commanders ... School</b>	145
<i>Michael S. Cotten (DE), National Member Training and Development Cmte Chair</i>	
<b>Report and Awards</b> .....	151
National Convention Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee <i>Bruno T. Williamson (IL), Chairman</i>	
<b>Introduction</b> .....	160
<i>PNC Charles E. Gannon (MD)</i>	
<b>Address</b> .....	162
<i>TAL Past National Commander John P. Jake Comer (MA)</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

<u>DAY 2, SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Report and Awards</b> .....	166
National Convention Internal Affairs Committee <i>William G. "Bill" Hill (MD), Nat'l Conv. Internal Affairs Committee Chair</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	171
National Convention Legislative Report <i>Blair M. Miles (AL), Chairman National Convention Legislative and Rules Cmte</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	175
National Convention Finance Committee <i>Jeffrey J. Van Horn (MO), National Convention Finance Committee Chairman</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	178
National Public and Media Communications Commission <i>Kevin D. Chaplin (VA), Nat'l Public &amp; Media Comms. Comm. Chairman</i>	
<b>Report</b> .....	187
National Convention Constitutional Amendments Committee <i>Nedley C. Fox (CA), Nat'l Conv. Constitutional Amendments Cmte. Chair</i>	
<b>Report and Awards</b> .....	189
National Child Welfare Foundation Committee <i>Mark E. Nave (PA), National CWF Committee Chairman</i>	

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

<u>DAY 2, SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 2024</u>	<u>PAGE:</u>
<b>Presentation - Commander's Choice Award</b> .....	195
<i>Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr. National Commander</i>	
<b>Greetings</b> .....	197
<i>Lisa Williamson, National President American Legion Auxiliary</i>	
<b>Greetings</b> .....	204
<i>Trish Ward, National Vice President American Legion Auxiliary</i>	
<b>Address</b> .....	208
<i>Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan, President TAL Endowment Corporation</i>	
<b>Address</b> .....	219
<i>Robert L. Morrill, President Child Welfare Foundation The American Legion</i>	
<b>Child Welfare Foundation Awards</b> .....	225
<b>Tony Cross Be the One</b> .....	229
<b>Final Report</b> .....	239
<i>Donald "J.R." Hall, National Commander Sons of the American Legion</i>	
<b>Presentation</b> .....	248
<i>Paul Rush (IN)</i>	
<b>Address</b> .....	251
<i>Dennis R. Boland (FL), Past President TAL Child Welfare Foundation</i>	
<b>Adjournment and Salute to Colors</b> .....	261

TABLE OF CONTENTS  
(Continued)

DAY 3, SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2024 PAGE:

**Call to Order**..... 263  
*Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., National  
Commander*

**Invocation**..... 263  
*Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain*

**Pledge of Allegiance**..... 265

**Roll Call**..... 265

**American Legion Youth Champions** ..... 269  
*Accompanied by Drew Godby Youth Program  
Manager*

**Report**..... 278  
*National Convention Credentials Committee  
Harold Thompson, Jr., Chairman*

**Oral Report and Awards** ..... 281  
*National Convention Americanism Committee  
Chris M. Casey (NE), Cmte. Chair*

**Rules of the Election**..... 288

**Appt. of the Judge and Tellers of Election** ..... 291

**Election of the National Commander-Elect** ..... 293

**Election of the National Vice Commanders** ..... 321

DAY 3 - PM SESSION, SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2024 PAGE:

**Call to Order**..... 343  
*Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., National  
Commander*

**Salute the Colors**..... 343



**Introduction of Installing Officer** ..... 344  
*David P. Stephens (IN), Past National  
Commander*

**Installation of Officers** ..... 345  
*David K. Rehbein (IA), TAL Past National  
Commander*

**Presentation** ..... 354  
First Lady Navarreté badge

**Presentation** ..... 355  
National Commander Joseph Navarreté cap and  
name badge

**Remarks by the New National Commander** ..... 358  
*National Commander Joseph Navarreté (NM)*

**Presentation** ..... 366  
*Past National Commander Donald L. "JR" Hall  
(MD)*

**Presentation** ..... 367  
Colors of Outgoing National Commander

DAY 3, SUNDAY, AUGUST 25, 2024 PAGE:

**Presentation** ..... 367  
Colors of Incoming National Commander

**Installation Prayer & Blessing** ..... 368

**New Business** ..... 369

**For the Good of the Sons of the American** ..... 370  
Legion

**Announcements** ..... 370

**Benediction** ..... 373  
*Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain*

**Adjournment & Salute the Colors ..... 374**

... At 11:10 a.m., Friday, August 23, 2024, the delegates assembled for the Sons of The American Legion 52nd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had:

-o0o-

... Gavel.

**Call to Order/Salute the Colors**

*Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander.*

SAL Squadron 29 out of Lenoir, North Carolina, please advance the Colors.

Hand salute.

Two.

Please be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please secure the doors.

Good afternoon, everyone.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I'm Terry Harris, National Vice Commander for the Midwest region.

National Commander J.R. Hall was in the

hospital overnight with a kidney infection. He asked me to chair the session in his absence.

Please rise.

... *Gavel.*

National Chaplain Jeffrey Hicks will invoke the blessing of God.

Please uncover.

**Invocation**

*Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain*

Before we go into the invocation, comrades, some prayer requests to lift up. Please keep these members in your thoughts and prayers.

William Barnett of the Detachment of Idaho had a stroke at the age of 31. Still in the hospital.

National Commander J.R. Hall of Maryland, kidney stone. He's in his hotel room, recovering.

Past National Commander Richard Cook, Oklahoma, is in the hospital with an infection.

Our SAL national liaison Kevin Mook is having surgery in the hospital as we speak.

And any others that are unknown that have

not been spoken, please keep them in your prayers for continued healing and better health.

Let us pray.

Be with us, oh Lord, as we gather for this 52nd Annual National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion here in the Big Easy, New Orleans, Louisiana.

May your wisdom and counsel guide us as we seek for God and country to develop and authorize programs to the benefit of our comrades and especially the veterans of this great land.

Teach us to think wisely and carefully before we speak, to act with courage and conviction for the good of all rather than simply for vested interests, and to deal charitably with one another that we may all continue to enjoy mutual respect.

So may we serve you in spirit and in truth that our accomplishments will be built upon the firm foundations of charity and justice, thus may our work both in our general sessions and our committee meetings bring credit to the Sons of the American Legion and The American Legion.

And be of benefit to those we seek to serve, to your great honor and glory, all this we ask in Thy holy name, amen.

*... Chorus of amens.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): In memory of our departed comrades, comrades of all veterans, let us stand in silence.

*... moment of silence.*

#### **POW/MIA Empty Chair Ceremony**

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): To maintain a high awareness that a constant vigil should be maintained so that no POW or MIA will be left unaccounted for, the Sons of the American Legion designate a POW/MIA empty chair at all meetings. This is the physical symbol of 1,000 American POWs/MIAs still unaccounted as a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity.

The repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of Liberty and a full accounting of those missing. Let us rededicate ourselves for this endeavor. The POW/MIA flag is

in place at this time.

I call upon National Sergeant-at-Arms Mark Fayer, Sr. to join us in reciting the pledge of allegiance.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

*... Pledge of Allegiance.*

Cover.

I will now call upon National Vice Commander Robert Bristo to join us in reciting the Preamble to the Constitution of the Sons of the American Legion.

**Preamble to the Constitution of the Sons of the American Legion**

*Robert L. Bristo (MN), National Vice Commander - Central*

*... Preamble to the Constitution recited.*

**Blue Star Banner Ceremony**

*Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander*

Serving as a constant reminder that servicemen and women, on a daily basis, are putting themselves at risk to ensure our freedoms, the Sons of The American Legion display a Corporate Blue Star Service Banner at all meetings, to serve as a

symbol of our support of all the military personnel serving this great country. Let us never forget that every day these individuals are protecting our liberty. The Blue Star Banner is in place.

... *Gavel.*

National Adjutant Anthony Wright will now read the call to the National Convention.

**Reading Of The Convention Call**

*Anthony P. Wright (PA), National Adjutant*

Pursuant to Article V, Section 2 of the National Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion, the National Commander Midwest of the Sons of The American Legion hereby calls for the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion to be held August 23rd through August 25th, 2024 in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Purpose: National Convention sessions, in accordance with the Uniform Code of Procedure for National Conventions, will be convened at 1:00 pm on Friday, August 23, 2024. The 52nd Annual National Convention shall be convened for the



following purposes: To complete all business of the Sons of The American Legion for the fiscal year 2023-2024; To vote on all resolutions which are properly presented to the National Convention; To consider and make amendments to the National Constitution and/or By-Laws of the Sons of The American Legion; To elect a National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in that sequence, for the ensuing year, 2024-2025. Elections shall take place on August 25, 2024.

Representation: Representation in the National Convention shall be allotted in accordance with the provisions of Article V of the National Constitution of the Sons of The American Legion which states in part:

Article V, Section 3. In the National Convention, each Detachment shall be entitled to three delegates and one additional delegate for each 500 Members, or major fraction thereof, whose current dues have been received by the National Treasurer of The American Legion, thirty days prior to the meeting of said National Convention, and

whose registration fees, as fixed by the National Executive Committee, for its total authorized delegate strength, has been paid, and to one alternate for each delegate.

Article V, Section 4. Each duly registered delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any registered delegate absent and not represented by an alternate shall be cast by the majority of the registered delegates present from one's Detachment.

Alternates for registered delegates shall have all the privileges of registered delegates except that of voting. A registered delegate is one who has received one's credentials and has paid such registration fees as may be required.

Article VI, Section 6. All Past National Commanders, while in good standing in their respective Squadrons, shall be members for life of the National Executive Committee, without a vote, and shall also be life delegates to all National Conventions of the Sons of The American Legion, with vote, to be exercised with their respective

detachments.

Article VII, Section 3. Members of the National Executive Committee shall be delegates to the National Convention with a vote, which shall be exercised with their respective detachments, except that the vote of the National Vice Commander shall be exercised only in their capacity as chair of the National Convention.

Commander, that completes the call.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I now declare this 52nd National Convention -- no, I don't. National Adjutant Anthony Wright will now call the roll. I apologize.

**Roll Call**

*Anthony W. Wright (PA)*

**National Commander**

Donald J.R. Hall, Jr., Maryland - Excused

**National Vice Commanders**

North: John R. Cook, New Hampshire

South: Linwood A. Moore, Virginia

Central: Robert L. Bristo, Minnesota

Midwest: Terry A. Harris, Kansas

West: James R. Fischer, Sr., California

**National Adjutant**

Anthony W. Wright, Pennsylvania

**National Assistant Adjutants**

Harold E. Thompson, Jr., Nebraska, Emeritus

**National Assistant Adjutant**

James E. "Ed" Sheubrooks, Florida

Robert J. Avery, New York

Scott A. Williams, Virginia

Scott J. Thornton, Ohio

Clifford E. Hall, Georgia

**National Chaplain**

Jeffrey E. Hicks, New Jersey

**National Parliamentarian**

Gary B. Leach, California

**National Historian**

Jeffery Thorne, Maryland

**National Sergeant-At-Arms**

Mark T. Fayer, Sr., Maryland

**National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms**

Brian K. Waters, Pennsylvania

Gregory A. "Greg" Falco, New York

Lyle G. Larson, Kansas.

Matthew W. Griffis, Arizona

Timothy Brower, New York.

**National Commander's Aide.**

Thomas G. "Tom" Deal, Maryland

**Past National Commanders**

Christopher A. Carlton, Indiana

Michael K. Seaton, California - Excused

Robert A. McBride, Ohio - Excused

J.R. Stillwell, Illinois - Excused

John J. Smolinsky, Massachusetts - Excused

Robert H. Faust, California - Excused

Gregory D. Reis, Illinois - Excused

Grant M. Jamieson, Michigan - Excused

Charles E. Gannon, Maryland

John M. Sherrard, California - Excused

David P. Stephens, Indiana

Christopher R. Cerullo, New York

Frederick L. Hartline, Sr., Ohio - Excused  
Douglas P. Bible, Minnesota  
Richard L. League, Maryland - Excused  
David R. Faust, Wisconsin  
Robert A. Worrel, Indiana  
Eugene L. Sacco, California  
Joseph M. Mayne, Minnesota  
John T. Dietz, Kentucky  
Jack E. Jordan, Texas - Excused  
William E. Matoska, Maryland - Excused  
Byron J. Robichaux, Louisiana  
Richard L. Cook, Oklahoma - Excused  
Kevin N. Winkelmann, Texas  
Clifford A. Smith, Massachusetts  
Neal C. Warnken, Kansas  
Michael J. Deacon, Iowa  
William L. Sparwasser, Maryland - Excused  
Earl R. Ruttkofsky, Minnesota  
Raymond P. Giehll, Jr., Indiana  
Thomas E. Cisna, Illinois  
James K. Roberts, III, Florida - Excused  
Joseph W. Gladden, Maryland  
Michael W. Moss, Colorado - Excused  
Kevin L. Collier, Alaska  
Brian J. O'Hearne, Massachusetts - Excused  
Jeffrey C. Frain, Arizona  
Danny J. Smith, Nebraska - Excused  
Greg K. "Doc" Gibbs, New York  
Clint D. Bolt, Virginia - Excused  
Joseph A. Paviglianti, New York - Excused  
Michael C. Fox, California

**Detachments**

Alabama  
Alaska  
Arizona  
Arkansas  
California  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
Florida  
France  
Georgia  
Hawaii

Idaho  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Latin America  
Louisiana  
Maine  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
Montana  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Hampshire  
New Jersey  
New Mexico  
New York  
North Carolina  
North Dakota  
Ohio  
Oklahoma  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
Puerto Rico  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Utah  
Vermont  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin  
Wyoming

Commander, that completes roll call. You  
have a quorum.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): One of my favorite parts.

I now declare this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion convened.

... *Applause.*

As a point of housekeeping business, I would remind everyone addressing the chair to please use one of the microphones located in the aisles on the floor instead of just calling out from your seat.

Please ask the chair to be recognized. Telling us where you are on the floor helps, then identify yourself by name, title, and your detachment before speaking. This will help ensure that we maintain order and give our court reporter a better opportunity to document the proceedings correctly.

Thank you.

### **Convention Dedication**

The Sons of The American Legion have been saddened this year with the passing of Past

National Commander James Hartman, Jr. from the Detachment of Maryland. He served the National Organization with distinction and honor.

I call Past National Commander Chuck Gannon from the Detachment of Maryland to the podium to present a resolution.

**Resolution**

*Chuck Gannon (MD), Past National Commander*

Thank you, Vice Commander. Good afternoon, delegates. Before I read the resolution, a minute about Jim.

When he was younger -- and for those of you that were around the first 15 years of this organization will remember Jim because there wasn't a convention, an NEC meeting, or any kind of gathering that went on that he wasn't involved in.

He was a tremendous organizer. He had an attitude to sometimes turn people off, but he always had in the back of his mind the good of the Sons of the American Legion.

He did a lot of great things, and he left us to raise a new family and finally came back.



And to show how organized he is, or was, Vice Commanders that are sitting here today are able to run a meeting when the Commander is gone, we can thank Jim Hartman, in part.

He established the system we're now using for selecting and training Vice Commanders, and you can tell that it's much improved. Let me read the resolution.

WHEREAS, the late James R. Hartman was a proud and dedicated member of a Sons of The American Legion with continuous membership for 58 years; and

WHEREAS, during the years of his outstanding service, he demonstrated self-commitment and incredible organizational skills while serving as Detachment Commander of Maryland in 1967; and

WHEREAS, James R. Hartman, Jr. of Maryland was bestowed the title of SAL National Commander by the vote of the National Convention in 1973; and

WHEREAS, in 1974 The American Legion

National Commander, Edward Lee Eaton, and James R. Hartman, Jr. both hailed from Maryland -- and they served together --

WHEREAS, the Sons of The American Legion are deeply saddened by the loss of this very distinguished member of The American Legion Family; and WHEREAS, Past National Commander Hartman's service to the Sons of The American Legion was significant and substantial, warranting recognition in the form of National Convention dedications during the corresponding 2024 events in his honor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the Sons of The American Legion in Annual Convention assembled in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 23-25, 2024, that the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion be dedicated in memory of Past National Commander James R. Hartman, Jr. from the Detachment of Maryland.

At this time, on the behalf of Commander Hall, who I know is watching now on computer, we would like to make Jim Hartman a Distinguished

Guest of this convention.

And along with that, all year long J.R. has promoted why we belong, to remember who it was we received our eligibility through.

He asked that we also make his grandfather, Edward Hall, the veteran that made him eligible, a Distinguished Guest of this convention.

J.R., thank you.

*... written resolution.*

The Sons of The American Legion.  
52nd National Convention  
Held on  
August 23-25, 2024

Resolution

**No.: SAL Resolution 2 - National Convention, 2024**  
**Title: Memorializing Past National Commander James R. Hartman, Jr.**  
**Origin: National Convention Internal Affairs Committee**

WHEREAS, the late James R. Hartman, Jr. Was a proud and dedicated member of the Sons of The American Legion (SAL) with continuous membership for 58 years; and

WHEREAS, during the years of his outstanding service, he demonstrated self-commitment and incredible organizational skills while serving as Detachment Commander of Maryland in 1967; and

WHEREAS, James R. Hartman, Jr. Of Maryland was bestowed the title of SAL National Commander by the vote of the National Convention in

1973; and

WHEREAS, in 1974 The American Legion National Commander, Edward Lee Eaton, and James R. Hartman, Jr. Both hailed from Maryland; and

WHEREAS, the Sons of The American Legion are deeply saddened by the loss of this very distinguished member of The American Legion Family; and

WHEREAS, PNC Hartman's service to the Sons of The American Legion was significant and substantial, warranting recognition in the form of National Convention dedications during the corresponding 2024 events in his honor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, by the Sons of The American Legion in Annual Convention assembled in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 23-25, 2024, that the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion be dedicated in memory of Past National Commander James R. Hartman, Jr. From the Detachment of Maryland.

*... End of written resolution.*

*... Applause.*

At this time I make a motion that the Detachment of -- make a motion to adopt resolution NC2024-2.

Is there a second?

BRANDON K. CURRY (KY): Brandon Curry, Kentucky, I second that motion.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): All right. The motion has been made by Chuck Gannon, Detachment of Maryland. Seconded by Brandon Curry,

Detachment of Kentucky. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, all those in favor of adopting Resolution NC2024-2, signify by saying aye.

All opposed, nay.

Motion carries.

... *Applause.*

At this time we're going to bring up National Internal Affairs chairman of The American Legion Bob Newman.

... *Applause.*

**Address**

National Internal Affairs Commission  
*Chairman, Robert E. Newman (IN)*

Good afternoon.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon!

ROBERT E. NEWMAN (IN): I want to congratulate the Sons of the American Legion for celebrating its 92nd anniversary and the 52nd Annual National Convention here in New Orleans.

As we look forward to the 100th anniversary in 2032, at the convention, just eight short years away, it's not just a milestone but

momentous occasion that we should all be eagerly anticipating.

Have you begun thinking about how to celebrate this historic centennial?

The Sons of the American Legion continue to impress and raise the bar with their hard work and dedication to our country and our communities.

Your veteran families, as well as veterans and Legionnaires, are proud of you. Not only reaching but surpassing your membership goal is a testament to your dedication and commitment.

The SAL has achieved an all-time high for the second year. Congratulations.

*... Applause.*

As of July 31st of this year, out of the 5,736 squadrons, only 1,914 Consolidated Squadron Reports were submitted, for a total of 33.4 completion rate.

Last year, 1,947 submitted for a 31.1 completion rate. There's a lot of room for improvement here. Let us take this as a challenge and aim for 50 percent submission rate next year.

CSR data is vitally important and gets incorporated into The American Legion National Commander's testimony before Congress. Your dedication shows this year's squadrons collectively donated more than \$10,434,722.

*... Applause.*

And volunteered over 5,383,300 hours, supporting the various Legion programs and VAs around the country. It's you, the Sons, who continue to set an example how a veterans support organization should be modeled. Your contributions are not just impressive, they are invaluable.

While those numbers are impressive, I will bet they're much higher. This is derived from just 33.4 of the CSRs submitted. Just imagine what it would be like if everyone submitted theirs.

You've also raised the bar on fundraising by consistently donating to Child Welfare Foundation since 1987. The Sons have donated over \$10 million to CWF this program year alone. It is \$489,185.30.

You have led the way with pride, honor

and integrity, considering the total donations for the year were \$723,348.13. The Sons have made great strides to mirror the procedures and processes of The American Legion on many levels.

As you know, the SAL can now be renewed online using legion.org to renew. We have had over 7,679 members take advantage of this process so far.

Have a great convention and continue to exemplify what a Veterans Support Organization should be.

Before I sign off, my father -- I gained my right to be an SAL member from my father, who served in World War II as a combat medic and fought in the Battle of The Bulge in 1944. I'm a proud member of Squadron 97 from the great state of Indiana.

*... Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): At this time we'd like to make Mr. Bob Newman a Distinguished Guest of the Sons of the American Legion convention.



At this time, I call on Blair Miles for the first report of the National Convention Legislative and Rules Committee.

**First Report**

**National Convention Legislative and Rules Committee**

*Blair M. Miles (AL)*

Good afternoon. Welcome to New Orleans. The Legislative and Rules Committee met this morning at 11:30.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Rules of Convention by the Legislative and Rules Committee.

As a duly elected delegate to this convention, I move for the adoption of the Legislative Rules for this convention.

BERNIE KESSLER (OH): Vice Commander, Bernie Kessler, Detachment of Ohio, National Legislative Commission member, duly seconds the motion.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I have a motion on the floor to accept Standing Rules of Convention as published and a second by Bernie Kessler of Ohio.

Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting the Standing Rules of Convention as published, signify by saying aye.

All opposed, signify by saying nay.

Motion carries.

At this time I call Past National Commander Byron Robichaux for the purpose of a presentation.

**Presentation**

*Past National Commander Byron Robichaux (LA)*

Good afternoon. And welcome to Louisiana and New Orleans, all the delegates and everybody a part of The American Legion Family.

It's been a while since we've been here. In fact, it's 26 years ago. But it's something that sits in my memory because I had the distinguished opportunity that year to become your National Commander when we were in New Orleans in 1998.

Hopefully, you've enjoyed stuff so far. You were greeted with beads from the Detachment of

Louisiana. We have a reception this evening. We have another little surprise for you.

At this time I'd like to recognize, if they're in the building, any of the people from the Detachment of Louisiana, from The American Legion Family of Louisiana, that have helped put this together and working.

... *Applause.*

And so we hope you enjoy coming to this 52nd National Convention. New Orleans is, of course, known for things like Bourbon Street, but there's so much more to do.

The official World War II Museum of the United States is located here honoring the greatest generation of veterans. And it's one of the most visited museums in the world.

We also have the aquarium and insectarium just outside of the Hilton area, and the streetcar rides, the very well-known Saint Charles street cars, historic in themselves because of their age.

Or you can go visit Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World and get a real taste of Mardi Gras as

well.

And definitely in New Orleans and Louisiana, you'll never go hungry. We have a good amount of Cajun and Creole food. We hope you're enjoying yourself on behalf of The American Legion Family in Louisiana. We welcome you to New Orleans. We welcome you to Louisiana, and as the saying goes, (Speaking in French) - let the good times roll.

*... Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): All right. National Convention Membership Committee Report and awards and National Vice Commander John Cook.

At this time I call on Daryl VerStreate Jr. for the National Convention Membership Committee Awards. On deck, John Cook.

**Report and Awards**  
**National Convention Membership Committee**  
*Daryl V. VerStreate Jr. (NY)*

Good morning. This past year, what a year we've had. At the beginning of the year we put out a challenge to beat last year's membership and arrive at 105 percent.

We crushed last year's goal. We're currently standing at 103 percent. I can live with 103. That's just phenomenal.

We did hit another all-time high. As of August 22nd, the Membership Report was 393,578 - beating last year's all-time high by more than 12,835 members, while making every goal this year and barely missing the 100 percent goal.

Since coming out of COVID, we have gained 37,527 members in the last three years.

Yeah, right. The total new members this year are 52,218, with 18 detachments over 90 percent retention rate; 20 detachments over 105 percent; 46 of the 55 detachments over 100 percent; with every region over 105 percent. And 67 new squadrons.

If you guys just didn't do a phenomenal job this year, you all deserve a round of applause. You really did a great job.

*... Applause.*

I want to thank everybody on the committee for all your hard work this past year and

making it possible to break every record ever set by the Sons of the American Legion membership and setting new all-time highs across the board.

Especially you, the member, all of you.

If it was not for all of your hard work combined, we would not be where we are today.

Moving into the awards. The National Regional Membership Award is the first detachment to reach quota in each region as of December 31st of the previous year.

Preprinted frame certificate for the West: Hawaii.

For the Midwest: South Dakota.

Southeast: Puerto Rico.

Northeast: Rhode Island.

Central: Wisconsin.

... *Applause.*

The Lawrence Hartline Award is a preprinted framed certificate for the most new squadrons from July 1st to June 30th.

Iowa: 10 squadrons.

... *Applause.*

Largest Squadron Award, with the most paid members for the prior year as of December 31st of the year: Augustus Ruser, Jr. Squadron No. 273 - Madeira Beach, Florida, 1,363 members.

... *Applause.*

The Highest Renewal Percentage Award by Region as of December 31st of the previous year:

Southeast - Puerto Rico, 98.04 percent.

West - Hawaii, 97.48 percent.

Midwest - South Dakota, 95.12 percent.

Southeast - District of Columbia, 92.13 percent.

Central - Wisconsin, 91.53 percent.

... *Applause.*

90 Percent Renewal Detachment Award:

Achieving 90 percent or higher as of the 105 percent target date: Preprinted framed certificates:

District of Columbia, 92.13 percent.

Hawaii, 97.48 percent.

Illinois, 91.34 percent.

Iowa, 91.34 percent.

Maryland, 90.93 percent.

Michigan, 90.74 percent.

Minnesota, 91.02 percent.

Nebraska, 91.66 percent.

New Mexico, 91.40 percent.

New York, 91.62 percent.

North Dakota, 90.7 percent.

Ohio, 95.5 percent.

Pennsylvania, 91.04 percent.

Puerto Rico, 98.04 percent.

South Dakota, 95.12 percent.

Vermont, 91.48 percent.

Wisconsin, 91.71 percent.

... *Applause.*

The Arthur D. Houghton Trophy

Award - detachment with the greatest membership increase as a percentage compared to the previous year as of the 105 Percent Report:

Category I, 200 - 1,000 members: Idaho  
107.58 percent.

Category II, 1,001 - 3,000 members: New  
Mexico, 123.64 percent.



Category III, 3,001 - 6,000 members:  
Wisconsin, 106.889 percent.

Category IV, 6,001 - 12,000 members:  
Arizona, 110.529 percent.

Category V, 12,001 and over members:  
Florida, 109.924 percent.

... *Applause.*

Recruiter of the Year Award: It's a member who recruits the highest number of new members in a membership year as of 105 percent goal:

Michael Bryant, John D. Wibby Squadron No. 86 - Overgaard, Arizona.

Recruiter of the Year is Michael Bryant from John D. Wibby, Squadron from Overgaard, Arizona, with 118 members.

... *Applause.*

Thank you, sir. Job well done. And with this award comes a preprinted -- an SAL uniform cap. Do you want to share your cap?

MICHAEL BRYANT (AZ): Certainly, I will.  
Unused, still in the bag.

*... Applause.*

Detachment Recruitment Award - detachment with the most new members recruited by size category as of the 105 percent membership goal date.

Category I, up to 1,000 members:

Idaho, 193 members.

Category II, 1,001 - 3,000 members:

Washington, 650 members.

Category III, 3,001 - 6,000 members:

Texas, 1,111 members.

Category IV, 6,001 - 12,000 members:

Arizona, 1,973 members.

Category V, 12,001 and up members:

Pennsylvania, 6,520 members.

Total members of 10,447 new members between those five detachments.

*... Applause.*

Squadron Commander of the Year is outstanding contributions to their communities. That is in line for spring submission NEC.

Nominations were mentioned, one, New

York, Scott Hubbard; Jason Stephens, Arizona; Scott Wright from Vermont; Shaun Tawzer from South Dakota.

Three of them will receive preprinted certificates, and one will receive Squadron Commander of the Year with an SAL uniform cap.

Squadron Commander of the Year, I'd like to take a moment to read to you, is 2024 National Squadron Commander of the Year award is hereby given to Scott Hubbard, Seeley B. Parish Squadron 457, Phelps, New York, for outstanding service to active duty service personnel, veterans, and their families during the 23-24 administrative year.

Your untiring efforts and dedication to your community have brought great credit to your squadron and the Sons of the American Legion.

Presented at the 52nd National Convention in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23-25, 2024, signed by Commander J.R. Hall and Anthony Wright.

Here's a plaque for Scott Hubbard and uniform cap. Thank you, sir.

... Applause.

The Triple Nickel Award is the detachment with 105 percent quota, five new squadrons and an 85 percent renewal rate, all by July 1.

And a \$500 gift certificate to Emblem Sales:

Iowa, 105.454 percent; 10 new squadrons, 91.26 percent.

... Applause.

South Dakota, 121.291 percent; six new squadrons, 95.12 percent.

Wisconsin, 106.73 percent; five new squadrons, 91.53.

... Applause.

As a delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I make a motion to accept the National Convention Membership Committee Report.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I have a motion on the floor to accept the National Convention Membership Committee Report.

Is there a second?

BRANDON K. CURRY (KY): Brandon Curry,

Kentucky, I second the motion.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Thank you, Brandon.

Motion is seconded by Brandon Curry from the Detachment of Kentucky.

Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting the National Convention Membership Committee report, signify by saying aye.

All opposed by saying nay.

The motion carries.

Thank you, Chairman VerStreate. At this time we would like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention.

*... Applause.*

Daniel J. Seehafer likes to say "it's personal" when it comes to The American Legion's mission of serving veterans and their families.

He is continuing the theme of "Be the One," to prevent veteran suicide.

An ordained minister from Wisconsin, he earned his American Legion eligibility through

service in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve, where he served as a military chaplain.

A member of American Legion Post 157 in Horicon, Wisconsin, Seehafer served in a number of American Legion offices at every level, including national chaplain and commander of the Department of Wisconsin.

Born and raised in Merrill, Wisconsin, he lettered in cross-country track while in high school and later received a bachelor's degree in pastoral ministry from Concordia University and a Master of Divinity at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer to the podium.

... *Applause.*

**Address**

*TAL National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer (WI)*

Good afternoon! As I say professionally, please be seated.

... *Laughter.*

It is good, good to be here! I know my brother, my friend, and I know he's taking care of himself -- he has a little issue -- and I'm sure he's watching, but later on, Brother Hall, we'll gather together, and we'll do this and maybe eat three olives or something like that. We'll be all right.

I'll tell you what, brothers, it is good, so good to be here. It's really our family reunion, isn't it?

But throughout the year, we gathered, we gathered together as a family, and I've been saying this: We have come together with two things, and that's what I've been kind of delivering throughout my journey, and that is relevance and purpose. Because I always say this, why in the world are you here? Why would you give your time, your talent and even your treasure, in some cases, to gather, to volunteer to work?

There has to be purpose and there has to be relevance. Guaranteed. And with that, there is no greater than this.

This, my friends, is our mission. Being that one to save one, because without a doubt changing lives and saving lives, bottom line, that is The American Legion Family. That, brothers, is you, isn't it?

... *Applause.*

And I'll tell you what, is it worth it? Is it worth it?

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes!

TAL NATIONAL COMMANDER DANIEL SEEHAFFER

(WI): When somebody taps you on the shoulder and says, you know something -- in my case belonging to the Legion, and I'm sure in yours -- being a part of the family, "This saved my life." That's what I get.

I also get "how it changed my life." I get that response as well. Again, whatever program it may be or the money that we raise for our foundations, it changes lives, and it saves lives. There's no doubt about that. Talking about purpose and talking about relevance.

So I understand being a reverend, having



the floor, that can be dangerous sometimes. But I know when to wrap her up. I just want to say thank you, first of all, for giving all of you a commercial break, yours truly, all right.

... *Laughter.*

But bottom line, and seriously, because I know you're leaders, and I really feel you're servant leaders. That's why you're here. And as my good friend would say, Brother J.R., who is listening, I'm sure, it's not about self; it's about each other, isn't it?

And we'll do anything and everything for each other. That's why we're here. Purpose and relevance. And let's continue with that urgency, yes, with that eye of the tiger, let's continue to change and save lives one at a time. Are you with me?

... *Applause.*

With that said, keep up the great work. Again, the work that changes and saves lives. With that said, God bless each and every one of you, from my heart to yours.

Love ya. Thank you.

... *Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): The Sons of the American Legion present this citation of appreciation to Daniel J. Seehafer, National Commander of The American Legion, in recognition of outstanding contributions and in appreciation for dedicated service to the programs of the Sons of the American Legion, and it is presented at this 52nd National Convention in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23rd through 25th, attested by Donald J.R. Hall, National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion, and Anthony W. Wright, National Adjutant.

Sir.

... *Applause.*

At this time, we would like to make Commander Seehafer a Distinguished Guest of the Sons of the American Legion National Convention.

... *Applause.*

TAL NATIONAL COMMANDER DANIEL J.

SEEHAFER: Again, I know I said Sons and I said

gentlemen, but I also see there are some spouses in here as well. You too are part of a very good, awesome program we have, and you are the heartbeat. I don't want to leave you out as well.

We all, together, the family, we change, and we save lives. Never, ever forget that. Again, God bless. Love you.

... *Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I'm sure glad I don't have to follow him.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort leading candidate for National Commander, Mr. Jim LaCoursiere, to the podium.

**Greetings**

*James A. LaCoursiere (CT)  
Leading Candidate for National Commander  
The American Legion*

Good afternoon, Sons of the American Legion. I learned an awful lot following Commander Seehafer over the course of the years. I guess you could say I'm following God, so I picked up on that.

I'm here today to say thank you, thank

you to the Sons of the American Legion. Thank you for all that you do. The American Legion, you are the forefront, the strong arm of this great organization taking care of and raising funds for the Child Welfare Foundation, and you guys do one helluva job with that. So I just want to say thank you.

*... Applause.*

You heard Commander Seehafer mention that we as The American Legion family are all about changing lives and saving lives. The commander and I, we talked about it, and I promised him I'm going to maintain -- and you will hear that during the course of the year on who we are, and that's all about changing lives and saving lives.

I started that with its who we are. We are The American Legion family, the largest and the strongest veterans service organization in America, and we need to pull together even more than what we currently do to let America know who we are.

The American Legion family, we are the voice of the veterans and their families throughout

the United States of America. We need to go beyond these four walls and let America know who The American Legion family is. And I can probably say that before the body of the Sons because I am a dual member.

.... *Applause.*

In my travels, I'm always asked, Commander Jim, what's your sense of direction for next year? And I make it clear, and sometimes my terminology gets me in trouble, and sometimes it don't. I let everybody know that I'm not changing a damn thing because, when something works, you don't change it, and I'm committed to maintaining consistency from Commander Troiola's year, through Commander Seehafer's year, and with my year, and the consistency I'm talking about is maintaining our number one mission.

Our number one mission of Be the One. We'll maintain our charitable fund-raising endeavors with the Veterans & Children Foundation, with primary focus on quality of life for our veterans, our active duty troops, and their

families.

We together need to be the ears and the eyes of America, taking care of our veterans and their families. We need to be there for one another. With our mission of Be the One, we need to continue educating one another, continue educating our neighbors and our peers. Educate them with our Be the One mission on saving the life of a veteran, but it goes beyond saving the life of a veteran because it's not just a veteran that's committing suicide, we have our active duty, we have their children.

Don't forget about the children of the military families. There's a lot of loss with the children. There's also a lot of loss with the spouses. But we can really grow and make a difference with saving the lives by reaching into the community and saving the life of a neighbor, saving the life of a stranger. We need to destigmatize the thoughts and ideologies people have with TBI, PTSD, any form of mental health issues. Let them know that it is okay to not be

okay as long as we are there for them.

We must listen to them, speak to them, and do not hesitate to ask the tough questions. Let's save a veteran's life. Let's be out there in every community throughout America and let America know who The American Legion family is because, when you think about it, the second word in our organization is American. We're about America.

We're a Legion when we all pull together. And when you think about that, a few years back with my campaign and everything, I actually coined the phrase of love. It's my love for this great organization, The American Legion family, and my love for the United States of America, but the love I'm talking about is L-U-V, which is loyalty, unity, and valor, and in my heart, you're all displaying that with your hearts in the compassion you have by being here today.

Your loyalty and commitment to this great organization, to your squadron, to your family, to your community, to the national organization, and most of all, to the great United States of America.

The unity when we all pull together as a family and we work in unison as one body for a better America and the valor when you put your hand up and you say yes, I want to help with that. I want to volunteer. I want to be there. I want to make a difference with this great organization. I want to make a difference for America.

But these are the core values that we need to get out there and share with the great United States of America.

So I just want to say thank you. Thank you for everything that you do. I truly wish your National Commander, J.R. Hall, was here with you today. I spent a lot of time in my travels during the past year hooking up with him, and I will let you know he did one heck of a job serving the Sons of the American Legion.

*... Applause.*

Be proud of Commander Hall, but also be proud of yourselves. Be proud of yourselves as an individual. Be proud of yourselves with your families. God bless each and every one of you, and



God bless the United States of America.

... *Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): At this time, we would like to make leading candidate LaCoursiere a Distinguished Guest of the Sons of the American Legion.

... *Applause.*

Sorry about that, we were having a discussion. Our next speaker is one of my best friends, and once you get to know him, he will be one of your best friends as well. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort trailing candidate for commander, Dan Wiley, to the podium.

**Greetings**

*Dan K. Wiley (KS)  
Trailing Candidate for National Commander  
The American Legion*

Good afternoon, family. Please, you look like you're still standing. I'm going to tell you these lights are bright. Past the first row, you can't see squat. It is great to be here. I have 393,000 thank you's for you guys. 393,000. That's right, you guys are knocking it out of the park

second year in a row with an all-time high. Give yourself another hand.

*... Applause.*

You are getting it done. You know, it is great to be here, kind of a surprise this morning that my friend Terry Harris would be -- how's Terry doing?

*... Applause.*

You know, for having just a few hours to prepare, he's knocking it out of the park. The thing I like, I look here, he's got a script he's got to follow. He's got no idea what I'm going to say. Neither do I. I told Terry one time he would make a heck of a National Commander, and I still think that was true at the time.

*... Laughter.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Thank you, Dan.

DAN K. WILEY (KS): You're welcome. I'm not done, buddy. So we have been blessed this past year as an American Legion family with excellent leadership, haven't we? Commander Seehafer,

President Williamson, and Commander Don "J.R." Hall Jr. How did he do?

*... Applause.*

You know, Commander, I wish you were here today because I had a couple of stories to tell about you, and I'm going to still tell them because I know you're watching online. It was an honor to cross paths -- too much Seehafer probably. I'm crossing too much stuff.

Anyway, we crossed paths a couple of times this past year. So he's in a Detachment, and he gets introduced to speak, and they introduce him as Dr. Hall. Yeah, so he gets up, he speaks, he's like, well, that was odd, but he's polite, not going to say anything about it. Gets to the next stop, they introduce him as Dr. Hall, and he's like, okay, hold on, wait a minute. What's this Dr. Hall stuff? They said what do you mean, it says right here, Don "J.R." Hall Jr., MD. MD? Maryland, right? True story.

I've got another true story. We were in Alaska, and I say this a little tongue in cheek. I

saved his life. It's true. We were in Kenai, and we had a chance to take a van with a driver to the Homer spit. That was really kind of cool, except for the ride there. It was about an hour, hour and a half van, and our driver had been in the convention all week, this Alaska department convention.

And he's driving, and I'm sitting in the passenger seat, and J.R. is in the seat behind the driver. We also had National Vice Commander Randy Edwards in the van, and our driver is nodding off, and so I'm engaging him in conversation, making sure he stays awake. And I got distracted for a moment, and I look up, and we are about the white line swerving kind of hard. We are one or two seconds away from running off the road.

I don't know if you've ever been to Alaska, but the roads in Alaska, you might have a 5-foot drop-off, and you might have a 500-foot drop-off. We were one to two seconds from certain crash, and I yelled at the driver rather loudly and woke him up. Boy, we pulled back just in time. So

we got to Homer Spit, we had a good time, and you know who drove on the way back, right? Yeah.

I give the guy credit; he was a good guy. I said, is it okay if I drive on the way back? He said, yeah, that would probably be best. Thank you. He didn't fall asleep once on the way home.

... *Laughter.*

I know J.R. and I laughed about that a little bit. J.R., I know you're watching online, Doc. Love you, man. It is great to be here.

I think Terry would tell you that, as a Department Commander, I was extremely inclusive of the American Legion family in everything we did, and I am a strong believer in the American Legion family, and I'll tell you why. My wife is a member of the auxiliary. My daughter is a member of the Auxiliary. My son is a member of the Sons of the American Legion. And, oh, yeah, before I forget --

... *Applause.*

I am a proud member of the Sons of the American Legion honoring my grandfather's service during World War I.

But that's not the only reason I'm a strong believer in the American Legion family. I'll tell you why I'm a strong believer. When I traveled the state of Kansas, and now as I travel these United States of America, when you walk into a post, you can tell within a matter of minutes whether that post is successful or not, and I guarantee you the most often common denominator on successful posts are those posts operating as a family!

*... Applause.*

Those posts that understand it's the mission and not who gets the credit, the cause and not the applause. It's those posts, those posts, units, squadrons, and chapters that are working together. Those are the posts that are successful.

You know, I can give you many examples of posts that wouldn't even exist if it weren't for the unit, the chapter, or the squadron, and I'm going to do that exactly with Kansas and a squadron we have in Kansas. I hope that wasn't my time up because I'm not done.

*... Laughter.*

Getting close, though. We have a squadron in Kansas that the post would not exist if the squadron wasn't there. It's in northwest Kansas. Northwest Kansas is sparsely populated. In fact, our Detachment Commander Jim Gallentine -- Jim, are you in the audience? Yeah, he's right back there. He's kind of shy.

Jennings Post 351 has roughly 18 members of the American Legion. That's not unusual, by the way, for western Kansas. Jennings Squadron 351 has 72 members.

*... Applause.*

That's right. They have four times as many members of the squadron as they do in the post. That post would not exist today but for the squadron. They keep the doors open. That's what you do.

As I get ready to close, I want to thank you again 10 million times. You know what's that for, right? You bet; you surpassed the \$10 million threshold of giving to the Child Welfare

Foundation. Give yourself another round of applause. Great job.

... *Applause.*

Now, normally I would close at this point with God bless you, God bless The American Legion family, God bless our troops, and God bless the United States of America, but I'm not going to do that. I'm going to do something different.

Who was at membership workshop? Give me a shout out. Five of you. Well you know what's coming then. We've got five from Kansas, and they don't even shout. What's wrong with you guys back there, man?

Anyway, we just finished the Olympics. I swell with pride every time I hear the National Anthem. They play that at the Olympics for the gold medal award winner, and every time there's a chant of USA.

I can still remember as a teenager the Olympic games and the Miracle on Ice at Lake Placid, hearing the USA chant at the end of that hockey game, the hair on the back of my neck stood



up.

Folks, that's what we're going to do today. In a minute, we're all going to rise, and I'm going to ask you what's the greatest nation on earth? And you are going to give me five or six good USAs. I want it loud, and I want it proud. You ready to do this? All right.

Everybody, stand up. If you're ready, I want it loud and proud. What is the greatest nation on earth?

USA! USA! USA! USA!

Awesome. Thank you, guys.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): At this time, I would like to make trailing candidate Dan Wiley a Distinguished Guest of the Sons of the American Legion National Convention.

... *Applause.*

After working with Dan, he's going to be fun, you'll see. Could we get the Past National Commanders of the Sons of the American Legion to start assembling in the back, please. Pretty please. At this time, I call Past National

Commander Charles Gannon to the podium for the purpose of a presentation.

**Presentation**

*Chuck Gannon  
Past National Commander  
Sons of The American Legion*

Thank you, Vice Commander Harris. Once again delegates to the 52nd Convention of the Sons of the American Legion, it's come time we actually make Dr. Hall a Distinguished Guest to his own convention.

We need to talk just a second or so about his year and that wonderful theme that he had. I suspect it will carry on forever now, representing more than me. What a thought. What a thought. I don't have, like he does, sewn in my jacket the name of my grandfather, but he does, and he sold that theme all along the way, but he also bought into Commander Seehafer's big deal, Be the One. And what a team that was.

I think it's going to be hard to top the Legion family, the dynamic three that were out there, and our big old panda bear was part of that.

So at this time, they're assembling in the back. We'll pretend you're here, big guy, and we'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest to the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion. Great job, my buddy.

... *Applause.*

At this time, I'd like to bring forward the Past National Commanders of the Sons of the American Legion. Mr. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort them up. Some of us are old. It takes a long time to get up them steps.

Gentlemen, my comrades, my partners in crime, some of you, we've been doing this a long time. There's not many of us, and we're proud group. I'd like to recognize all of you for all of the work that you have done, not so much when you were Commander, but the work you continue to do on behalf of all of us.

So all of you have already gotten your distinguished guest badge, and you all have earned it. We hope to see all of you, including myself, for many years to come.

... *Applause.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I'm going to ask a question, but I don't want an answer. What would we do without these guys? Some of the greatest SAL members that we have had, and I would like to thank each and every one of them for your service.

... *Applause.*

At this time, I call on National Vice Commander John Cook for his final report. On deck, the National Convention Americanism Committee's report and awards, and National Vice Commander James Fischer Sr.

**Final Report**

*John R. Cook (NH)  
National Vice Commander - Northeast  
Sons of the American Legion*

Good afternoon, everybody. About a year ago I was standing up on this very stage being installed as the National Vice Commander for the northeast region. You told me that ten years ago, I would have told you were all off your rockers.

But here we are, being on stage with my

wife Denise, having my cap and pin installed as the National Vice Commander was an experience I'll never forget. I was blessed to have some of our family here to celebrate the occasion, and I know in my heart my mom and dad were looking down smiling.

I made a commitment to myself and to Commander Hall to be the best Vice Commander I could be, and I did my best. As someone who didn't know what a Zoom meeting was, I had to learn pretty quick, those meetings sometimes 5, sometimes 12. I've now mastered the Zoom meetings. Well maybe not mastered, but I feel pretty comfortable with them.

I thoroughly enjoyed sitting in these committee meetings, commissions, Zoom meetings. They were all very well attended and extremely informative, brainstorming and learning at its finest.

I was able to forward the minutes to the committees and the committeemen meeting on those attachments. I was amazed at how much information we got out to these people. I got return e-mails,

phone calls, some saying thank you, some saying great information, some thanking you for sending it all forward and being very helpful.

It was a great feeling to know that the detachments wanted and appreciated the monthly update that we were sending out to them.

Visitations was my most fun part of being the National Vice Commander for me. I got invited to several detachments, D.C. meetings, and conventions. My first one was in the Delaware, followed by Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York. As lead candidate, I went to Vermont and Maine.

While we were in Delaware, I attended a pig roast in Delaware, visited the Monster Mile, drove the International Speedway. Also in Delaware, I was very impressed to see that The American Legion had an American Legion ambulance family service. Let me give you a little history about that.

David C. Harris, American Legion Post 14 Ambulance Service. In 1924 the members of the David

C. Harris American Legion Post 14 initiated the first American Legion ambulance service in the world. Its 18 founding members were veterans of World War I who volunteered their time for the sick and the injured to the hospitals in Wilmington, Dover, and Milford and beyond.

Prior to this time, persons in medical need were transferred by train. This practice was dangerous, and the patients were seriously ill and needed the treatment.

At the time of the founding, services were provided to districts that extended from Summit Bridge to Milford, originally located on South Main Street in Smyrna.

In 2013 the ambulance service dedicated a brand new building at the intersection of Route 6 and 300, cross street of Smyrna and Clayton. The David C. Harris Post 14 American Legion Ambulance Service has become a continuous service for the now serving Delaware Bay to the Maryland border, from Collins Beach to Garrison Lake. Staffed by volunteers, staff and service was responsible for

answering more than 25,000 calls for assistance during its first 75 years.

In '22 alone station 64 answered more than 5,000 calls just in 2022. That's quite a feat to have an ambulance service. I thought that was pretty cool when I went out there. That was quite a bit to see out there.

I was privileged to attend the New York Sons 50th Anniversary Convention. What a time we had up there. It was very warm. We had a great time in Niagara Falls, and we got to go in the boat and go up to Niagara, very well up there.

I visited new people, new squadrons seeing how they fundraise and how they care for our veterans was the very favorite part of my job. Hopefully, I answered or got the answers for the questions you had.

I've been able to share some of the ideas with other detachments as well as bring ideas back to my own detachments and Squadrons. I would also like to thank you all today for having a new all-time high in membership. We've been hearing that



390-some-odd thousand all day. It's from you people out there. That's where this all comes from. It's not one of us, it's family.

I would also like to thank you all for the \$10 million mark for the CWF. What a feat that is. Again, it's a family, it's all of us. Not just one or two of us or one or two detachments. All of us together. I thank you for that. Without all of your hard work and dedication, this would not have happened.

I see a bright future for the Sons of the American Legion. Let's go out there and get them 400,000 memberships. Let's get that 400,000. Make that mark.

With that, remember what Commander said, Be the One, Be the One. It's working. It is saving lives. They're proving that. It's not just the veterans. So let's get out there and Be the One.

It was truly an honor to serve you as National Vice Commander of the Northeast Region. God bless you and thank you every one of you.

... *Applause.*

I'd like to make a motion to have my final report accepted.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I have a motion on the floor to accept National Vice Commander Cook's final report. Is there a second?

MICHAEL GRAICHEN (RI): Michael Graichen, Detachment of Rhode Island, seconds.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): The motion is seconded by Michael Graichen of the Detachment of Rhode Island. Do we have any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting National Vice Commander Northeast Cook's final report, signify by saying aye. All opposed, saying nay.

Motion carries.

At this time, I would like to make National Vice Commander Cook a Distinguished Guest of the Sons of The American Legion National Convention.

At this time, I yield the podium to National Vice Commander John Cook.

NVC JOHN COOK: At this time, I would call Chris Casey for the National Convention

Americanism Committee reports and awards. On deck will be James Fischer and National Historian Jeff Dorn.

**Report**

**The Americanism Committee**

*Chris M. Casey, Chairman*

*National Convention Americanism Committee*

Good afternoon, National officers, chairmen, committeemen, Past National Commanders, Sons, and guests. The Americanism Convention Committee met earlier this morning. First, I'd like to thank all the commission members of the Americanism Commission for their willingness to dedicate their time for the betterment of our organization and the consultants. They did a great job this year.

I'd also like to thank the previous Americanism chairmen for their continued guidance. With over 61 members in attendance, more than half standing, so very thankful that they stood it out. Had great representation of all the regions, like we typically do for Americanism. The accomplishments this year were outstanding.

I don't know if that really expresses what we accomplished as Sons of the American Legion with regards to Americanism this year. I'd like to share some of the numbers really quick before we get to the awards.

The donations for Americanism programs for 2023-2024 totaled \$4,822,305.12.

... *Applause.*

That's an increase of over 1.3 million from the previous year and an increase of greater than 2.5 million in the past two years. Hours donated were 4,635,499. That's an increase of over 2.9 million hours. That value to our communities is over \$155 million. That's an increase of over \$100 million from the last year.

The Sons of the American Legion, we just continue to knock it out of the park with Americanism, as well as everything else we do. I believe the numbers put up earlier, Americanism might have been about half of all the donations.

There's a lot of programs, a lot of children and youth activities in Americanism. So it

doesn't -- it's not surprising that we'd be heavy in donations there.

The commission had some special goals this year. I just wanted to point out numbers for a couple of them.

Flag education programs. So we had the Legion's National Commander mention America in his message to us. We had Dan Wiley, Trailing Candidate for National Commander from the great state of Kansas, having us chant "USA, USA." We're kind of building to this Americanism thing.

Flag education is one of those things that I just firmly believe is so important to the youth in our country. We had 97,436 hours. That's an increase of 41,279 hours from the previous year. Again, to reiterate what the I&A chairman said, that's only about a third of our CSRs. So the goal was 10 percent increase. The Sons made that happen with 74 percent increase in flag education programs.

... *Applause.*

The commission moved forward with judging

of the scrapbooks. We'd like to thank everyone who participated doing that too. We had more scrapbooks and history books than we've ever had according to Hammer, our Vice Chairman, who's been around a lot longer than I have. That wasn't meant to be a dig. He just has a lot of experience.

### **Americanism Awards**

We'll now move on to recognize those who excelled in Americanism this year. Starting with the Atwood-Beyea-York Memorial Award. I promised you guys last year that I'd have a PowerPoint, but it fell through the cracks. I hope it didn't fall through the cracks this year. There we go. If we could go just one slide forward. There we go. These are our brothers, gentlemen.

Gerald Atwood was a member of Sons of the American Legion Squadron 1060, Brooklyn, New York. Gerald was a New York City firefighter assigned to Ladder 21 and was among hundreds of firemen killed after responding to the World Trade Center on that fateful day. Gerald was an eight-year veteran of the FDNY working out of Hell's Kitchen. He grew up

in the Old Mill Basin neighborhood of Brooklyn, graduating from North Shore High School and spent two years at Kingsborough Community College.

Next, Edward Beyea was a life member of Sons of the American Legion Squadron 173 in Bath, New York, and worked as a computer programmer for Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield in the World Trade Center. Mr. Beyea needed full-time care for the last 21 years of his life, ever since a diving accident left him a quadriplegic. He refused to be limited by his disability and learned how to type using a stick that he operated with his mouth.

Mr. Beyea, along with his friend and colleague, Abe Zelmanowitz, who refused to leave Mr. Beyea's side after the terror attack, waited together on the 27th floor for rescue workers, who could not get there in time.

Raymond York was a member of Broad Channel Sons of the American Legion Squadron 1404, where he held the office of Third Vice Commander. One of New York's bravest, he gave his life on September 11th, 2001, while attempting to save his

fellow citizens during the terror attack on the World Trade Center. A veteran firefighter with Engine Company 255 in Queens, Mr. York had been assigned a light duty due to an on-the-job injury.

On 9/11, he was playing the role of Fireman Ray in the fire safety show at Rockefeller Center, he made his way to the burning towers by hitching a ride in a television truck and an ambulance. His remains were found the next day on West Street. Raymond York, who worked with the FDNY for 20 years, had planned to retire at the end of 2001.

To quote a passage from Gerald's eulogy, "After all is said and done, it is not how or where we finish our journey that champions our greatness, it's how we live."

The Atwood-Beyea-York Memorial Award for best Americanism program goes to Squadron Ronald Reagan, Palisades Squadron No. 283, Pacific Palisades, California.

... *Applause.*

District: District 5 of Texas.



And the Detachment winner is Ohio.  
Congratulations.

While they're coming up, if we could have a representative from the following detachments make your way to the stage: Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, and Texas.

Now for the National Emergency Fund. I think we'll take a little pause while people can get some pictures.

We're going to move on. The National Emergency Fund given to the highest Detachment per capita donation by region. First place this year, Southeast Region, Arkansas with \$6.02. Second, the West Region, Montana, \$1.46. Third, Northeast, Connecticut, 50 cents. Fourth, Midwest, Nebraska, 35 cents. Fifth, Central Michigan, 13 cents.

... *Cheers.*

Is that Michigan? Somebody's excited.

Now for the Legacy Scholarship Fund for the highest donation, Detachment donation by region. First is Northeast, Maryland, with \$9,900.

Second, the Central, Ohio with \$3,225. Third, West, Arizona \$1,500. The Midwest, Iowa with \$1,000. And the fifth, Southeast, Texas, \$550.

... *Applause.*

All right. And the Community Service Scrapbook Contest Awards. Again, the commission -- on behalf of the commission, we thank you, everyone who participated in the scrapbook contest. I know the National Historian, he'll speak in a moment about the history books. We've grown, and that's great. We want to see more of those.

The winners of the Community Service Scrapbook Contest for Squadron, Harry White Wilmer No. 82, out of Maryland;

District, District 3 of Minnesota;

And for Detachment, Delaware.

... *Applause.*

That's the award winners for Americanism.

Just quickly, I wanted to say it's been the absolute honor of my life to serve as the Americanism Commission Chairman on behalf of my grandfather's service. I want to thank you for the

time as Americanism Commission Chairman and look forward to seeing what the commission continues to do moving forward. So keep up the great work. As a delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I make a motion to accept the National Convention Americanism Committee report.

NVC JOHN R. COOK (NH): We have a motion on the floor to accept the National Convention Americanism Committee report.

Is there a second?

MICHAEL J. VOZAR (IL): Michael Vozar, Illinois, seconds proudly.

NVC JOHN R. COOK (NH): Michael Vozar, Illinois, seconds proudly.

Any discussion? Seeing none, all those in favor.

All opposed.

Motion carries.

Chris, I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our convention. Right now we're going to bring up National Vice Commander from the West, Jim Fischer, Sr.

**Final Report**

*James Fischer, Sr. (CA)  
National Vice Commander - West  
Sons of the American Legion*

Good afternoon, all. What an honor it's been to serve this year. I want to take a moment to talk about Be the One. On October 2nd, my nephew Kyle took his life. He's the son of a veteran. It's very devastating for our family, and we need to keep the discussions very open. It's so important, our mental health.

Now I'll get back to membership. I'd like to thank our Membership Chairman Daryl and our former Chair Tom for pushing the changes on the awards. We now have a lot more awards for the smaller and larger detachments, and it makes it a little fairer.

The Western Rendezvous we hold for the Western Region in Nevada every year, and this year it was fantastic, it was huge, biggest one we've had so far. Nevada proudly hosts that, and we love it. We also discussed the online myLegion. We need to work on that. We have a lot of rural Squadrons

that are not up to speed, and we need to get them up to speed. It's going to be so important the next couple of years.

The Western Region is doing really well this year. We have 6 of the top 10 detachments percentagewise. Number one, New Mexico, at 123.77 percent. Latin America at number three at 118.18 percent. Number five, Arizona at 110.61 percent. Hawaii at 110 percent at number seven. Number nine, Oregon, at 108.08 percent. Number ten, Idaho, at 107.74 percent. Six of the ten in one region, that's amazing. Also, Washington was over 100 percent at 105.37. So seven of our detachments were over 105 percent. We almost got one other region, but we're a half a percent behind. We still have five months, so we will get number one.

I want to thank Hawaii. That's part of where we're talking about the smaller detachments. They came in renewal wise, at 100 percent last year. Along with the Philippines and this year they're at 97.48 percent. They've lost like two or three members total in two years.

As I said a little bit ago, Nevada hosts the Wild Willy's Western Rendezvous. We're building on our team exercises, camaraderie, and making the region stronger, we're helping each other. Apache Junction out of Arizona has come up with a briefcase they hand out for free. It has a computer, a card reader, and tons of pamphlets inside, and they're distributing to anybody in their detachment that wants to get online.

Arizona, I believe, is the only Detachment that every Squadron is online. That's a great step for Arizona. Speaking of Arizona, it kind of scares me because they're catching up to California real quick. They have a campout that's unbelievable every year. It's like their spring DEC. They bring all the families, campers, motor homes, all the kids. It's amazing to see what they can do as a detachment. I've been there several years now, and it's so fun.

Also, Arizona, the national organization with the Sons here, is coming up with a program to promote the youth. So each region we were all asked

to pick a Detachment from our region that would be the leader this next year on working this program to see what works, what doesn't work. Arizona stepped up, and they're going to be from the West.

I would really like to thank Blair Miles too. He did the Washington Conference this year, and if anybody's not been there, it's amazing. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, it's so honorable, that whole Arlington. It's probably the most humbling thing I've ever done in my life was to go to that and to walk around there. If anybody gets a chance to do that, get it done. It's just so humbling.

Like I started off saying, it's been a huge honor, a privilege, and thank you very much for letting me be your Western Region National Vice Commander.

*... Applause.*

I make a motion to accept my report as read. Can I get a second?

MICHAEL VOZAR (IL): Michael Vozar, Illinois, second.

NVC JOHN R. COOK (NH): The motion on the floor has been seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor, say aye. All opposed?

Motion carries. Thank you.

... *Applause.*

Jim, I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our convention. You are distinguished, by the way.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER SR. (CA): I now call for the National Historian's report.

**Report**  
**National Historian**  
*Jeff Thorne (MD)*

Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Commander Hall. I wish you well on your recovery.

Today I'm here to present the national history contest award. This year's winner was for best history book was Harry White Wilmer, Squadron 82, for the Squadron. For the Detachment, the Detachment of Kansas.

... *Applause.*

Receiving the award on behalf of the Detachment of Kansas, Jeff Kearns.



NVC JAMES R. FISCHER SR. (CA): As a delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I'm making you a Distinguished Guest.

I'd make a motion to accept the historian's report. Can we get a second, please?

BRANDON K. CURRY (KY): Mr. National Vice Commander, Brandon Curry, Kentucky, seconds that motion.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER SR. (CA): Any discussion? All in favor say aye. Any opposed, nay. Motion passed. I'd now call Central National Vice Commander to give his report.

**Report**

**Central Region**

*National Vice Commander Robert L. Bristo (MN)*

Good afternoon, everybody!

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon!

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): How are you all feeling out there? That's how it's got to be.

Anyway, our Central Region was outstanding during our 2023-2024 calendar year.

Our eight detachments, Illinois, Indiana,

Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, these detachments worked extremely hard to reach all our national goals that were set.

My slogan, believe and succeed, I felt was important because when your belief is strong, your success will be even greater; isn't that right?

You know, that's what I just said. Anyway, these detachments that did well, there was detachments I did not visit. However, I did stay in touch with all the detachment commanders.

The Detachment of Michigan, under Commander John Beeman and his officers, also had an outstanding year.

The detachment was the second in our region in membership.

Michigan was only .18 percent short of making the 105 target goal set.

Now, that's simply amazing. Watch out Wisconsin.

... *Applause.*

I did not visit Detachment of Michigan,

but I was invited to attend their Junior Air Rifle National Championship at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan.

This was an amazing event in which I talked to individuals, getting, and understanding the training it took.

This event takes countless hours to prepare and concentrate for. The spectators were allowed to make all kinds of noises to distract the shooters. They were banging on the bleachers, doing anything, ringing bells and stuff, trying to distract them. You know what, they're trained to ignore us. So that was quite amazing. And we had some really good shooters there.

I visited the Detachment of Indiana with Detachment Commander Paul Rush. It was fantastic. The detachment absolutely does great when it comes to fundraising.

Commander Rush's project, COTA, which stands for Children's Organ Transplantation Association, the detachment was asking for \$25.00 donation to help for this event.

You get a yellow baseball cap, and it has blue writing on it. It says, "I support COTA."

I bought one. I would have bought more but I don't have that many heads, so I just bought one.

Anyway... that was bad.

I also attended the Central Region Extravaganza held in Indianapolis, which that event was Past National Commander Jeff Vrabel, Sr. who passed away and is now in Squadron Everlasting, was essential in making this spectacular event great. He was the one that got us started with the Central Region Extravaganza.

I visited the Detachment of Ohio under the Detachment Commander David Dilts. It's the second largest in the region, which was an all-time high in membership for the calendar -- I need to go over here.

Now the Detachment of West Virginia -- all right. You guys can laugh. You got a free laugh. Go ahead.

... *Laughter.*

Okay. Now I'm back. The Detachment of West Virginia, Commander Herbert Churchman, I did not visit. But I can say the detachments for the CWF, helped the department by giving them \$10,000 to help them meet the goal for the Veterans & Children Foundation.

They reactivated three squadrons. They have Squadron 174 in Morgansville, which was raising funds for an organization called the Holy Pursuit's Dream Foundation.

Their purpose is to provide hunting and fishing trips to children who have had life-threatening illnesses and diseases at no cost to them or their families. They're fully outfitted with everything that they would need.

The Detachment of Illinois, under Commander Michael Vosar, which I did not visit, has been outstanding. The detachment achieved 90 percent retention rate and chartered four new squadrons. They revamped their website with a bold, fresh look. They sponsored two annual central -- they sponsored the Second Annual Central

Region Extravaganza, which I attended, and it was very informational and everyone attending was excited to attend this event.

The leadership team was very energetic and their desire to strive for excellence at all levels. The Detachment also does a great fundraiser, which is Socks for Kids, to the CWF Collaboration with Auxiliary for young Sons to grow by including them in the Patch Program.

You know, there's a guy they call Hal "Butch" Ray. You know, from the Detachment of Illinois, our Central Region membership chairman, did an outstanding job reporting our outstandings with amazing quotes and food for thought which gained a lot of attention leaving many wondering what he will be saying in his next report.

I visited the Detachment of Kentucky under Detachment Commander Steve Curry. This was an exciting -- after I get through telling you what happened -- this detachment does a great job with their membership.

Commander Curry, although trailing in

their membership towards that 100 percent, their detachment still was able to beat their 2022-2023 membership turn-in.

Commander Curry's belief is that what is most important in their detachment's relationship. This is shown up by Commander Curry's traveling to one of his squadrons that was turning in their charter. He was able to talk to them to keep them from turning it in.

I was taken to a Triple A baseball game there in Louisville -- I guess they call themselves the Louisville Bats. They were playing St. Paul Saints from Minnesota, which was our team. We won -- I hate to say that, but that's good.

Don't boo me.

... *Laughter.*

You know, I had a good time. That was the first time I went to a Triple A baseball game. Gosh.

And what happened after that, the trip to that baseball game, okay, we had eaten dinner before the game started at this restaurant.

And while we were going back to the game, which we hadn't got to, you know, I was with Brandon and Mark Tinsel from Indiana -- as we were walking across the street, the street sign said "walk."

So I was talking to Brandon, and Tim gets hit by a car. Now, the car -- I guess it was a kid. He had a Civil Air Patrol shirt on.

He apparently brushed Mark's hand as he was walking and Mark said, "What the heck, you just hit me!"

So Brandon, he's got to do his thing. He goes over. The guy stops. And it's a kid wearing a Junior Air Patrol shirt.

So Brandon was really scolding him about he needs to pay attention to what he's doing. Well, the kid said, "I'm sorry, but I was looking at my GPS and I didn't notice him as he was walking across the street."

Then he said, "Well, you know, my mom's a police officer." So I guess at that point Brandon let him go, said okay, just be careful.



This is a true story. Brandon, am I lying?

BRANDON K. CURRY (KY): Not lying, brother.

... *Laughter.*

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): Things happen when you least expect them. I never even saw him get hit. I'm wondering why this guy is -- he's doing one of these numbers (jumping), and I'm saying, "What happened to you?" "I got hit by a car."

So anyway, needless to say, moving on, Brandon was okay, and the Bats got beat.

... *Laughter.*

Now, going back -- almost in closing, I'm going back to the Detachment of Wisconsin, under Commander Allen Watry.

This detachment honored their 2024 Detachment Convention to one of their Past Detachment Commanders Nick Volenec, who went into Squadron Everlasting.

The detachment report reporting 61

squadrons reporting accomplishments of 72,611 hours. They were simply amazing. And \$405,386 in donations.

The total economic impact of Detachment of Wisconsin was \$2,764,531.

Let's give them a round of applause.

... *Applause.*

I was just thinking also, the detachments known for their "moos". Can we ask them to moo. Now you've got to practice, Wisconsin.

Okay. Now, going back to the Detachment of Minnesota. You know, Minnesota, under the commandship of John Weiss, this Detachment -- they're ready to hook me up here.

The detachment known for its contributions for Child Welfare Foundation by holding auctions in terms of items to help boost up our funds, this event brought in -- we made almost \$2,000 in one event at one of our conferences.

The detachment's often asked how we operate. But we tell anybody that comes, our Distinguished Guests, they all take a part in this

and they really love it. And it's a good event because it's a big fundraiser for our detachment.

After saying all this, you know, yeah, sure, I betcha, I'd like to make this a motion to accept my report. And from Minnesota, can I get a "yes, sir, you betcha."

Let's help them out, guys, yes, sir, you betcha.

Okay. Thank you.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER SR.(CA): We have a motion, as entertaining as it was, we need a second.

MICHAEL VOSAR (IL): Michael Vosar, Detachment of Illinois, second.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): We have a second.

Any discussion?

All in favor, say aye.

Opposed.

Roll call vote?

... *Laughter.*

Robert, we are now making you a

Distinguished Guest.

We're looking for Report of Children and Youth, Joseph Lohman.

**Report**

**Children and Youth**

*Chairman Joseph A. Lohman (MD)*

It is a little bright. Good afternoon, everybody.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon!

JOSEPH A. LOHMAN (MD): Awesome. This is my first time speaking at a convention. If you have any issues with it, talk to my mentor, Bill Hill from Maryland.

There he is. Told you it's bright up here. Sorry about that.

First of all, Henry, if you can make your way up, please. So before we go to awards, I want to go over a couple of things real quick from today's meeting.

We had 46 people, which is probably the most I've seen since I've been going to these Children and Youth meetings.

Like the Americanism Commission, we were also standing room only. So I'm very excited to see that many people. We had a lot to discuss. It was about 45 minutes long, but it was a great discussion.

And first of all, if I could find where -- there he is. Come on up. So I don't know if we have --

... *Applause.*

So Henry, I don't know if I'm just getting weaker or you gained weight since last year.

But anyway, so if you all remember, this is Henry from last year. He raised over \$2,500 for Child Welfare Foundation.

... *Applause.*

This year, Henry V, which is his name, he told me it's been \$4,000 he's raised.

... *Applause.*

And just in our Children and Youth meeting today, which was 45 minutes long, he raised \$115. That's \$115 for 45 minutes.

That's pretty dang good. Want to say anything?

HENRY HASSELHAN V, JR. (NJ): I'm going to thank you for everybody being here. Thank you for supporting all our veterans. They fought for our freedom and some of them died, sadly.

Thank you for all being here.

... *Applause.*

JOSEPH A. LOHMAN (MD): This is how he actually raises the money. Hold on.

Terry, you're supposed to work for the program, it's not who wins okay.

... *Laughter.*

So Henry, on behalf of Commander Hall, I want to make you an Honorary Distinguished Guest on behalf of this 52nd National Convention. Thank you. Thank you so much for what you do. It's so important. Let's give him a hand.

... *Applause.*

Okay. So we actually went over, like I said, it was about 45 minutes long. These lights are bright.

We went over our goals a little bit for this year. We actually had a great year. There were a few mishaps. One of the goals we discussed was that The American Legion's really pushing forward our Children's Veterans Foundation.

And our goal was \$1 per member this year. And it was a pretty lengthy discussion, as a recommendation to the Children and Youth Committee next year: Should we keep it a dollar or make it 50 cents and so forth.

We had a lot of great input, but one thing we all agreed on is the fact that it comes down to our CSRs. The information that was provided to you earlier at the convention about, I think it was 32 percent that was reported -- and if we actually got up to 50 percent, or 75 percent, our numbers would have been a lot higher, and we actually would have made goal for what we want for the VCF.

So I ask you to go back to your squadrons, detachments, regions, so forth and push for the CSRs. That's what's so important.

Lastly, we talked about Commander Hall's Children and Youth initiative. It was something very special for us this year, special to my heart.

It was a program that we developed back in November. And we went back and forth, it was kind of hard to do, But we came up with a pizza garden. And these five gentlemen to the left of me made so much fun of my pizza garden during our calls. But it was about getting the children out, getting their hands dirty, getting them off the PlayStation, getting them out of the house, actually go out like it was back in the day and play in the dirt and so forth.

So, with that being said, we started this program and basically, we made this garden. It was the shape of a pizza, and in the garden was toppings for your pizza. However the squadron wanted to do with it, the kids wanted to do with it, it was basically up to them, it was about teaching them about horticulture and getting them working together and getting our kids and youth involved.



The only drawback, the other four actually got on board with the program.

Mr. Linwood over here wanted to know how are they going to grow pepperonis.

So then eventually we changed the name. We called it the Linwood rule. It's now a youth garden. We're going to grow pepperonis, even though there's no such thing. But it included other things such as herbs, fruits, and things like that.

It's taken off. It was a pilot program that we presented to our national organization for the Children and Youth organization basically to say, you know, like I said, we need to get our youth out.

And needless to say, not only was it very successful, but it's made national news. I want to thank The American Legion, also the Sons of the American Legion for promoting this event through the Roundup, through the Millennium online.

I also want to thank our local newspapers out of Maryland for promoting it. And also it hit

national news. CBS News brought a team down to the youth garden. They interviewed us for three hours in the hot sun, and we got about 20 seconds of TV time, but that's okay.

At this time I'm going to ask, can we go ahead and play that bit from CBS News. And while they're queuing it up, I'll go into a few more words and hopefully -- okay. I'm going to go on a few more things and hopefully they get it queued up.

But I really wanted you all to see this clip. It was also very special to Commander Hall. It was one of the things he really was looking forward with his Children and Youth initiative program.

All right. I also want to thank the committee this year for a wonderful job. We had an 80 percent turnover. I want to thank Jim Noble and John Lawrence for their help in transitioning to this new committee.

Like I said, I'm new at this. We had four other guys that were new at this. Many of

them were never even on a committee before. We've come a long ways.

We've learned a lot. We've made a lot of mistakes, but we learn from our mistakes just to make sure it's even better. So we're going to go ahead and start the awards.

If you don't have a representative from the squadron, please have your detachment come up.

Can we switch the feed to the laptop?

... *The delegation viewed a video.*

... *Applause.*

JOSEPH A. LOHMAN (MD): Thank you, guys. Like I said, it was very near and dear to my heart just watching those kids plant those vegetables and everything else.

One other thing that just came up, that day where J.R. and I sat in the sun for three hours for his two-second clip, they planted some seeds for -- in fact, you saw that one bed that was actually, it was just dirt. They planted seeds for pumpkins.

And what they're going to do is come back

in October, they're going to pick the pumpkins they planted and take it home for Halloween to do whatever they want to do with it.

It's a great program. We wanted to share that information with you. I want to also thank Sean Phelan, the guy you actually saw that was on the news clip. He did 90 percent of the work.

And I want to thank Post 217 College Park, Maryland, the University of Maryland, for providing a lot of the soil.

Also the city of College Park, a lot of donations they made as well, to help make this happen.

So with that being said, I want to go ahead to awards, as I said earlier. If your squadron is not here, please have a representative from your detachment.

Start off with the Best Squadron Children and Youth:

From Northeast, Rick Morrill Squadron 348 from New Jersey.

... *Applause.*

From the Southeast, Michael J. Cicero,  
Squadron No. 173 out of Holiday, Florida.

Out of the Central Region, Nicholas  
Squadron No. 510 out of Nicollet, Minnesota.

... *Applause.*

Out of the Midwest, Roy Reed, Squadron  
252 out of Winside, Nebraska.

... *Applause.*

I hope I pronounce this correctly.  
Apologize if I don't.

Out of the West, Thomas Sakic Squadron 82  
from Washington State.

... *Applause.*

Best Overall Children and Youth, Best  
Squadron, Brick Memorial Squadron 348 out of New  
Jersey.

Best District: District 5 out of Texas.

Best Detachment: Ohio.

... *Applause.*

... *written report of National Convention  
Children and Youth Committee.*

The C&Y Committee met this  
morning/yesterday in Room 205 8:30am. There was a  
total of guests in the meeting. The following

Committee members were present.

Joe Lohman (MD), Chairman.  
Started with an overview of our Goals and Programs  
Starting with VCF, COTA and other C&Y programs  
Recap of American Legion Children & Youth month /  
Military Children month  
Recap American Legion Family Day  
Four pillar challenge  
CDR Hall youth initiative project

Based on our goals and initiatives, the Children & Youth committee received an 80 percent success rate for their service over the last year. We did miss our goal of raising approximately \$390k (\$1 per member) for the Veteran and Children foundation. However, with an 80 percent turnover from last year's staff, the committee did an excellent job for their first time collaborating with this committee.

Quick recap of American Legion C&Y month, American Legion Family Day, AND Military Children month

C&Y Academy has transitioned over to the Americanism Commission. C&Y Committee has been assisting the transition throughout the year. Chairman Casey will provide additional details on the program.

The C&Y Committee has chosen a youth/pizza garden to support Commander Hall's parent/ youth initiative project.

The pilot program started in November.

Teaching children how to plant toppings for a pizza and other vegetables for themselves and the community. In June, the children returned to the youth garden to harvest the food they grew and had a tasting session that included cucumbers, radishes and other vegetables and herbs. In addition, they planted pumpkin seeds and plan to harvest the pumpkins in October. The children will take the

pumpkins they grew back home in time for Halloween.

Includes several field trips to University of Maryland horticulture center and U.S. National Arboretum in Washington DC.

Throughout the year we have been promoting this pilot program with articles in the Round up and Millennium newsletter. The program has also received recognition in many local newspapers in Maryland. In July, CBS news visited the youth garden and did a segment on this project, focusing on how the Sons of the American Legion is using this pilot program to get our children out of the house and learn gardening.

At this time, I would like to present you with the news clip that has been picked up by at least sixteen states in the US.

Eye on Agriculture American Legion Planting Seeds  
(youtube.com)

This project would not exist without the support of Sean Phelan who designed and maintained the garden, American Legion Post 217 in College Park who allowed us to use their property for this pilot program. I also want to thank our public relations committee at both the SAL and TAL for their support promoting this program, the many local newspapers in Maryland and Natalie Brand from CBS news for helping promote this program throughout the country.

*... end of written report.*

Mr. Commander, as a Delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I make a motion to accept the National Convention Children and Youth Committee

report.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): I have a motion on the floor to accept the National Convention Children and Youth Committee report.

Is there a second?

... *Seconded.*

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): Thank you very much.

Any discussion?

Call for the question.

All in favor? Opposed?

Not with that little kid, you can't oppose them.

We have a certificate of appreciation, Joe, from our Commander. And I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention.

... *Applause.*

Now we call our Midwest Final Report from Terry Harris.

... *Cheers and Applause.*



**Report**  
**Midwest**

*National Vice Commander Terry A. Harris (KS)*

What an honor this year has been.

Commander Hall's theme this year has been

"Representing more than me."

I'm very proud to admit that I have done my best to do just that. I had planned on having a couple of pictures up on the screen, but I kind of got derailed this morning on how things were going to happen, but I want to talk about my mom and my dad for just a minute. Kind of hard to do sometimes.

My father retired Army, a veteran of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. He was on the ground in all three.

My mom was a Korean War veteran. They adopted me out of an orphanage in Germany. Don't you feel bad for them?

*... Laughter.*

I also, back in my hotel room, have their Garrison caps. They were both very dedicated members of The American Legion. They got me

involved when I was eight years old.

So at eight years old, if you consider that, I've been a member for 10 years now.

... *Laughter.*

Or about. When I was elected to the position of National Vice Commander, I knew what to expect, but then, again, I really didn't.

Once I got out in the trenches, it was amazing to witness what other detachments were doing. I learned a lot just by observing and talking with our Blue Cappers.

We all know who does the work at every level of this organization. And I've stated numerous times, it doesn't matter what color my cap is, it will always be blue. I'm very proud to be one that works my tail off for the organization.

When you get the chance, go to South Dakota so you can learn about growing membership. They can teach you a thing or two, I promise.

Go to Iowa, figure out how to earn seven Triple Nickels. Way to go, guys.

Go to Nebraska, see how important our

Children and Youth pillar is. Elect a Detachment Commander like Missouri has and grow at growing membership with a vengeance. They've done a good job this year.

If you want to observe a fantastic way to accomplish Boys State, then Oklahoma is where you want to go.

North Dakota has spent this entire year fighting for a place at the top in membership.

I was also able to visit the Detachment of Colorado for their awards banquet. It was great being able to present them all their national awards.

Now, I do have to say, Wisconsin was one of my favorite visits. Commander Watry, you did bounce that first pitch.

... *Laughter.*

Oh, yeah, you did. He had arranged for leading candidate Navarreté or myself to throw out that first pitch.

We chickened out. And so he said, "I'll do it." And yes, you did bounce it. I was

watching.

... *Laughter.*

It's now time for me to go home and get back to work with my American Legion Family there. Kansas, I love you all, man.

From Commander's homecoming, to visiting the Naval Academy, to the Washington Conference and the visit to the memorials has been such a heartwarming experience.

Being able to help at the National Oratorical Contest at Hillsdale College is yet another very rewarding experience. What I've taken from there is that watching and listening to the contestants, our country is in pretty doggone good shape for the future.

Walking the halls of Congress, being able to talk with staff and show them the support for our veterans has all been such a wonderful experience.

I must also take the time to thank my wife. She's sitting back there with the Kansas delegation. She has held down the fort when I had

to be out visiting detachments in the Midwest. If you don't know her, I think it would be worth your while to meet her. She's such a strong, independent, and supporting wife, and I could not have succeeded this year as I have. So thank you, dear.

... *Applause.*

I'm sorry to say I'll be home a lot more now.

... *Laughter.*

I've enjoyed this year, and it is something I will never ever forget. I've managed to make friends all over the Midwest and nation and will continue to cherish those friendships.

I hope and pray that I have represented you well. I look forward to the future to see where new leadership takes us. I pray that God blesses each and every one of you. God bless our American Legion Family, God bless our veterans and active duty personnel, and for God's sake, God bless America!

Thank you.

*... Applause.*

As a delegate to this convention, I would make a motion to accept the Midwest National Vice Commander's Report.

CHRIS SHERBOURNE: Mr. Commander, Chris Sherbourne, Detachment Commander, Oklahoma, proudly seconds.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): I have a motion and second on the floor to accept the report as read.

Do we have any discussion?

Hearing none, all in favor say aye. All opposed say nay.

It carries. Thank you.

Terry, I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): I'm now going to call the Report for National Veterans Employment Education Committee. James Coates.

Harold, you're on deck after National Vice Commander Linwood Moore.

Good afternoon.

**Report**

National Veterans Employment and Education Committee

*James M. Coates (NY)*

Good afternoon. First thing I'd like to do is to recognize and thank our VE&E Commission members and NEC liaisons. Gentlemen, if you're here, please stand and be recognized as I call your names.

First, we've got our Vice Chairman and NEC liaison, Jim Stewart; Commission Member Fred Vaccarella from Virginia; Commission Member Dennis Henkemeyer from Minnesota; Commission Member William Stem from Maryland; Commission Member Jim Noble from New Jersey; and a man who has greatly assisted me, our secretary, Clifford Hall from Georgia. Hopefully, he's still here.

And then NEC Liaison Jon Kingston from Texas; Jacob McCarty, NEC Liaison, West Virginia; and Eddy White, NEC Liaison, Montana.

Thank you very much, guys, for all your work and the effort that you've put in. Very much appreciate it.

... *Applause.*

Just a short review of the VE&E Commission activity remaining for 2023-24. Prior to the start of the October 19th, '23 Zoom meeting, after our convention last year, advisor Kevin Mook joined the meeting and advised us that The American Legion had put the resolution approving the VE&E tri-fold brochure on hold for further review by The American Legion.

The reason being we failed to advise The American Legion of the production of the brochure.

In April of 2024, advisor Kevin Mook let us know that The American Legion VE&E director Joe Sharp and chairman Jay Bowen were going to review the VE&E tri-fold brochure and recommend any needed changes.

We're hoping this creates a pathway to bring this tool to fruition, and we give our membership information about how they can best



support the Veterans Employment and Education Commission.

I would also like to thank The American Legion VE&E for allowing us to attend their programs given during the Washington Conference.

These programs have been very informative, and we hope to be able to continue to participate in them in future years. The Sons of the American Legion Veterans Employment and Education Commission is also asking that members please send in short video clips and photographs of members working on VE&E-related activities such as helping our homeless veterans, volunteering at stand-downs or other events.

These will be used to create a short video to promote Veterans Employment and Education activities.

As many of you have already seen, the VE&E Commission has a table in the convention hall this year, way in the back, and is selling "Be the One" coins for \$10, and tickets for a 50/50 game of chance, and the proceeds of which are going to go

back to The American Legion in support of their "Be the One" programs. Please stop by our table and help support The American Legion in this endeavor.

And we also have some related literature to help highlight the needs of the homeless veterans and other related VA handouts. And I'm sure that many of you are aware of the VA "Make the Call" brochure. Along with this, our application forms, there's many application forms back there for the Marvin Nay award.

Speaking of which, I'd like to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms if he would please escort Martin Widmer to the podium, please. Martin, if you would please stand. And I can't see out there.

All right. Right over there. I'd like to tell you a little bit about Martin. Martin is a 17-year-old Sons member of The American Legion - Murray-Troutt Squadron No. 262, Audubon, Camden County, New Jersey. Marty currently serves as Squadron 262 chaplain and Camden County SAL chaplain.

You may look at this application -- I'm

sure as the reviewer of the awards did -- and say that 71 hours from April 2023 to April 2024 is not extraordinary.

But I wanted to say that for a 17-year-old boy, juggling school, sports, and work, volunteering 71 direct hours with homeless veterans is amazing.

*... Applause.*

Thank you. Marty's heart and much of his volunteer work is with homeless veterans. He volunteers at New Jersey standdowns, Cherry Hill, Atlantic City and Bridgetown. At the events, he hands out food and clothing to veterans in needs.

He gives up his major holidays to cook and serve food to our homeless veterans on the streets of Camden, or at Veterans Haven South, transitional housing.

Bimonthly, he brings food and hygiene items to the Veterans Haven South. While many teenagers would just drop off the linens, Marty stays. He talks with the veterans. Plays games with them and assists in getting them online to

apply for jobs and mental health appointments.

So please join me in congratulating Martin Widmer, this year recipient of the 2023-2024 Marvin Nay Award.

*... Applause.*

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): Marty, we're going to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention.

*... Applause.*

JAMES M. COATES (NY): That concludes our report for the Sons of the American Legion Veterans Employment and Education Commission 2024 - New Orleans Convention.

Respectfully, Jim Coates, Chairman, Sons of the American Legion. Being a delegate to this convention, I make a motion to accept my report.

Where am I from? New York.

JOSEPH GALLAGHER (VA): Second.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): I have a motion and a second on the floor. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, we'll call for the

question.

All in favor, say yes.

Any opposed, say nay.

Motion carried.

... *Applause.*

James, we have a certificate of appreciation from our commander for you.

... *Applause.*

As a delegate of this convention, I now present you to be a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention. Thank you, sir.

... *Applause.*

Linwood. I now yield the floor to Linwood Moore from the Southern Region.

### **Report**

Southern Region Report

*National Vice Commander Linwood A. Moore (VA)*

Good evening, everyone -- afternoon.

First of all, I'd like to say thank you very much from the Detachment of Virginia for giving me the honor to represent Virginia, the great state of Virginia and the Department of Virginia for this position here.

It's been an honor to do this. I didn't have a lot of traveling to do this year. Our Commander, he was very busy on the road. They had him going everywhere. I don't know how he did all what he did.

But I did travel in January to the state of Texas, went to Austin. And Austin was very, very cold. They said dress warm, but I never thought it would be as cold -- it was colder there than it was Virginia. I froze.

But we had a good time. Got to speak in front of the department and the Sons and everybody else in the Auxiliary. Enjoyed a visit. They were very hospitable and very good to me.

Came back from there. I didn't have any other trips until I went in June. I went to Louisiana.

I met with Camille and everybody else in Louisiana, and I had a blast down there. They were very good. They were very helpful to me.

I had some problems off and on with some of the reports I sent out, and Camille let me know,

and a few others.

And Alabama, Blair Miles, he let me know if I did something wrong. And thank you all for the corrections that came back.

I did a week at Boys State, my 17th year straight going to Boys State being a counselor.

Everybody wanted to increase the 10 percent. I've been doing it for 17 years. I'll keep going and going until they get tired of me.

After that, I spent a weekend in Georgia at their state convention. Had a blast down in Georgia. They treated me very well. I learned a lot of stuff.

The way they did things was a lot different than what we do in Virginia.

And actually I like some of Georgia's stuff better than we do in Virginia. Anyway, I had a blast. I traveled around.

I went to J.R.'s homecoming. I had a good time up there. Went on the tour of the Annapolis Naval Academy, and I've already worked up at the Naval base right across the road from there.

I've done some work with the cranes and worked with all of them. I've already been around there some. Had a good time up there at his homecoming.

I've been around. Again, thank you very much. I've had a good year.

I'm very proud of the southeastern region. We finished top in the membership this year and we stayed in first all year long. We finished first.

And you've got to watch this California, they said they've got til December to catch us.

We've got to keep it going here. We don't want to let them catch us.

As far as I'm concerned, I had a great year. I enjoyed it. I had a lot of help, had a lot of people and a lot of thanks from my wife who supported me in everything I did this year and last year also when I was campaigning. If it wasn't for her, she's, my rock. She keeps me straight. I get aggravated and upset. She settles me down, slaps me around a little bit, gets me straight again.



But anyway, in Virginia we have a fantastic Legion family. I love every one of them. They've been good to me. They helped me with everything I needed. The Detachment has helped me with anything, with any questions.

I could go to Past Commander Clint Bolt and go to two Past National Vice Commanders Jeff Evans and Steve Gower, and they helped me with anything I need, if I had any questions.

Thank you and bless you all for all the help you gave me. And as a delegate of this convention, I'd like to make a motion to accept my report.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): Motion on the floor. Second?

JAMES "JAMEY" HOLLOWAY (GA): James Holloway (GA), NEC, seconds that motion.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): We have a second on the floor.

Any discussion? Hearing none, call for the question.

All in favor, say yes.

Any opposed, nay.

Report's filed.

Linwood, I'm going to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention.

... Applause.

Harold, are you ready for the credentials report? Perfect.

**Report**

First Report of the Credentials Committee  
*Harold Thompson, Jr., Chairman National Convention  
Credentials Committee*

Credentials Committee 2024, the 52nd National Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana. Chairman Harold Thompson called the Convention Committee to order on August 23, 2024 at 11 a.m. for the purpose of taking necessary committee action.

No convention resolutions - none was presented.

There are 933 delegates and 101 delegates at large for a total of 1,034 delegates from 55 detachments.

With the exception of the National Commander shall exercise only in their capacity as a chair of the National Convention to make the total 1035 delegate votes:

We have 36 alternates; 145 guests registered.

Members attending the Credentials Committee meeting was Harold E. Thompson Jr., Nebraska; Ed Sheubrooks from Florida; Matt Christie of Illinois; James Lastorka of Iowa; Glen Neville of Minnesota; Rob Avery of New York; Scott Thornton, Ohio; Tim Anchors of Pennsylvania, and Ross Grower of Virginia and Steve Grower.

With no further business, Steve Grower moved to close the meeting. Second by Glen Neville.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10, August 23rd, 2024.

Okay. I'm going to go ahead, since we've got time this afternoon, to read each detachment and what their votes would be:

Alabama, seven plus one, for a total of

eight.

Alaska, seven plus two, for a total of  
nine.

Arizona, 22 plus two, for 24.

Arkansas, four plus one, for five.

California, 26 plus six, for 32.

Connecticut, seven plus one, for a total  
of eight.

Delaware, eight plus one, for a total of  
nine.

District of Columbia, three plus one, for  
a total of four.

Florida, 54 plus two, for a total of 56.

France, three plus one, for a total of  
four.

Georgia, 13 plus two, for a total of 15.

Hawaii, three plus one, for a total of  
four.

Idaho, four plus one, for a total of  
five.

Illinois, 31 plus four, for a total of  
35.

Indiana, 78 plus five, for a total of 83.

Iowa, 13 plus two, for a total of 15.

Kansas, 15 plus three for a total of 18.

Kentucky, seven plus two, for a total of  
nine.

Latin America, three plus one, for a  
total of four.

Louisiana, seven plus two, for a total of  
nine.

Maine, nine plus one, for a total of 10.

Maryland, 38 plus four, for a total of  
44.

Massachusetts, 14 plus four, for a total  
of 18.

Michigan, 58 plus three, for a total of  
61.

Minnesota, 26 plus four, for a total of  
30.

Mississippi, five plus one, for a total  
of 16.

Missouri, nine plus one, for a total of  
10.

Montana, five plus one, for a total of six.

Nebraska, 17 plus two, for a total of 19.

Nevada, four plus one, for a total of five.

New Hampshire, 16 plus two, for a total of 18.

New Jersey, 23 plus one, for a total of 24.

New Mexico, seven plus one, for a total of eight.

New York, 66 plus four, for a total of 70.

North Carolina, nine plus one, for a total of 10.

North Dakota, five plus one, for a total of six.

Ohio, 67 plus three for a total of 70.

Oklahoma, six plus two, for a total of eight.

Oregon, six plus one, for a total of seven.

Pennsylvania, 130 plus one, for 131.

Philippines, three plus one, for a total of four.

Puerto Rico, three plus one, for a total of four.

Rhode Island, four plus one, for a total of five.

South Carolina, six plus one, for a total of seven.

South Dakota, seven plus one, for a total of eight.

Tennessee, seven plus one, for a total of eight.

Texas, 15 plus four, for a total of 19.

Utah, four plus one, for a total of five.

Vermont, 11 plus one, for a total of 12.

Virginia, 12 plus three, for a total of 15.

West Virginia, eight plus one, for a total of nine.

Wisconsin, 12 plus two, for a total of 14.

Wyoming, six plus one, for a total of 17.  
Which makes it 1,034 delegates.

This concludes my preliminary report.

... *Gavel.*

**Adjournment and Salute the Colors**

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER, SR. (CA): Hand  
salute.

Two!

We are now in recess until tomorrow.  
9:00 a.m. That's the one right after 8:00 a.m.

... *At 4:10 p.m., Friday, August 23,  
2024, the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of  
the American Legion adjourned until 9:00 a.m.  
Saturday, August 24, 2024.*

-o0o-



**Day 2**

... At 9:06 a.m., August 24, 2024, the delegates reassembled for the Sons of The American Legion 52nd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had:

... Gavel.

**Call to Order**

Terry A. Harris (KS), National Vice Commander - Midwest

Sergeant-at-Arms, please secure the doors. Thank you. Good morning, everyone.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning.

**Salute the Colors**

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Please rise.

With the Colors of our Nation in place, join me in offering a right-hand salute.

Two.

National Chaplain Jeffrey Hicks will invoke the blessing of God. Please uncover.

**Invocation**

*Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain*

Good morning.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning.

NATIONAL CHAPLAIN HICKS: Before we get into the invocation this morning, I do have some good news. The power of prayer is real. Our National Commander is behind us on the stage.

Round of applause for that.

*... Cheers and Applause.*

Another prayer request, as I mentioned yesterday, I have a new one to add to the prayer requests. Bill Barnett of Idaho, stroke at 31.

Continued prayers for our Commander, JR Hall. PNC Richard Cook of Oklahoma, an infection. Our SAL National Liaison Kevin Mook, who is doing better, still in the hospital.

And the new one we have is Jeff Lee from Virginia. The ANEC has been diagnosed with cancer, is undergoing chemo treatment.

Any others out there that we're not aware of, let us go to a word of prayer.

Oh, Eternal God, who has committed to us the swift and solemn trust of life, we know not what a day may bring, but only that an hour of serving you is ever present. May we wake to the

instant claims of Your holy will, not waiting for tomorrow but responding today.

We ask that you will move us to lay to rest the resistance of foolishness, indolence, selfishness or fear for what tomorrow may hold.

Consecrate with your presence and blessing the work of The Sons of the American Legion, and more especially this 52nd Annual National Convention.

May the work we do here be to Your everlasting glory and to the benefit of this country.

May the fellowship enjoyed here ripen into lifelong friendships, mutual respect, and love among us all.

You have cautioned us, oh, Lord, that you will require much of those to whom much is given. Thank you that our lot is cast in such goodly circumstances and so rich a heritage.

May we strive together through generosity, diligence, and our earnest labors to complete the ambitious tasks to which we have set

our hands and the programs we have pledged to undertake.

May this National Convention be a symbol and a reminder of our dedication to serve God, country, community, state, and nation, as we are able, and to serve the veterans of this land in their need.

All of this we ask of you, our eternal God.

Amen.

*... Chorus of amens.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): In memory of our departed comrades and the comrades of all veterans, let us stand in silence.

*... Moment of Silence.*

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

I call upon National Sergeant-at-Arms Mark Fayer to lead us in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

*... Pledge of Allegiance recited.*

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Please be seated. National Adjutant Anthony Wright will now

call the roll.

**Roll Call**

*Anthony W. Wright (PA)*

**National Commander**

Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., Maryland

**National Vice Commanders**

North: John R. Cook, New Hampshire

South: Linwood A. Moore, Virginia

Central: Robert L. Bristo, Minnesota

Midwest: Terry A. Harris, Kansas

West: James R. Fischer, Sr., California

**National Adjutant**

Anthony W. Wright, Pennsylvania

**National Assistant Adjutants**

Harold E. Thompson, Jr., Nebraska, Emeritus

**National Assistant Adjutant**

James E. "Ed" Sheubrooks, Florida

Robert J. Avery, New York

Scott A. Williams, Virginia

Scott J. Thornton, Ohio

Clifford E. Hall, Georgia

**National Chaplain**

Jeffrey E. Hicks, New Jersey

**National Parliamentarian**

Gary B. Leach, California

**National Historian**

Jeffery Thorne, Maryland

**National Sergeant-At-Arms**

Mark T. Fayer, Sr., Maryland

**National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms**

Brian K. Waters, Pennsylvania

Gregory A. "Greg" Falco, New York

Lyle G. Larson, Kansas- Excused

Matthew W. Griffis, Arizona  
Timothy Brower, New York

**National Commander's Aide**

Thomas G. "Tom" Deal, Maryland

**Past National Commanders**

Christopher A. Carlton, Indiana  
Michael K. Seaton, California - Excused  
Robert A. McBride, Ohio - Excused  
J.R. Stillwell, Illinois - Excused  
John J. Smolinsky, Massachusetts - Excused  
Robert H. Faust, California - Excused  
Gregory D. Reis, Illinois - Excused  
Grant M. Jamieson, Michigan - Excused  
Charles E. Gannon, Maryland  
John M. Sherrard, California - Excused  
David P. Stephens, Indiana  
Christopher R. Cerullo, New York  
Frederick L. Hartline, Sr., Ohio - Excused  
Douglas P. Bible, Minnesota  
Richard L. League, Maryland - Excused  
David R. Faust, Wisconsin  
Robert A. Worrel, Indiana  
Eugene L. Sacco, California  
Joseph M. Mayne, Minnesota  
John T. Dietz, Kentucky  
Jack E. Jordan, Texas - Excused  
William E. Matoska, Maryland  
Byron J. Robichaux, Louisiana  
Richard L. Cook, Oklahoma - Excused  
Kevin N. Winkelmann, Texas  
Clifford A. Smith, Massachusetts  
Neal C. Warnken, Kansas  
Michael J. Deacon, Iowa  
William L. Sparwasser, Maryland - Excused  
Earl R. Ruttkofsky, Minnesota  
Raymond P. Giehll, Jr., Indiana  
Thomas E. Cisna, Illinois  
James K. Roberts, III, Florida - Excused  
Joseph W. Gladden, Maryland  
Michael W. Moss, Colorado - Excused  
Kevin L. Collier, Alaska  
Brian J. O'Hearne, Massachusetts - Excused

Jeffrey C. Frain, Arizona  
Danny J. Smith, Nebraska - Excused  
Greg K. "Doc" Gibbs, New York  
Clint D. Bolt, Virginia - Excused  
Joseph A. Paviglianti, New York - Excused  
Michael C. Fox, California

**Detachments**

Alabama  
Alaska  
Arizona  
Arkansas  
California  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
Florida  
France  
Georgia  
Hawaii  
Idaho  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Latin America  
Louisiana  
Maine  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
Montana  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Hampshire  
New Jersey  
New Mexico  
New York  
North Carolina  
North Dakota  
Ohio

Oklahoma  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
Puerto Rico  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Utah  
Vermont  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin  
Wyoming

Commander, that completes roll call. You have a quorum.

#### **Opening Remarks**

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I now declare this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American Legion reconvened.

Before we get into the reports for today, I want to review the procedure that we would like to follow today for everyone coming to the stage.

Committee Chairmen, please exit the auditorium to my left - your right. That way. And come around to left side of the stage so you are ready to come to the podium when called upon for your report. One of the Sergeants-at-Arms can



assist you with locating the entrance to the stage.

Award recipients: For awards with multiple recipients, we will ask for a representative from the detachments to assemble at the left side of the stage in advance.

At this time, I call on National Member Training and Development Committee Chairman Mike Cotten for the Detachment Commanders School report and certificates.

On deck: The National Convention Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee report and awards and the National Convention Internal Affairs Committee report and award.

**Report and Certificates**

**Detachment Commanders School**

*Michael S. Cotten (DE), National Member Training and Development Cmte Chair*

Good morning. I hope everybody had a wonderful time last night because it makes reading my report that much more enjoyable for me.

If the following detachment commanders will come up and assemble on the right side, audience right side of the stage by the SAL sign,

for presentation of your documents and  
certificates:

Michael Gracian.

Michael Bryant.

Timothy Saucedo.

Robert Barry.

Rocco Cirigliano. That's from Florida.

Rocky -- Rick Allen.

James Blake.

Michael Obremski.

Tim Cudd.

Terry Tartavouille.

Andrew Rice.

Robert Fresquez.

Gaither Espey.

Tim Conway.

Steven Thomas.

Angel Navarez.

Ross Polson.

William Unger.

George Alva.

Kevin Chaplin.

Allen Watry.

Those are the detachment commanders that successfully completed the Commanders training. At this time I'd like to thank the MTD committee, Shawn Davis, Frank Meraz, please stand and be recognized.

Scott Baker.

Mark Kilstrom.

Michael Obremski.

Consultants Tom Marsden and Ron Roberts.

NEC support, Dennis George.

Robert Phillips.

PNC Byron Robichaux.

PNC Dave Stephens.

PNC Michael Deacon.

Also David Faust and Doc Gibbs. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you very much.

*... Applause.*

The 2024 Commanders class commenced at 8:00 yesterday morning, finished at 10:00. There were 47 attendees with 21 certified commanders and 26 guests who had a desire to learn.

Topics included duties of the Commander, expectations of the Commander, public speaking, visitations, dressing for success.

The roles and duties of the detachment officers and NEC, the National organization chart, and the importance of your adjutants. I'll repeat that. The importance of your adjutants. They can make your life easy or difficult.

The criteria presented will be available in the Legion website with an access link available from the National liaison.

Commanders who receive their certificate and stipend are those whose certified Election of Detachment Officers reports were received by National.

Member Training and Development will be offering NEC training and also adjutant training at the Fall NEC and Commanders training again preconvention 2025. Times to be determined.

If your name as a commander was not on that list, please see me after this presentation. That way we can clarify why.

For those commanders who attended the class, please fill out your standard reimbursement form from your department or detachment and email it to Kevin Mook and Brian Compton at National.

I also want to take this moment to thank the instructors: PNC Byron Robichaux, PNC Dave Stephens and PNC Michael Deacon; National Liaison Kevin Mook, Brian Compton; National Adjutants, Bob Avery. Thank you for all the extra time printing these.

And the entire MTD team all who make great effort to make this class and the MTD program a success.

We look forward to seeing you at the Fall NEC.

Commander, my report has been submitted electronically, and as a delegate to this convention I make a motion that it be accepted.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I have a motion on the floor to accept the Detachment Commander School Report.

Is there a second?

STEVEN COX (PA): Commander, Steven Cox, Detachment of Pennsylvania, seconds.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Motion is seconded by Steven Cox of the Detachment of Pennsylvania.

Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting the Detachment Commanders School report, signify by saying aye.

All opposed by saying nay.

The motion carries.

... *Applause.*

Thank you, Chairman Cotten.

The Certificate of Appreciation signed by National Commander Donald JR Hall and Anthony Wright, National Adjutant. And at this time I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd Annual Sons of the American Legion convention.

... *Applause.*

At this time, I call on Bruno Williamson for the National Convention Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Committee report and awards.

On deck, National Convention Internal Affairs Committee report and award and the National Convention Legislative and Rules Committee final report.

**Report and Awards  
National Convention Veterans Affairs and  
Rehabilitation Committee**

*Bruno T. Williamson (IL), Chairman*

Good morning, everyone. Before I go into my report and the awards, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, we have a table in the back with a lot of information. Please stop by if you haven't.

Hello, my brother Sons, Legion Family members and guests, your Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee met yesterday morning.

We had a roomful representing 25 detachments. I'd like to thank this year's National Convention Commission members this year for their work.

Vice Chairman NEC Eddy Seegers; Seth Rippe; Buster Sutherland, Jeff Gibson, Michael

Kirschner; our liaisons, Jamey Holloway, Steve Pintarich, Gary Swanlund and Maxwell Rice and our consultant, Nick Arceo and SONA representative, Tommy Cisna.

Besides what is in VA&R and CSR, your commission promoted six programs this year. I know everybody in this room, their squadrons took on Commander Hall's squadron Four Pillar challenge this year, and the VA&R project in that challenge is Operation Comfort Warriors.

We rededicated ourselves to promoting that and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Fisher House, and rededicated ourselves to promoting National Veterans Assistance Day, this being the 17th year that we have been working that program.

Two new programs that came about this year, one came from Alabama, the Widows and Widowers Luncheons. This is a program to bring spouses who have lost their military spouse, and this brought them into a form of community, togetherness, and to bring forth some camaraderie



and to seek out benefits that they deserve.

Women veterans are the largest and fastest growing population in our VA medical centers. I was happy to see that one of the commission members brought women veterans to the forefront and the Rise Program.

This program deals with our women veterans who are suffering from PTSD and MST. So I'm glad that we were able to bring some awareness to that.

We had a goal this year of having 55 representatives, deputy representatives or associate representatives, in our VA medical centers across the country. We started this year at 29 representatives: VACO, VA Central Office, currently says that we're at 35.

We had some issues with our past certifying officers and our local VA medical centers. Certifications were getting, for lack of a better term, lost in the matrix, if you will, and we've been able to clear up 11 of those.

We had six new certifications. So we're

up to 46 hospitals currently. We're hoping to get close to the --

*... Applause.*

Thank you. It will be good that some day we'll be able to be like our parent organizations, The American Legion Auxiliary and The American Legion, and get close to the 150 mark.

National Advisory Committee, the NAC, over 100 VSOs across the country are a part of this federally mandated committee. This committee brings forth recommendations to the Secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs for the betterment of our veterans and VA facilities.

The Sons of the American Legion, based on our membership and our numbers of representatives in the hospitals, are a voting member of the NAC. We're also one of only 25 VSOs appointed to the executive board, and this is pretty prestigious for the Sons of the American Legion.

Washington Conference, of course, was held in February. A little bit of history was made if you will. It was the first time the

entire commission was invited to the conference.

If you've been to Washington Conference, you know that there's an incredible amount of information brought forth either through VBA, VHA or NCA.

Too much that you've got five or six guys trying to take notes and that just doesn't work. So thank God The American Legion gave us a link so we could get all the presentations and to forward them out.

Two things that came out of the conference that I want to speak on. About 10 years ago, VA started to do research into 3-D printing. Currently they're doing 3-D printing with dentures and in what would take months to get is now taking days.

They are now 3-D printing organs to where a patient, after they've had a CT or an MRI, they can 3-D print what the patient, the veteran's going to have surgery on, and physically the physician, the surgeons, can hold the organ. -- I'm not a medical dude -- but they can see how they want to

get to this thing.

The second thing I'd like to talk about is the Compassionate Contact Corps. There are a lot of you out there that like to talk. I know some of them. A lot of them are in Illinois.

... *Laughter.*

And the Compassionate Contact Corps is a buddy check. You go through a simple amount of training. It is pretty simple. I've gone through the training.

You fill out some paperwork and you're paired up with a homebound veteran and you make weekly calls to them. The duration of the calls is completely up to you and your veteran. And you become a facilitator, liaison, to your veteran between him and the VA. And it's a way just to keep in contact just to check on your friend. So I encourage you to get involved with that.

We ended the meeting with questions and answers, and I'm glad that we had a lot of questions in the meeting and a lot of participation.

We'll now go into the awards.

The Kirby Kepler Memorial, the best Squadron Report of the Year, Cookeville Squadron 46, Cookeville, Tennessee.

... *Applause.*

There's someone here from Tennessee?

The Allen O'Brian Memorial for the number one district. Fifth district, Texas.

... *Applause.*

And the Earl Webster Memorial Award.

The Detachment of the year. O-H.

FROM THE FLOOR: I-O.

BRUNO T. WILLIAMSON (IL): Ohio.

... *Applause.*

And lastly, the Charles B. Rigsby Award - for Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Volunteer Service. This year we had two amazing applicants. Both of them were deserving of this award, but we had one gentleman that stood out just a little bit more than the other.

You might have heard a little bit about him yesterday. He's probably going to be the

youngest recipient of this award, besides being a high school student, active in sports and has a job, he somehow managed to volunteer 467 hours helping our veterans, our nation's veterans.

My brother Sons, members of the Legion Family and guests, it's my pleasure and honor to introduce to you the Charles B. Rigsby VAVS Volunteer of the Year Martin D. Widmer, Murray-Troutt Squadron No. 262 - Audubon, New Jersey.

*... Applause.*

He might be one of the few recipients that has hair and it's not gray.

*... Laughter.*

Great job, Martin.

In closing, some accomplishments that we've done based off of our CSRs.

\$2.2 million raised, 240,000 volunteer hours with a value of \$7.9 million, for a total of \$10 million in Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation. That's at approximately 33 percent reporting.

So did we really do \$30 million over the

year? We don't know. We need to report, my brothers.

As a Delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I make a motion that the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Convention Committee report be accepted.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): I have a motion on the floor to accept the National Convention VA & R Committee report.

TOMMY CISNA (IL): Tommy Cisna, Illinois, seconds.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Seconded by Tommy Cisna, Detachment of Illinois.

Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting the National Convention VA & R Committee report, signify by saying aye.

Opposed by saying nay.

The motion carries.

... *Applause.*

Thank you, chairman. And again, the Citation of Appreciation. All right. At this

time, I would like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd Annual National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

*... Applause.*

At this time I would like to turn the podium over to Chuck Gannon for the purpose of an introduction.

**Introduction**

*PNC Charles E. Gannon (MD)*

Good morning, delegates.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning.

CHARLES E. GANNON (MD): It's often said that National Commanders don't want to give it up, but to go to the extent of getting sick just so you extend your time --

*... Laughter.*

-- it doesn't work that way. And we're glad to see "The Big Bear" is back. And I ask you to stand.

*... Cheers and Applause.*

Big guy, you've had a whale of a year, and you fellows that are standing in line to take



over this job, you've got a tough one to follow down the road, I'll tell you that.

On the behalf of all the Past Commanders, I'd like to present you your delegate's badge to your convention, the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion. You've earned it.

... *Applause.*

And your grandfather got one yesterday. Welcome back, son.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER DONALD L. "J.R." HALL, JR. (MD): Good morning!

FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning!

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Well, it truly is an honor to be here. Some people didn't think I'd come. Some people think I might not should be here, but I can tell you this, this is how my thought process went: I'm a proud Son and a grandson of Edward Hall, a World War II veteran, who went off that boat in Omaha Beach to fight when they were waiting for him.

If he can do that, why the hell can't I

come up here with a kidney stone and still be with my brothers?

*... Applause.*

It's a pleasure to be here to honor my grandfather's service. That's what I've tried doing all year. I've tried my hardest to represent the Sons of the American Legion, and I'll give a report tomorrow.

This morning, I was supposed to be in IA, and I shocked them when I went in there, too. So the script has already been written for our Vice Commanders to run the morning part of this.

So at this time, I'd like to introduce a special guest, somebody who has had a lot of conversation with me this year. We've become much closer friends.

All rise for Past National Commander Jake Comer.

*... Applause.*

**Address**

*TAL Past National Commander John P. Jake Comer (MA)*

Thank you very much.

Commander J.R., Adjutant Tony, my Eastern Division vice president John Cook, my fellow Americans, all, Sons of the American Legion, well, here we are again. This is my 36th year addressing the Sons of the American Legion convention out of my 37 years since I was National Commander, and I enjoy it each and every time.

You members of the Sons of the American Legion, whether you know or it or not, are very important to our programs. In fact, I would hope -- and I wish that in most departments you go back and get on our committees, be part of the action, because you do a great job. Proven by the fact that this year, at an all-time high in membership, and how can we forget that you are a 10 million man organization, raising \$10 million for the Child Welfare Foundation.

*... Applause.*

Back in '87, we started something with these American Legion, the Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion. Every Commander has a challenge. My challenge that year was we go out

and raise a million dollars for the Child Welfare Foundation. And we raised \$1,168,000 that year. In one year.

And every Commander and president, they have their own programs. They go on, do other things, but not the Sons. The Sons kept it going to the point that this year we now have \$10 million. Unbelievable!

*... Applause.*

But, yeah, you've got to go back, get onto those committees. We're too old to march in the parades anymore and do many of the programs that should be done, at least I am, at 92; what are you going to do?

*... Laughter.*

But this year, I cannot leave this podium without expressing, in my opinion, you have one of the most fantastic and outstanding National Commanders the history of the Sons of the American Legion in J.R. Hall.

*... Applause.*

We had a great team in Dan Seehafer, my

National Commander; Lisa, the national president, and J.R.

Wherever they went, they went as a team. That's why they were successful for all of you. And this year, I know you'll be looking at Joe Navarreté coming in as National Commander, great family in New Mexico. His lovely mother and father so active as they were bringing up an outstanding son that's going to represent us so well.

Thank you for the opportunity once again of addressing you, because when we hear, we forget, and when we see, we remember. It's when we do, we understand.

God bless you all.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Commander Comer, at this time I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our convention.

*... Applause.*

At this time I'll yield the podium to Vice Commander Bristo.

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): At this time I call on Bill Hill for the National Convention

Internal Affairs Committee report and awards.

On deck: The National Convention

Legislative and Rules Committee final report and award for the National Convention Finance Committee report.

**Report and Awards**

National Convention Internal Affairs Committee  
*William G. "Bill" Hill (MD), Nat'l Conv. Internal Affairs Committee Chair*

I have to say this feels unfair. I thought I was going to go after Bruno, and then now I'm up here after Jake, and you just can't top that.

Tony, I'm sure you set it up that way, I'm just saying.

Commander, glad to see you here.  
Officers, delegates, and guests of the 52nd National Convention: Good morning.

I'm the new -- this year, in the spring, I was appointed the new chairman for the Internal Affairs Commission and also ran the Internal Affairs Committee meeting for the convention this year.

I'm probably going to miss a few. I'll apologize. I made some cryptic notes last night. But I want to thank Chris Michael, who was the chairman before for a well done before and stepping back and doing some things.

I understand he's a younger gentleman, just getting married, a lot of things going on in life he wants to get started and straightened up, and he asked me afterwards to extend thanks for what he's had the opportunity, but I told him he's still always welcome to support us and help us when he can when he gets things a little more settled. It was very understandable.

I also want to thank Ken Sutton from California, who is the vice chair. Juan Torres and Dickie Huntley. Also our NEC liaison Chris Cook -- and I'm sure I missed one. And also our consultant, leading trailing candidate, Bill Clancy from New York, for a job well done.

This year the Convention IA Committee meeting began at 8:30. We had 16 members of the committee were present, 20 guests.

Again, as you heard yesterday, we also had a standing room only. So that was great to see a lot of people there, a lot of interest in all these different meetings that were taking place.

We had a good update, provided a general update on what we were doing under IA Commission, which also includes MT&D, membership, and squadron activities, as well as convention. A lot of great things taking place. You've heard today and yesterday; you'll hear more today. It's really a lot of great things we're doing, getting a lot of training out to people, and trying to get a lot of interest and stuff out to the detachments so you can get it down to your Blue Caps and getting this information out as far as possible.

We had one motion yesterday for a resolution that was presented yesterday morning for memorialization of Past National Commander James Hartman that was voted on approved.

There was no other business, and our meeting adjourned at 8:45. Sorry it ran a little longer than meetings went for me. But that's okay.



I also do have today, before I close in this, there's a new award, a newer award that we didn't have any recipients last year. They did. They actually ended up in the fall.

So this year I have the honor of presenting the first, on stage here, the Consolidated Award for 100 percent Consolidation Report submittal.

I have to tell you, it's interesting and an honor having this. When you look at the number, we should have 55, but I'll mention the three we have here today.

The first award would go to Delaware for 100 percent CSR submittal.

*... Applause.*

Also have Vermont for 100 percent.

*... Applause.*

And also Wisconsin.

*... Applause.*

And I'm not mooing.

We have representatives for those detachments. Thank you.

As a delegate of the 52nd National Convention, I make a motion to accept my report.

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): Motion made to accept the report. Second?

STEVE GOWER (VA): Steve Gower, Virginia, seconds.

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): Steve Gower Detachment of Virginia seconds.

Is there any discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor of accepting the National Convention Internal Affairs Committee report, signify by saying aye.

All opposed by saying nay.

It's carried.

I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

... *Applause.*

At this time I call on Blair Miles for the National Convention Legislative Report.

... *Applause.*

**Report**

National Convention Legislative Report  
*Blair M. Miles (AL), Chairman National Convention  
Legislative and Rules Cmte*

Good morning. Legislative had a good year. This year we had a wonderful Washington Conference. For those who attended, thank you very much. It was a great success. Large crowd. Three buses, and we had a lot more youngsters with us. And it's really good to see the young kids be a part of this.

For three years, I had the honor of watching three different National Commanders lay an SAL wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. That's what I'll remember the most about these three years. If you ever get a chance to go on this trip, please do. It's something you'll never forget.

Saying that, the 2025 Washington Conference is set for next year. The dates are March 2nd through March 5th, with Sunday, March 2nd, being the wreath laying tour.

Voter Voice. You've heard me talk about

this all year long. We did good this year. We're about a thousand members signed up now for Voters Voice.

In an organization of almost 400,000, I think we can do a little better than that, and we're reaching out, and we're finding different ways to get this.

Yesterday, at our legislative meeting, packed house. Standing room only. And we passed out a QR Code for Voter Voice, and had the people that were in the meeting, if they were already signed up for it, to pass it on. If they weren't, take out your cell phone, capture that QR Code and get on Voter Voice.

Before we concluded the meeting, I asked the group how many captured that QR Code. And I'm going to say almost 25 hands went in the air. That's 25 people we wouldn't have got if we didn't just simply ask.

So to the detachment leadership out there, get your guys to sign up for Voter Voice, if you can. Use your meetings, your mid-winters, your

detachment conferences, and help. It's very important what we do in spreading the word and getting the attention that we need for our veterans and legislative.

The George B. Evans Award - Grassroots Veterans' Advocate of the Year Award is designed to recognize an SAL member for his hard work in his advocacy for our veterans.

Letting our legislators know what's important for the betterment of our veterans is an important role the SAL plays along with The American Legion. Whether it's at the local level or national level, we do have an avenue to make our wishes known for the well-being of our veterans.

So for those of you who are advocates for our veterans, thank you for doing so, and again Voter Voice can help you connect that.

That being said, the 2024 George B. Evans Veteran Advocate of the Year Award goes to Mr. Casey Hanson from Squadron 42 from South Dakota.

... *Applause.*

Casey, we've got a nice plaque for you,

and this is his cover. And I appreciate your hard work. Very good job.

CASEY HANSON (SD): All right. This is awesome. Thank you, guys, for being here. Thank you, veterans. It's truly an honor to be part of the Sons of the American Legion, and it's even more of an honor to be able to support our veterans, and I hope everybody continues to do that.

It's definitely a passion of mine, and I hope it's a passion of yours, too. So thank you very much and have a good weekend and thank you.

... *Applause.*

BLAIR M. MILES (AL): With nothing further, I'd like to make a motion as a delegate to this convention to accept my report.

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): The motion is made.

PNC GREG "DOC" GIBBS (NY): Doc Gibbs.

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): Doc Gibbs of New York seconds.

All those in favor, say aye.

Those opposed, nay.

So carried.

At this time I would like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

... *Applause.*

At this time, I'm going to yield the podium to Linwood Moore, National Vice Commander.

... *Applause.*

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): Okay. At this time we've got the report of the Finance Committee, Jeffrey Van Horn, chairman, National Convention Finance Committee. Come up to the podium.

... *Applause.*

**Report**

National Convention Finance Committee  
*Jeffrey J. Van Horn (MO), National Convention Finance Committee Chairman*

Good morning, officers, delegates, guests, I'm Jeff Van Horn from the Detachment of Illinois, home of Jeff Trout.

The adjutants allotted me 25 minutes for my report, so I'll try to keep it under 20. I was

appointed chairman of the National Finance Commission at the spring NEC. Much like the Children and Youth chair, Mr. Lohman, this is my first time on the national stage.

If I make a mistake, please talk to Mr. Bill Hill of Maryland.

Briefly, after being caught off guard at the preconvention NEC to give a report yesterday, I would like to say currently we're reconciled through May 2024.

I would like to thank the members of the National Finance Commission, also our NEC liaisons Mr. Kelly of Florida, Mr. Hansen of Indiana, and lastly, our former chairman, Mr. Hill, for his guidance during this transition. After the pre-NEC, we see how that's going. But seriously, thanks, Bill, for all of your help.

The Convention Finance Committee met yesterday at 11:30 a.m. We had 21 detachment representatives and four additional guests. Shocked me that many people for a finance meeting.

We discovered that there are actually



funds to cover the National Convention this year. So we're doing good. There were no resolutions to consider.

With no further discussions regarding this matter, we closed the meeting.

So Commander, thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as a delegate of the 52nd National Convention from the Land of Lincoln, Illinois, I make a motion to accept the Convention Finance Committee report.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): All right. We have a motion to accept this report. Do I have a second?

FRANK MERAZ (CA): Mr. Vice Commander, Mr. Frank Meraz, Detachment of California, delegate to this convention, I'd like to second that.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): Detachment of California seconds it.

Any discussion?

All in favor, say yes.

All opposed, say nay.

The motion passes.

I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our National Convention.

... *Applause.*

Now we have the report of the Public and Media Communications Commission, Kevin Chaplin, Chairman, National Public and Media Commission Chairman.

**Report**

National Public and Media Communications Commission  
*Kevin D. Chaplin (VA), Nat'l Public & Media Comms.  
Comm. Chairman*

Thank you, Vice Commander. Just for keeping people lined up, when we show the video of the winners for the Snapshots of Service, if you see your squadron or detachment as a winner, if you could please get people to queue up over on this side for the award presentations. Thank you.

Good morning. First, I'd like to thank and introduce the commission members, Brandon Roberts from Georgia; Doug Heiser from Indiana; Doug Evans from Kansas; our national web master Gene Theroux from Massachusetts; our Past National Commander liaison, David Faust, from Wisconsin; and

our advisor, Andy Profit; our national newsletter editor Rusty Myers from New Jersey, and NEC liaisons Joseph Guimond, Jeff Lee, Joseph Wysochanski and Terry Pressley. I'd like to thank everybody for their hard work.

Last October, we launched a new newsletter, The Millennium. Jeff Vrabel Sr. agreed to be our editor. With his excellent skills and amazing dedication, it has been a great success. Unfortunately, Jeff passed away suddenly this past June. Jeff not only was the editor for The Millennium, but he's also the editor for the Roundup newsletter.

Jeff has held many positions in the Sons and he's also a Past National Vice Commander. Can we please have a moment of silence for PNC VC Jeff Vrabel Sr.

*... Moment of silence.*

Thank you. At this time I'd like to introduce the National newsletter staff. Rusty Myers is our interim editor. Butch Ray and Randy Timms are our reporters, and Lou Michaels is our

photojournalist. Hopefully, everyone is receiving, reading, sharing The Millennium. It comes out once a month as a link to the monthly SAL or in the monthly SAL email.

When you click on The Millennium link, you'll be able to view it online and download and print the PDF.

If you're not receiving this email, please log into [mylegion.org](http://mylegion.org) and look for the subscription e-newsletter link and select the Sons of the American Legion option. You can additionally select to receive other emailed Legion publications and communications, and we encourage everyone to help us with the content for this newsletter. We want to hear about all the great things that your squadrons and detachments are doing.

The commission has been working on tracking the performance of our website, newsletters, and social media. Our goal is to increase member engagement using our Facebook page, our website and newsletter subscriptions. Not only

are we seeing increases in the subscribers to our e-newsletters, but our open rate of 22 percent far outpaces the industry standard of 14 percent.

Please encourage your members and your detachment to engage with the mylegion.org website and read our newsletters and follow our Facebook page. We all know this organization does some truly amazing things for our veterans, children and youth and active military and their families. Let's make sure the world knows the great things we do.

As you know, the Public Media Communications Commission judges a national photo contest each year, Snapshots of Service. The photo contest is designed to showcase the outstanding work and commitment our members have to this great organization.

Each year we choose the winning photos in four categories that represent the pillars that support The American Legion: Americanism, Children and Youth, National Security, and Veterans Affairs.

This year, like last year, it was very

stiff competition. There were some great pictures submitted, and I wish we could make them all winners.

Here is the video of the winners and other submissions.

*... The delegation viewed a video.*

Weren't those some great pictures?

*... Applause.*

Veterans Affairs. First place Veterans Affairs Rehabilitation is William Zeb Longest, Squadron No. 42 - Floyds Knobs, Indiana.

Second place Veterans Affairs is Orville H. Frank Squadron No. 742 - Fairview, Pennsylvania

Third place Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation is Loudon Squadron No. 257 - Loudonville, Ohio.

First place for Children and Youth is Edgar L. Herrick Squadron No. 42 - Arlington, South Dakota.

*... Applause.*

Second place for Children and Youth is Henry "Gene" Burton, Sr. Memorial Squadron No. 13 -

Sitka, Alaska.

Third place for Children and Youth is Belleville Squadron No. 105 - Belleville, New Jersey.

... *Applause.*

Americanism, First place, Mooney-Long Squadron No. 279 - Blue Mound, Kansas.

That was a picture of 10-day-old Ryan Krupko, his first picture as an official member of the Sons of the American Legion. He's here. He received the 100 percent ribbon for his detachment and grabbed hold of it with a big fist.

Second place Americanism is Hopewell Valley Squadron No. 339 - Hopewell, New Jersey. It was the SAL Bugler.

... *Applause.*

Third place, Americanism, is Westfield Squadron No. 124 - Westfield, Massachusetts. And that was Gene Theroux placing flags in honor of a hero from World War II.

If you don't know, Gene does a lot of restoration of cemeteries and grave markers. I

think that's his full-time job if I'm not mistaken.

*... Applause.*

National Security. First place is Belleville Squadron No. 105 - Belleville, New Jersey.

Second place, National Security, is Loudon Squadron No. 257 - Loudonville, Ohio.

*... Applause.*

And third place, National Security, is Dover Squadron No. 8 - Dover, New Hampshire.

*... Applause.*

And that was our National Vice Commander John Cook giving blood with a big grin on his face at the American Red Cross.

If I could get somebody from Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey to queue up.

Videos of Service Awards. Newest contest to bring awareness to the public about the Sons of the American Legion using social media platforms. The video must contain SAL members with their covers or identifiable clothing on during the



activity or event and fall into one of the three categories: Program support, community engagement, membership, and recruitment.

The winning videos will be published on our national Facebook page. This year the winners are:

For Membership and Recruitment, first place, Cherry Valley Squadron No. 443. - Cherry Valley, Massachusetts.

*... Applause.*

Program Support, first place, Benson Squadron No. 112 - Omaha, Nebraska.

*... Applause.*

Community Engagement, first place, Belleville Squadron No. 105 - Belleville, New Jersey.

*... Applause.*

There should have been a second and third place, but we didn't get enough videos to be submitted. So hopefully we'll get more next year.

So, everybody, I know you're putting them out there. Just need to submit them in the proper

form.

As a delegate of this convention, I make a motion to accept my report.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): You've made a motion to accept his report for Public and Communications.

Do I have a second?

RICK ALLEN (IL): Rick Allen, Detachment of Illinois.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): Rick Allen, Detachment of Illinois, seconds.

All in favor, say yea.

All opposed, say nay.

Yeas pass.

... *Applause.*

I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention.

... *Applause.*

At this time, I call on Ned Fox for the National Convention Constitutional Amendments Committee report.

**Report**

National Convention Constitutional Amendments  
Committee

*Nedley C. Fox (CA), Nat'l Conv. Constitutional  
Amendments Cmte. Chair*

Well, good morning.

Yesterday, Constitutional Amendments met.

I believe it was about 11:03. We had 30 people in attendance. Lively discussion on various topics.

However, there were no constitutional amendments.

With that, I would like to make a motion to accept my report.

... *Applause.*

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): All right.

Ned Fox made a motion to accept his report.

FRANK MERAZ (CA): Mr. Vice Commander, Frank Meraz, Detachment of California, delegate to this convention, seconds that.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): What Detachment?

FRANK MERAZ (CA): Shake and bake California.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): It's got to

be a different detachment. It can't be the same detachment to make the second.

ADRIS SCHMIDT (NE): Adris Schmidt (phonetic), Detachment of Nebraska, seconds.

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): Detachment of Nebraska makes a second.

All in favor, say yea.

All opposed, say nay.

Yeas got it.

... *Laughter.*

I'd like to make Mr. Fox here a Distinguished Guest of our 52nd National Convention.

... *Applause.*

I'd like to turn the podium back over to Commander J.R. Hall.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: At this time I would like to call on Mark Nave for the National Child Welfare Foundation Committee report and awards.

Evidently Mr. Nave had a posse he'd like to bring with him.

... *Laughter.*

**Report and Awards**

National Child Welfare Foundation Committee  
Mark E. Nave (PA), National CWF Committee Chairman

Good morning, everybody. I guess there really hasn't been much going on with CWF this year, huh? No! It's far from that.

First of all, we came into the year, \$400,000 away from reaching \$10 million. As always, we came through by raising \$489,000 and exceeding \$10 million in total donations.

... *Applause.*

I want to introduce my committeemen, because without these gentlemen it's not possible.

They are the energy, the knowledge, the spirit, and experience that's behind this committee that helps things go.

Sandy Lipman, who is here, somewhere. I see Jon Coakley, John Sansoucie, George Fleming, Lyle Chapman.

... *Applause.*

These gentlemen are on every Zoom meeting for different and various reasons throughout the

years. The ideas, the experience, gentlemen, thank you for the work that you've done for this committee over the years.

*... Applause.*

I also want to thank our consultant for this year. That's Phil Stander. Phil, if you're here, please stand up. Thank you, sir.

*... Applause.*

Our NEC liaisons, Bryan Hine, David Dieckgraeff, David Vulcan, and Paul Hayse. Thank you for coming to our meetings and providing the information and helping us out with everything we needed this year.

I want to send a special thank you out to PNC liaison and also past chairman for CWF, Chris Carlton.

To get to \$10 million, there were many that came before us that served on this committee.

I'd like to recognize the past chairmen, if you're here, stand up. David Ridenour, Gary Ray. Harold Tremblay, Mark Arneson, Jeff Frain, Pete Sierminski, and Chris Carlton.

... *Applause.*

We thank you for your service on this committee over the years and helping us reach our goal.

Are there any other past committee members at this time that have served on Child Welfare Foundation here? Please stand.

We thank you for your service on the committee through the years and thank you for your involvement.

At this time, we're going to go into the presentation of the Child Welfare Foundation awards.

For the Highest Monetary Donation Award by Region:

For the West, Arizona \$118,411.37.

... *Applause.*

Central: Ohio, \$51,830.00.

... *Applause.*

Northeast: Pennsylvania, \$44,770.04.

... *Applause.*

Southeast: Florida, \$23,066.00.

... *Applause.*

Midwest: Kansas, \$7,747.00.

... *Applause.*

Now we move on to the highest Detachment per capita award by region.

West: Nevada, \$24.59 per member.

Southeast: Mississippi, \$6.55 per member.

Northeast: Vermont, \$2.73.

Central: West Virginia, \$2.05.

Midwest: Kansas, \$1.30 per member.

... *Applause.*

The next awards are the \$2.00 Per Capita Donation Award. The following detachments have achieved this award: Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, Mississippi, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

... *Applause.*

While they pass out the awards, a couple notes of interest. Nevada had \$24.59 per member. Arizona had \$13.73 per member. Outstanding. Not



only were you over \$2, you were over \$10, and in one case \$20. Great work.

*... Applause.*

Now we're going to the \$1.00 Per Capita Donation Award. The following detachments have achieved this: Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, France, Georgia, Kansas City, Latin America, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, and South Dakota.

*... Applause.*

As a Delegate to this 52nd National Convention, I make a motion to accept the National Child Welfare Foundation Committee report.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a motion on the floor. Do I hear a second?

DOUG EVANS (KS): Doug Evans, Kansas, seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a second from Kansas.

Call the question.

All those in favor, signify by saying aye.

Any opposed?

Motion carries.

This is your certificate. We appreciate all your hard work and would like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention.

... *Applause.*

Of course we'll hear more about CWF in a little while. This year we made a new award. It's going to be called the Commander's Choice Award.

During all my traveling, you get to see a lot of great works out there, more than what we talk about together, and there's a lot of things we can share. As I traveled this year and seen so many good things happen, I did a hot stop over there in Arizona.

As you guys seen I asked the guys over there that had that briefcase thing to come back and share it with us all -- at the NEC they brought the briefcase out.

What I loved about the briefcase wasn't just that they made the briefcase that could help

everybody, but what I loved about that is they were giving it away to help other squadrons. Sons helping Sons is what we're all supposed to do.

These guys, if you know, when it comes to them just being the top donor for Arizona, this one squadron that did the briefcase, well, they also had a lot to do with that \$118,000 that was brought in.

I was really impressed by them, as I have been by so many. But I thought we'd make something special for them, so we made the new Commander's Choice Squadron of the year.

At this time, I'd like to have the gentlemen from Apache Junction please come on up here.

**Presentation - Commander's Choice Award**

*Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr.*

*National Commander - Squadron of the Year*

I'll read this as they're coming up. As the Sons of the American Legion emblem in there, it says National Commander's choice Squadron of the Year, Apache Junction, Squadron 27, Apache

Junction, Arizona, 23-24.

... *Applause.*

GARY MAXWELL (AZ): Good morning, everyone. I appreciate the award. I want to thank everyone that joined us in Indianapolis for the outreach program. The speech, the presentation I was able to give up there, we're going to be doing it in the morning as well, we'll have it down here. I just want to say thanks for the support.

People from all over the country are reaching out about this, and it's really grown. It's doing a lot of good stuff for our Sons. Thanks for your time.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Our next guest comes all the way from Alaska. They gave me this paper that talks about her. I think everybody knows Lisa. I can tell you this year I've worked with Lisa, what a pleasure. I can't wait to thank The American Legion Auxiliary for giving me the best that I've ever seen do the job.

When I mean "do the job," I don't mean

somebody that just came in and represented The American Legion Auxiliary, but somebody that bought into The American Legion family. I can read you all the stuff that she's from Fairbanks. It says something on here about youth, and that's not what we think of when we think of Lisa, so I'm not going to go there.

She is the senior member of our team. I'm not saying she's old. I'm just saying out of me, Dan, and her, Lisa is our oldest member. She had a job trying to keep us two guys straight sometimes.

Folks, I want to tell you, our next guest is one of the best friends I could have. Last night she came over to my room and spent some time with me because she knew I wasn't feeling good. It's a great honor.

Please get up and put your hands together hard for my dear friend, Lisa Williamson.

*... Applause.*

**Greetings**

*Lisa Williamson, National President American Legion Auxiliary*

Great song. Where did you know I liked

that song? So someone's putting his foot in his mouth again, it looks like. Yes, I am the oldest. I have two little brothers that it seems like I have to forever keep in line. It's not working, as you can tell.

Between J.R. and National Commander Dan Seehafer and I, we really are about the family. When we first met each other, we all clicked. As time has gone by, and we've traveled together, and our spouses have traveled together, the family -- we just have become closer and tighter. We have our own inside jokes. We can look at each other, and there's been times that I've been laughing so hard when there's been a speaker, thanks to J.R., and it's just something that we live now.

We know that J.R.'s wife might have had a little mishap with some steps recently, and as a family, we check on them. There's been some other health issues, as we are all aware, for all of us. We're immediately on the phone texting, calling, face timing, and supporting each other like family. I'm very, very grateful to this year and for J.R.

to have a new best friend, my husband Daryl.

... *Applause.*

J.R. is definitely near and dear to my heart as is Dan and Margie and all of the spouses. We had one heck of an aide in Mike Rohan also. It was wonderful to be together as a family. We've had some funny discussions. Being the only one of the group that doesn't drink, I've seen some things that I can't unsee, heard some things that I can't unhear, but it's made us closer.

We've talked about cocktails and how many olives go in a cocktail if it's two or three olives. We've talked about lattes and whether it's almond milk or oat milk that goes in a latte. We've talked about a whole lot more, and what really is almond milk, so think about it. This year we also, as a family, you know that we have concentrated on --

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Wait a minute. Lisa had to say almond milk in her speech. Just so you know, everyone seen Dan Seehafer up here, and he said three olives.

I have something else to say, but this started in Hawaii. They did not have creamer for Commander Dan, and they brought out almond milk, and somebody said, almond milk? Does almonds really have milk? I said, well, they call it almond milk because nobody would buy it if they said nut juice.

*... Applause.*

AUXILIARY PRESIDENT LISA WILLIAMSON:

It's all a marketing ploy. Can you see someone like this milking an almond?

As a family, we've promoted veteran and military suicide and really, really advance the Be the One mission. There's all kinds of statistics that I've quoted before, you've heard before, but the nuts and bones of it is to remember that it's okay to not be okay, and it's okay to ask for mental health help. And as a family organization, we can do that.

You know what we do when we do that. We tell people, we're an ear for people that we can change lives and save lives, and that's what it's



about, right? It's about saving and changing lives, and that's what this whole mission is. It's been incredible to work it with J.R., to work it with Dan.

I can guarantee you, in a few days when I'm no longer the national president, just because I'm not serving in this official capacity does not mean I'm not going to continue pushing Be the One and try to save our military and our veterans from their mental health issues and from suicide.

*... Applause.*

Like Dan says, National Commander Seehafer says, it's personal. While I've never been personally touched by suicide, my son is serving in the active duty -- is in the National Guard, and I saw how it affected him when one of the guys, one of the airmen in his Squadron died by suicide. It affected that whole Squadron.

There's research that shows that one suicide death can affect 135 to 150 people. That's some sizes of your squadrons, our posts, our units. That whole group of people is affected by one

suicide death. So if we can take care, if we can just Be the One, that will help affect that 135 to 150 people. I've had an absolutely marvelous year.

You SAL members have been near and dear to my heart for many years. I worked at our department headquarters for the Legion, so I saw how the family worked together. This organization has helped me raise my kids, and I'm very proud of both my kids, and this organization gave me my husband because that's where I met him is at one of our events, the love of my life. With the exception, of course, of J.R. as my other love.

But it has been wonderful. It is like having two little brothers, absolutely love them, will love them till the end of time. I know that we will all continue to work in whatever capacity that we come across when it comes to furthering our collective goals in the American Legion family.

So I'll just finish with three words that I always, always finish with -- Be the One. Be the One.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Lisa, on behalf of the Sons of the American Legion, I give you this Certificate of Appreciation, hereby presented to Lisa Williamson, National President American Legion Auxiliary, in recognition of outstanding contributions, in appreciation of dedication and service to the programs of Sons of the American Legion, presented this 52nd National Convention in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, August 23rd through 25th, signed by me and Tony.

Sister, you know it comes with love.

LISA WILLIAMSON: Thank you very much.

... *Applause.*

I thank you all very, very much. Maybe you all could teach him how to get here without getting stuck in an elevator.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Everybody clap so she'll leave.

... *Applause.*

It's been a fun year.

At this time, we have our Leading Candidate for National President from The American

Legion Auxiliary, and something new that the adjutant and I discussed that we like to do. Our leading candidate for National Commander will now bring out Ms. Trish Ward from the great state of Kansas.

**Greetings**

*Trish Ward National Vice President American Legion Auxiliary*

Commander Hall, Officers and Sons of the American Legion, good morning. I am Trish Ward, leading candidate for American Legion Auxiliary National President 2024-2025, from the great state of Kansas. It is such an honor to speak to you this morning. Thank you so much for the kind invitation.

Serving our nation's heroes is my life's work, passion, and purpose, and I am so excited to have the opportunity to continue the great work Commander Seehafer and Hall, along with our ALA National President Lisa Williamson have set a standard of excellence for the 2023-2024 year, and it has been filled with great work, commitment, and a critical focus to help our veterans who are contemplating self-harm. Their work has saved

lives, and we must continue and support the Be the One mission and help our veterans who are struggling.

If elected on Wednesday, I look to assure their great work, along with initiatives from previous administrations continues forward.

For the 2024-2025 administrative year, I have established the Department Excellence Initiative, where we will invest in our members, units, and departments to help make them stronger and more resilient with the changing landscape we are witnessing in small town America.

Through these initiatives, our focus will be to reinvest in our organization and truly rebuild strength from the grassroots up. Will it be easy? No. Will it work? I'm not sure. But we must try.

The American Legion Auxiliary has lost nearly 2,000 units over the past ten years, and this trend must stop. As I like to say, our units, Squadrons, and posts across the country make up the fabric that holds this organization together. When

we start losing the threads of that fabric and they break, the cloth weakens. We need to be strong across the country to be able to accomplish the great work we do every day, and it takes all of us working together helping each other.

My husband Steve, our son, son-in-law, three grandsons, and three great grandsons are all proud members of the Sons of the American Legion.

We are a Legion family.

*... Applause.*

Thank you. We are a Legion family, and like you, we believe in the principles of this organization. Our strength lies in supporting each other and continuing our collective mission of service, not self, and I can't wait to keep the momentum going in a positive and forward focused trajectory.

Thank you for your choice of Joseph Navarreté for Commander of the Sons in 2024-2025. I know of no finer man to lead, and I can't wait to join he and Jim LaCoursiere in a wonderful year of service, activism, and accomplishment.

In Kansas, a proud Kansan Native American warrior stands atop our capitol. Ad astra is a symbol of aspiration and inspiration for our people. And our motto, ad astra per aspera means to the stars through difficulties. As we stand here today, I see the stars, and they are right there for the taking.

So together let's make it amazing as we lead the way, reach those stars, and make great things happen for our members, and most importantly, those we serve. Thank you so much.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Trish, we'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

TRISH WARD: Commander Hall, thank you so much for this recognition and for the invitation to speak this morning. I can't wait to lead the way with all of you right there beside us.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Our next guest,

from the state of Illinois, Honorable Vincent Gaughan, President of the American Legion Endowment Corporation.

**Address**

*Hon. Vincent M. Gaughan  
President TAL Endowment Corporation*

I just got one of the qualifications for being President of the United States. I just fell up the stairs.

*... Laughter.*

National Commander Donald L. Hall Jr., also Commander J.R.; National Judge Advocate -- sorry. National Adjutant Anthony Wright, National officers, members of the Sons of the American Legion, friends, and guests -- just a matter of personal privilege, hello, Illinois. God love you all.

It's my honor to be here today with this special group of friends. Thank you for what you do to further our mission and for your tireless work and dedication. The Sons of the American Legion continue to be a force to be reckoned with. Your support of the American Legion programs, in



addition to your own programs in such an outstanding way with all time high membership, 102.79 percent and a total membership of 392,781 members. You've got to give yourself a round of applause for that.

*... Applause.*

In addition to that, you've shown your outstanding leadership in membership and also your programs by having 44 detachments that are at 100 percent or exceeding 100 percent. And the other milestone is you have contributed over the decades over \$10 million to the Child Welfare Fund. These are outstanding accomplishments. I really mean this.

*... Applause.*

You are creating a legacy that will profoundly impact this nation for years to come. This is something to be proud of every day. I am here today to present this year's Veterans and Children's Foundation Award. This year's recognition award are presented to the following Sons of the American Legion Detachment.

Harry W. Colmery Legacy Award is given to the number one Detachment with the highest total contributions in support of the Veterans and Children's Foundation. This year the award goes to the Detachment of West Virginia, with a combined total of over \$10,200 in donations.

... *Applause.*

Don't go too far. Also, the highest per capita donation by the Detachment, this is the James A. Drain Founder's Award, it given to West Virginia, the Department of West Virginia.

... *Applause.*

In your support of the Veterans and Children's Foundation, what you have done, and the moneys that are gathered are used for the TFA and also for the support and training of our service veterans. At this time from November 2023 to June 2024, our service officers have attained \$15.5 billion for our veterans. What this means is you have to dig down -- this is just like instant coffee. You pour some water on this thing, and then you're going to see the impact on the community.

Some people couldn't get a lift for their apartment, a paralyzed veteran or something in that area, the family members are finally relieved of some of the financial burdens, what they had to give up to support that veteran. That way, that veteran is feeling like he's communicating and supporting his family and his friends and his children.

This is some of the outstanding things that the money that is accumulated by the Veterans & Children Foundation is being used for. Now, we have an additional award, and this is another outstanding one. One more thing is that since the inception of the TFA, we have helped 11,161 children. That's just during the last decade.

We have one other award, and this is outstanding. This is the Diamond Two Award. This is presented for making a donation of over \$100,000, and it's presented to the Sons of the American Legion.

... *Applause.*

I just want to say, I think you have some of the problems The American Legion has, and nobody knows the things we do. You're just outstanding. You're here. You support programs, and you do this selfless thing for the American veteran for our country. It makes me so proud to be here today with such an outstanding group. I can't say how humble I feel being in your presence. God love you all.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest for our 52nd National Convention.

*... Applause.*

We're running a little ahead of schedule. That's a good thing, right? One thing that I haven't been able to do, and I'd like to do it this time if we could have all of our veterans and our dual members please rise and be recognized.

*... Applause.*

Thank you all for your service. I think I'll take this time to tell a little story that you've all seen part of unfold just back in May. My

grandfather's service as a POW was locked up and sealed, so the family could not get his service records. We knew where he served. We have his DD-214.

In May you seen that a brother, another Son doing something for a Son. Bob Manzo came up on stage because he's part of Division 29. He handed me my grandfather's records that Division 29 gave to him to give me.

When we went to Normandy this year, I got to see the commander of Division 29 and stand next to the Division 29 Memorial there because Division 29 was the first one on the beach. What an honor for my friend to do that for me. Thank you, Bob.

*... Applause.*

And at this time, to kill a little bit more time until our other guests come, does anybody have any money they want to give away? Come on up here. We'll take donations at this time. Nobody's prepared for donations?

If you've got cash in your pocket that you'd like to give to the Commander's kidney stone

fee, come on up here. All right. We have some coming up.

DETACHMENT OF FLORIDA: Good morning, everyone. Detachment of Florida, Operation Comfort Warrior, \$3,600. American Legion Veterans & Children, \$3,000. National Emergency Fund, \$5,788. Child Welfare Foundation, \$13,902.38.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Come on up.

DETACHMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE: On behalf of the Sons of the American Legion Detachment of New Hampshire, we have a donation for \$2,088.

... *Applause.*

PHOTOGRAPHER: Taking a lead from PNC Gladden, \$20 is \$20.

DETACHMENT OF TEXAS: From the Detachment of Texas, I have a check for \$500 for Child Welfare, and then a bunch of money from all over the state of Texas from our Squadrons for Child Welfare.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: He said a bunch of money. I like that.

DETACHMENT OF ARKANSAS: Marty Roberts, NEC, Detachment of Arkansas, I have several checks. National Emergency Fund, \$125, Comfort Warriors, \$100, Child Welfare Foundation, \$125. Legacy Scholarship, \$150. That is it.

... *Applause.*

DETACHMENT OF WEST VIRGINIA:

Mr. Commander, we have four checks for the Child Welfare Foundation. One for \$118.50, two checks for \$500, and one for \$1,875, totaling right around \$3,000.

MARK E. NAVE (PA), I have a \$20 donation for CWF for a misplaced cover.

DETACHMENT OF GEORGIA: I have a check for \$300 for my Squadron 29, Marietta, Georgia.

DETACHMENT OF NEW YORK: J.R., good to see you up here. I've got, I think, eight or nine checks up here. One for the National Emergency Fund for \$2,500. From Squadron 1449, Detachment of New York, \$2,000 for Comfort Warriors. Legacy Memorial Scholarship Fund, \$200. \$6,671 for CWF. \$948 for National Emergency Fund. \$1,050 for Operation

Comfort Warriors. Commander's project, \$1,000. And Be the One campaign, \$1,550.

... *Applause.*

DETACHMENT OF LOUISIANA: From the Department of Louisiana, I am Gerald Marx, the Detachment Commander, Children and Youth we have \$200 from Squadron 407; NEF, \$200 from Squadron 407. CWF, we have \$71 from the Detachment. And we have \$225 for CWF from Squadron 5, 51, 122, 125, 208, 209, 248, 350, and 407. Then for CWF again, we have a \$600 check from 16, \$300, 208, \$100, and 407's got \$200 for these.

DETACHMENT OF NEW MEXICO: From the Detachment of New Mexico for CWF, we have a check for \$2,500. My adjutant is cutting it for you now.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We'd like to thank Bernie Kessler for that \$20 donation for the missing cap.

PNC MICHAEL J. DEACON (IA): Past National Commander Mike Deacon over on your right. I just wanted to say that I've seen a couple



donations go up there for the Legacy Scholarship Fund. That fund is self-contained now. They're not using it. That's why we still have the Legacy Run, but the money from the Legacy Run is now going to Veterans & Children Foundation Fund.

Some of the guys might want to know, if they want to change lanes, instead of collecting for the Legacy Scholarship Fund, put it someplace else that can really use it. We're getting to that age where not enough people are using that fund, so it is self-contained. They said they don't need us to collect for that anymore. Thank you very much.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Thank you, Commander Deacon. I've got to tell another story. This is about being here in Louisiana. Is Camille in here? Camille said it's time to go to dinner, Commander.

So we walked out and around Camille's vehicle, there was a couple other Louisiana boys drinking some Legion milk, you know. They said, where are you taking the Commander for dinner? He said, I don't know, I hear Burger King's got a

special down there. We got in the car and headed out. He said, Commander, whatever how Camille talks. Commander, we're going to go down here and do this thing there and going to get something here. Whatever you say, Camille.

So he pulled up in front of a place to get crawfish, they had a big old crawfish outside, but they had not one inside because the place was closed. So we passed Chuck E. Cheese. I like pizza and wings. Chuck E. Cheese is pretty good. I've been to quite a few parties. But that wasn't good enough. Took us on down the street, and we went by Burger King. We didn't go in.

I'm not going to tell you where we ate, but when we got back, those guys drinking Legion milk were still there. They said, where did you take him?

I said, he took me to Chuck E. Cheese. I had pictures on my phone that I had looked up to show everybody Chuck E. Cheese things and all that. They said, was it good? Yeah, I like a good pizza. The thing that made me mad was I played basketball

for 45 minutes, had over 800 tickets, and as I grabbed those tickets because I was going to go get an LSU basketball from the gift, he stole it away from me and said, no, we're giving this for the children so we can take it all from children and youth.

It was just a joke, but as I sat down in the lobby there and going around, here come the ladies of the Auxiliary. They said, we cannot believe Camille took you to Chuck E. Cheese. I didn't let him off the hook. I showed the pictures from Chuck E. Cheese and said, it was pretty good anyway. All right.

We are ready at this time for our next guest, from the state of New York, Robert Morrill, president of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

**Address**

*Robert L. Morrill, President  
Child Welfare Foundation  
The American Legion*

Commander J.R., distinguished officers and guests, and my fellow Sons of the American

Legion, good morning. I'm truly delighted to be with you today.

I would first like to take the opportunity to recognize Mark Nave, your representative on the Child Welfare Foundation Liaison Committee. Mark does a great job representing you all. Is he here somewhere?

If you get a chance to get a copy of the American Legion National Magazine, on page 10 of the August issue, an article about the Child Welfare Foundation with Mark's picture on it. I guess the person that wrote that article thought he was a better looking guy than me to represent the organization.

*... Laughter.*

I'll let you be the judge, okay?

I would also like to give a shout out to the Sons of the American Legion members from the Detachment of New York. They're a great bunch of guys, and I'm so proud to be a member of New York's Detachment. Where are you guys? There you are, right up front. How about that?

I'd also like to recognize a young man by the name of Henry from New Jersey. Is Henry in the audience? Henry is 7 years old. I saw him yesterday at our booth. Last year Henry raised over \$2,000 for the Child Welfare Foundation, and he told me yesterday that so far, he's raised over \$4,000. 7 years old, can you imagine that? Great job.

*... Applause.*

Well, you did it. You reached your goal of attaining \$10 million in contributions to the Child Welfare Foundation, and if that's not enough, you also reached another all-time high in membership. What an amazing year of accomplishments. I am so proud to be a member of this organization.

I would like to thank all the Sons of the American Legion members, not only you in the audience today, but also all those members who are back home and could not make the convention. You are a vital part of the success of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, but even more important than that, your unwavering support and

dedication to our veterans across the nation is deserving of much praise and is unmatched by any other group in our country.

Your embrace and partnership of the American Legion's mission Be the One to help prevent veteran suicide is very important and much appreciated. So thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do for veterans and their families.

At our annual fall meeting in October, the CWF Board of Directors approved \$684,050 in grants to four youth serving nonprofit organizations.

I am happy to report that the close of the 2023-2024 Child Welfare program year, which closed on May 31, 2024, the foundation received a total of \$723,348, of which \$44,084 was more than the previous year. Of that, the SAL contributed \$489,185.30.

*... Applause.*

The best part of that is you donated \$64,124.75 more than the previous year. So give yourself another hand.

... *Applause.*

As we close the chapter on this very successful year for the Child Welfare Foundation, we look forward to new achievements and getting back to the work that needs to be done, making sure every child in America has an opportunity to grow up happy and healthy.

As we make our plans for the coming year, take a moment to plan your activities or events to benefit children, whether it be activities to receive \$1 per member to attain the pro capita banner, feeding the pig fund-raising by making piggy banks available at your post homes or on tables at all of your dinner functions. The way we make a difference in a child's life is \$1 at a time.

As you know, the 2024 year marks the 70th year of service to the youth of our nation by the Child Welfare Foundation, and it has been a banner year, but as we celebrate our accomplishments today, we know that a lot of hard work still needs to be done. With the economy the way it is, the

need for our work on behalf of children with physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs is greater than ever.

In October, the CWF board of directors will be reviewing 210 grant requests. So you see there is a great urgency for the services we provide to many youth oriented organizations and why we continue to support, why your support is so vitally needed. We're going to see a CWF board look forward to tomorrow's challenges in what we can do to accomplish things together, to assist the needs of our nation's youth, to assist better lives.

When you find some time at this convention, please stop by the Child Welfare Foundation booth in the exhibit hall to support the foundation by purchasing some of the items we have available. We are located in row 100.

And you can also just make a donation if you don't want to purchase anything. We have new polo shirts in men's and women's sizes, baseball caps, and lapel pins, coins, aprons in red and black, and a hot seller is CWF socks and SAL



tumblers. So stop by and purchase some of those things, help us out. We also have the large piggy banks, and they all make good Christmas gifts. Stop by and shop early.

### **Child Welfare Foundation Awards**

Now for the awards. The first award is the U.S. "Udie" Grant Award, awarded to the top department nationally based on total contributions of the American Legion, Auxiliary, Sons, Riders, and 8 and 40 during the contribution year. With a total of \$123,268.37 in donations, the winner is the Department of Arizona.

*... Applause.*

The next award is the Garland D. Murphy Jr. Award, awarded to the most active Detachment in the nation based on actual contributions received during the contribution year, with a contribution of \$118,411.37, the winner is the Detachment of Arizona.

*... Applause.*

Our next award is the excellent award, awarded to the Detachment with the highest per

capita contribution average for the contribution year within each organization. With a per capita of \$31.03 per member, the winning Detachment is the Detachment of Nevada.

*... Applause.*

Close behind Nevada was Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas. So congratulations to all of you departments also.

*... Applause.*

Next is our Meritorious Achievement Award, awarded to the top Detachment that experienced the highest increase in per capita giving in the contribution year. With an increase in per capita of \$7.20, the winner is the Detachment of Arizona.

*... Applause.*

Now I have a very special award to present. A Certificate of Commendation presented by The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation to the Sons of the American Legion in recognition of the outstanding support of the American Legion

Child Welfare Foundation in receiving the \$10 million milestone.

On behalf of the board of directors with profound gratitude, we thank you for your dedication to the betterment of all children, and it's signed by myself, Robert L. Morrill, president.

*... Applause.*

Commander J.R., The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation board of directors would like to thank you for your unwavering support of the foundation this year and for your continued support. It is my honor to present to you today this gold five diamond pin in recognition of your year of service.

*... Applause.*

Before I leave, I'd like you to give it up for Stacy Cope. She is not only the administrator for the Child Welfare Foundation, but she's responsible for a lot of our other American Legion Americanism programs. Great lady.

*... Applause.*

Commander, Distinguished Guests, and members of the Sons of the American Legion, thank you for inviting me here today to be with you. It's been a privilege. I look forward to seeing the Sons of the American Legion in action over the next year and seeing the great things that we can accomplish together. God bless you all. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: President Morrill, we'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd Sons of the American Legion Convention. Thank you for all you do.

*... Applause.*

We have a new guest with us this year. The American Legion family has been putting out the word there about one thing, Be the One. Be the One to listen. Be the One to make a difference. Make sure that we're helping all of our veterans in crisis and doing all we can.

Our new member to the team, at this time, I'd like to bring out Tony Cross of the Be the One program.

... Applause.

**Tony Cross**

*Be the One*

Thank you very much. It's an honor to talk to one of the strongest arms in our American Legion family. I'm a life member. I'm a dual member and a Rider. Unfortunately, disabilities keeps me from riding the bike with a sciatic nerve issue.

It would be fair to tell you a little bit about how I got here and a little bit about my story, then I'm going to talk about Be the One. I've been running appeals for VA&R for the last seven years over at the GOC, some of you have been there, and I've been a veteran service officer for almost 10. I've dealt with a lot of stuff, and so I thought, I really understood this.

My story started in 1979. I was born in 1960, tough life like most, some. Went into the Marine Corps right out of high school. Had an incredible career until I got to the end of it, went off a cliff in cold weather training. Let's say I wasn't much of a skier. Broke my back and a

few of other things.

Got out of the Marine Corps medically retired at the end of my career. Got home, went through a divorce. It was a Saturday morning, for about 45 minutes, I remember I had a chair, a TV, and a goldfish bowl and a pistol. I'm a type A if you haven't figured that out already. And for 45 minutes, I really thought for a minute that I didn't want to be here.

Flash up to about December of this last year, I got approached to go to headquarters to be the manager for Be the One. I'm like I knew what Be the One meant. I could see it over the last two or three years, but I did not realize what Be the One manager would look like, and quite frankly, nobody else did either.

I will tell you; I came up through the Legion. I'm an active member. I've done just about every position. Some of my closest friends are SAL members that I know, if I ever called them, they'd be there. That is family. I come up that way. And to be at headquarters and be an active Legion

member, being a veteran, being a veteran service officer is a unique position, and plus I've been trained at about every level of suicide prevention -- not that that makes you any better. But over the last several months, I have dealt with more crisis, some in our own organization -- that's a little shocking.

As of today, we've trained 3,799 of our family members to be suicide, that went through the Columbia protocol or some other course. When we leave this place, this sacred place of all of us gathered, we'll be close to 10,000 trained in at least trying to recognize suicide prevention.

Many of us sitting here, it's not just a veteran issue, it's a family issue in some cases. It's extremely sensitive issue, one that's hard to really put your hands around. It doesn't matter if you're an introvert, extrovert, how many medals you've got on your cover, if you're a brigadier general or a private, suicide can happen. It's not just a mental issue.

So I went up there in December of this

last year, I took 187 calls over the last nine months. Six of them were crisis hotline calls, meaning I needed to get a hold of the crisis hotline with the veteran, and in other case, just a lady, a family member needed help right then. It is very hard to ask someone, have you ever thought about committing suicide?

So I want to tell you what happened to me last week in Illinois at the race. I got to the St. Louis side where I stayed, and I went downstairs after I got settled in. If anybody knows me, I wear mainly Be the One stuff. My wife thinks that's the only clothing I own, and she's right because what happens is more often than not, somebody asks me what's Be the One? It is our number one mission.

I'm on the elevator, and I ran into this lady, and she said, excuse me, sir, what's Be the One? I told her, and she said, oh, my God, my brother, he's a St. Louis police officer, two tour combat veteran. He will not go get help. He's in bad shape. I said, what branch is he in? She said



marine. Hello, I'd love to talk to him.

I called him, talked to him for just a couple minutes. He started crying. I said to him this question, I said, listen to me. You've been a police officer for about ten years. I'm about to ask you a very difficult question. Have you ever thought about suicide?

Quiet, he said yes. I said, I'm going to tell you something. I'm going to be back from the race tomorrow night. I'd love to take you to dinner. I want to sit down and talk to you. He enrolled in the VA counseling session this past week to get help.

*... Applause.*

What I want to say to all of us is we're somewhat stubborn, all of us. Sorry about that. My neck just went back. I know he's had it going on, but what an amazing guy, amazing Commander. I got the privilege to address your first college this last year.

SAL is near and dear to my heart. I had a 50-year member uncle, not only was he a dual

member, he was real passionate about the Legion. But I want to go back to Be the One. It is literally changing our look. I just got through with a marketing meeting that, quite frankly, we're 105 years old. We're not real easy to move. However, this body does not seem to have that challenge.

*... Applause.*

I mean, seriously, I watch it. You can raise money. You can do whatever you want to do. If your numbers are 375, next year they could be 400,000 easy. It's just a matter of deciding to do it. Everybody wants to be part of something, right? They want to be part of this network of family.

That's what brought me -- I could have easily just said, hey, stay in VA&R. I turn 65 next year. I've got four grand babies. I probably didn't need to take this job. But I suffer from depression, and I'm going to look at you in the eye and tell you that. I can get in a quiet moment where I need to spend time to myself. Maybe you know it.

My healing is to help someone else. Quite frankly, that's what I'm doing. The crisis is big. We lose 800,000 a year around the globe to suicide. I want to close with this.

It is truly an honor to be a dual member of SAL. More importantly, it's an honor to address you. From my perspective of being an active Legionnaire. I belong to Post 182. I had a class, six-month class this last year during the winter. I was a second vice at this time. I've been about everything.

I asked my commander, I said, hey, let's do a school. One Thursday night a month, I'll call it a Be the One school. I invited the Riders, Auxiliary, Legionnaires, anybody that wanted to come. I started out week number one, the very first month, I had everybody stand up and introduce themselves. It is amazing what stories we probably have right in this room of your dads, your grandfathers, of stories that we knew nothing about. We don't open up to each other, right?

We went for six months, and then I had a

coin created, and I took them all through suicide prevention, and we decided to have a Saturday we were going to open up Be the One to anybody that wanted to come for breakfast and to do cornhole and do some claims. Everybody was in that school participating.

We had a guy come in by the name of Bob Dorn, a Vietnam veteran, 79 years old, had never filed a claim. Got him fixed up. Bob kept sitting around. He didn't leave. And I walked up to Bob, and I said, Bob, you all, right? He said, you know what, I just want to be around all you guys. This is family. Bob Dorn on the new list of officers is now the second vice, and his wife is an Auxiliary member, and he's a dual member in the SAL.

I want to thank you for what you do. Thank you for letting me address you. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Guys, here's some good numbers for you. Go ahead and sit down. Just a little ago, we took donations. You know, we usually bring a couple thousand dollars in. Listen

to these numbers. CWF, \$29,718; Legacy, \$350; NEF, \$9,561; OCW, \$6,770; VCF, \$4,600; Be the One, \$1,550. For a grand total of across this stage \$52,549.88. That's what the Sons of the American Legion do.

*... Applause.*

So we had the four pillar challenge that we started this year. I want to give you the numbers from that. I know Kevin and Brian are still -- we've got some in late, and they're working on getting some of the certificates out. I have to say thank you to all of you that took part in this and was participants.

You know what I heard as I traveled was, Commander, we usually don't give money to this or that. We're a small Squadron. But when I sat with Americanism Chairman Mark Nave, he said, Commander, thank you for doing that because those Squadrons that didn't think \$18 would matter when it was only 18 members, it did matter. Every dollar mattered. We got more money from Boys State this year than we ever got from the Sons of the American Legion. So

we want to thank you for that.

We had 128 Squadrons participate from 33 different detachments. Money recorded for children and youth, \$33,743. For VA&R, \$17,793. For Americanism, \$21,727. Money turned in for national security for blood drives, \$6,021, and over 1,500 pints of blood. That's over \$79,000 that went in for the four pillar challenge. Thank you all for putting the work in.

*... Applause.*

I also have to thank my guy down there, Tommy Deal. He's been my aide, and you see what I was working with. He worked his butt off on that challenge. It wasn't easy. Some people wrote checks in. I want you all to know we laughed at a lot of you. We said what to write it for, but it was pretty easy. You still put Americanism, VA&R, Children and Youth, instead of some of the programs, and we laughed over and over again.

But it was a great program. I believe they're going to carry it on next year. I don't know. At this time, we're still waiting for the

next guest, I believe.

I would ask Tommy, if he would, to come up here now. I'm going to go ahead -- my report is supposed to be tomorrow, but I'm going to go ahead and talk right now. He asked me if I didn't have a video or something to play. I said I'm not worried about that. They put together something that we could take pictures of, but I've got pictures in my head from this year that will last me a lifetime.

**Final Report**

**Donald "J.R." Hall**

*National Commander*

*Sons of the American Legion*

I want to thank every detachment, every squadron member, everybody who made this year a fantastic year for me because it wasn't about me. It was all about Ed Hall. It will remain that. It will remain about my pawpaw and the things I got to do this year by honoring him, being in Normandy, being in Hawaii on December 7th, putting all those flags down across the country in different places who asked me to do it.

If I put pictures up and if I said names

right now, I'd probably forget somebody that meant a lot to me, but I'm going to tell you, if you're an SAL member, you mean a lot to me. You gave me a year to recognize my grandfather that I couldn't have without being here. I want to thank every one of you for that from the bottom of my heart.

... *Applause.*

Representing more to me took on a whole new life this year. As we went places and we talked about it, I had a lot of people come to me and told me how much they liked it. We talked about it. We talked about my suits, you know inside my suits, my grandfather's name is always across my heart. I have a necklace on with him.

The American Legion let us make more videos this year to honor the Sons and put the word out than we've ever done. That's all great work. So you know why those great works are happening?

Because of you. Because of you, we keep growing, and we keep doing things right. Look at what we've done. It ain't one person. Arizona did a heck of a lot of work this year for the Child



Welfare Foundation, but it ain't just this year. It's been the work of everybody. Everybody give yourselves a round of applause for all the great numbers we've ran across here for all the programs.

*... Applause.*

Something I started doing later on in the year that I'd like to do here now if you would. Everybody take a couple minutes, maybe close your eyes, a couple seconds, not minutes. But remember your why. Think right now who makes you eligible.

Who served to make you a member of the Sons of the American Legion? That's why you're here. That's why we're the Sons of the American Legion. We're not The American Legion, nor do we want to be. We want to be the proud ancestors of those who served and be proud to be Sons of the American Legion. Sons of the American Legion is the best program The American Legion has, and you all make that happen and our ancestors. So don't forget your why.

*... Applause.*

As I was in Washington Conference and I

went through and got to speak five different times that day, and I went to a reception, and I sat down, and a guy came up next to me and said, Commander, you are the king of a short speech, and I love you. I don't like to go on and on. I'm just trying to cover the things that I want to cover today.

I have to say thank you to Maryland, what a ride. To all my brothers, please stand.

*... Applause.*

It takes a lot to get up here. It takes a lot of money to raise and to do the things you want to do if you want to do it right. To honor my grandfather, that was the only way I wanted to do it was to do it right. I have to thank everybody who helped along the way.

Tomorrow when I hand this off to Joseph, the great thing is, just like we've done over the last couple years, the SAL don't start over every year. We build. We build. I started having calls late nights from California three years ago from Michael telling me what's going on, this is where we're going, this is how it's done.

Then it happened with Chris Carlton last year, same thing, calls from Chris telling us what to do, me and Joseph.

Then this year I've talked to Joseph, talked to Bill Clancy and all. We're not starting over every year when a new guy gets up here and becomes Commander. We're building. We're passing the torch. We're passing the baton, and we're going to continue to grow, just like we did last year when it was 380,000, this year 390.

I hope Joseph does 400,000 or even more because I can tell you Chuck said somebody behind me may have a hard time. I don't think anybody will have a hard time. This is the best position you can stand in. You get to do the work and do it right if you so choose to. I can tell you this, I don't think we're going no place but up.

It ain't about me. It's about the Sons. I want to make my good friend a Distinguished Guest. Wish I could say you earned it. All right then, I don't think I have to say any more. I'll just say it anyway.

With that, as a delegate of this convention, I make a motion to accept my report.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): We have a motion on the floor.

PNC JOSEPH W. GLADDEN (MD): Past National Commander Joe Gladden would like to second.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): We can't have a second from Maryland.

PNC JOSEPH W. GLADDEN (MD): Well, I'm going to do it anyway.

JOHN WEISS (MN): John Weiss, Detachment of Minnesota, it's my honor to second that motion.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): We have a second from John Weiss.

PNC MICHAEL C. FOX (CA): Mr. Chairman? Michael Fox, Past National Commander, and damn good friend to Dr. Hall. I'd also proudly like to second that.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): Is there anyone else? We have a motion and a second. All

those in favor, signify by saying aye. Opposed, nay.

Motion passes.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Last night when President Williamson came over to my room to see how I was doing and talk to me, she gave me this goat pin, and she gave me a stethoscope, and she had it specially made with a little silver thing around it that says Donald L. Hall, J.R., M.D. And I haven't had to tell that story much because as your heard yesterday, Dan Wiley loves that story.

At this time, I'm going to turn the microphone over to our Adjutant Tony Wright. If I had to say thank you to him, I would, but I have a million times. Tony, thank you for everything you've done for me this year.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Thank you very much, Commander Hall. It has been a privilege to serve as your chief administrative officer. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Just a few announcements, one that J.R.

and I had talked about with this \$10 million celebration that's going to go on this afternoon. The topic of caucus meetings came up, and J.R. and I were going back and forth, what we were going to do with this. The plan is after the \$10 million celebration, if I'm correct, Commander, we're going to have the caucus meetings at a location for the Vice Commanders to decide that.

The other announcement that I have is I was passed a note that the Four Corners party is going to be held on Monday, August 26th, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., and I'm going to get in trouble by my Detachment Commander that's a French teacher because I'm not going to pronounce this right for sure, but the Deutsches Haus on 1700 Mass Street, clearly in New Orleans here. Is that correct, Steve?

That's fine, but everybody knows what I'm talking about. We will carry on the tradition, as we did last year with Commander Hall prior to him being installed as National Commander.

We are going to have rehearsal after the

caucus meetings for those incoming officers for the 2024-2025 administrative year. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Well, folks. We're running ahead. Isn't that a good thing? Dennis Boland is going to come in about 12:30 and speak. We're going to take a short recess, and everybody please come back. Don't go out and not come back. Dennis has worked hard for us over the years. We wouldn't have gotten to \$10 million without Dennis Boland. He deserves everybody to have him come here and listen to him speak.

We'll stand in recess until 12:30.

*... At 11:50 p.m., Saturday, August 24, 2024, the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of Recessed until 12:30 p.m.*

-o0o-

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: At this time we'll reconvene the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

Gentlemen, I just had somebody walk up to me. In my travels, I told you we did a lot of traveling and had a lot of good things happen. We counted up some money earlier today. It was like 52,000.

We got another check and a presentation that I think is worthy of doing. At this time I'll have the Commander of Indiana come out for a check presentation.

**Presentation**

*Paul Rush (IN)*

DELEGATE FROM INDIANA: This year my project was COTA, Children's Organ Transplant Association. I had a bet with New Jersey and Florida. I just found out that's their departments. And the bet was to reach 65,000 each.

And with that I have a check for COTA for \$66,000.

*... Applause*



COTA REPRESENTATIVE: I'm honored to receive this check on behalf of the Children's Organ Transplantation Organization.

We are an organization that covers all 50 states. If you haven't heard of us, we come alongside families at a time in their lives where they are experiencing a crisis for a life-saving transplant.

I just can't thank you all enough for the partnership you've come alongside these families with. These three states have raised over \$200,000.

And this is a record for SAL. 66,000 is a record. So if there's anybody out there that wants to continue this tradition, we'd really appreciate it.

Thank you, all.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: You hear Commander Dan say it a lot this year. I've taken it on. I've said it many times: The American Legion Family, we change lives, and we save lives. That's how we do it. Right there. Taking care of

people.

*... Applause.*

PNC DOUGLAS BIBLE (MN): Mr. Commander, point of personal privilege. Douglas Bible, Past National Commander, Minnesota.

Last evening, Minnesota had a very special event. I'd like to introduce to you one of our delegates who got married last evening, Glenn and Sherry Neville.

Please give them a round of applause.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Again, saving lives and changing lives. Brother, we're going to save your life by telling you to get plenty of therapy and come back and see us in 20 years and have your anniversary with us. You just gotta feed a couple people.

*... Laughter.*

Folks, this next name, this next person I'm going to bring up here to the SAL needs no introduction.

For years, he came up here and sang the

praises of the Sons of the American Legion, and this year, as we hit \$10 million, there was no way we could do it without having this man on stage.

My friend, your friend, the SAL's friend, from the great state of Florida, Mr. Dennis Boland.

... *Applause.*

**Address**

*Dennis R. Boland (FL), Past President TAL Child Welfare Foundation*

Well, as we say in southwestern Florida, how you all are? I'm doing pretty good myself.

... *Applause.*

Now, I want the truth. Last year, when I received my Sons of the American Legion card, I had 39 years. I have received my card this year and only have 14 years.

... *Laughter.*

So do I look any prettier?

... *Laughter.*

I don't think so.

... *Laughter.*

Anyhow, I just came from the Americanism

Commission, and we heard from the youth winners, and every one of them put in their speech thanking the Sons of the American Legion. That is an awesome testament to you guys for what you do in the National organization.

One thing I don't like hearing, five words, I am just a Sons of the American Legion member.

I had a gentleman tell me that, and I stood there for 15 minutes telling him what the Sons of the American Legion have done. He was amazed. He was kind of a young, newer member.

But I like to see when anyone, a veteran comes up to you and they say I'm part of The American Legion Family and I'm a proud member of the Sons of the American Legion, because you guys do so much for our organization.

People go through life wondering if they make a difference. You just saw the check that was given for COTA. Our Department Commander had the same thing in his mind. He raised \$130,000, but he gave half of it to COTA and half of it to Project

Vet Relief.

And believe it, the Sons of the American Legion were a big part of those donations to COTA.

When I talk about COTA, you guys do stuff and a lot of times you do it automatically, but you never look at the final outcome.

In Florida, I just talked to Rick Lofgren from the COTA association, and he told me that we have a young kid in Tampa that, because of The American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion, will have a lung transplant.

And then he said two kids moved from New York City to Orlando, and they both need livers. It's a genetic thing in their family to have two kids have to have livers. Without your participation in COTA, that wouldn't be available to them. So give yourself a great hand for what you do.

*... Applause.*

I'm a biggie on communications, and I have 5,000 friends on Facebook. A lot of times I get a little risqué because I have weird friends on

Facebook.

... *Laughter.*

But anyhow, I friended a young gentleman from Jacksonville, Florida. His name is Butch. He said, "Why did you pick me?" And I looked at his Facebook page, and it's pretty much lined up with what I believe. So I told him that.

And then he says, "Are you a Legionnaire?" I said yes. He belongs to -- he's the adjutant of his squadron. He's the assistant director of the ALR of his squadron, and he's the director ALR chairman.

So like you, you never know what a person does until you stay and talk to them person to person.

I can't not give you the accolades that I wish to give you for what you do. Why did you join The American Legion, Sons of the American Legion? I joined The American Legion (mumbles) years ago. You didn't get that, did you?

... *Laughter.*

But I was fortunate to become a

department commander. When I became a department commander, they took me to the Children's Miracle Network in St. Petersburg, and I was able to see a young child at the neonatal department you could put in your hand. And because of us, that child survived.

You ought to give yourselves a hand on that because I'm telling you, it's just...

... *Applause.*

Special Olympics, have you ever gone to the games of the Special Olympics aside from just donating money? You'd be so impressed with those children and grownups that participate in it.

I was fortunate that my post, at one time, we were dedicated to helping Special Olympics. And in our county, at the Games, our Color Guard posted the Colors for them.

And we walked in with all the kids behind us, and we circled around. We came to the flagpole, and we raised the American flag. And the children, the kids, were behind us.

And when you looked at them, they all

stood there with their hand over their heart. You looked at the stadium where the people were sitting, half were standing, and half maybe had -- but that's the kind of thing that builds your heart to see the respect that those kids give to us.

We do this -- we don't want accolades. The best accolade you can get is feeling good because you did this for someone that needed it.

Like I said, my big thing is communication, communication, communication. I had the good honor to be with your National Commander at The American Legion World Series. And we had, believe it or not, Sons of the American Legion in the audience attending the games, wearing their Sons of the American Legion cap.

That is such an awesome feeling, because we are family. Don't ever forget that we are a family, and we work together. That's why we are so strong as an organization because of what you do, what the Auxiliary does and what the Legion does for our country and our communities around this state.



I can't thank you enough, and I hope the pride you feel in you is as much as the pride I feel as being a Sons of the American Legion member and being able to tell people the great things you have done.

In a little bit here, you're going to celebrate the \$10 million mark. I've had bets with certain National Commanders, which I've always lost, but I didn't have one with J.R. this time.

But you figure you've donated \$10 million to the Child Welfare Foundation since your inception in '88, since -- not your inception, but since you started donating money to the foundation.

The foundation has given out a little over \$20 million. 10 million of your money that you donated would not have happened for all the children's organizations that we take care of.

So I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being one of the greatest organizations in our nation, and I believe that wholeheartedly.

Nothing derogative against the VFW, but they tried to duplicate you. I'm sorry to say, it

didn't work with them. I don't understand why because I know your commitment to our programs has made us, as I said before, a great organization.

I can't thank you enough. God bless you. I love you as my family because you are my family. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Dennis, it is an honor to make you a Distinguished Guest for the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion.

Thank you, brother.

*... Applause.*

MARK E. NAVE (PA): Dennis, we want to thank you at this time for the many years of service and support that you've given to the Sons of the American Legion and also the Child Welfare Foundation.

And the members of the Child Welfare Foundation Committee we want to give you this token of our appreciation, which states: For your years of service and dedication to the Child Welfare

Foundation, Dennis Boland, from the 2023-2024 SAL Child Welfare Foundation Committee and friends.

We present this to you for all that you've done for us.

One another thing, is Henry Hasselhan here? Henry, I'm going to need you to come up on stage.

DENNIS R. BOLAND (FL): This is what I'm talking about!

MARK E. NAVE (PA): This is Henry. Last year, Henry raised over \$2,500 for Child Welfare Foundation.

Since that time he's donated an additional, I want to say, \$1,400, over the past year.

The Child Welfare Foundation board wants to recognize you, Henry, by giving you this pendant here for your accomplishments. We want to give this to you to say thank you for the great work you've done, thank you for being a standard for what it is for our youth.

Congratulations, buddy.

HENRY HASSELHAN V, JR. (NJ): Thank you. I'd like to give a special thank you to everybody that helped us, The American Legion, and helped the Child Welfare Foundation.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Almost done. Now, remember what the Adjutant said earlier, we're going to go to the celebration. then after that we will have caucuses.

So at this time, we're going to let all the Vice Commanders get up here real quickly and tell you where your caucus is going to be.

NVC TERRY A. HARRIS (KS): After the celebration. The Midwest Region, we're going to go out those doors, turn right, right at the end where it will be nice and quiet.

*... Applause.*

NVC ROBERT L. BRISTO (MN): Central Region, that corner right over there, if it's not going to be too loud.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: If you didn't see it, it's that corner over there.

*... Laughter.*

NVC LINWOOD A. MOORE (VA): Southeast Region, we'll meet right over here by the sign.

NVC JOHN R. COOK (NH): Southwest region, over in this corner.

NVC JAMES R. FISCHER SR (CA): Back in that corner.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Everybody, we're going to go in a corner. You're going to be scolded.

*... Laughter.*

How about one big round of applause for the job our Vice Commanders did yesterday and today? Appreciate all the work they did.

*... Applause.*

And at this time we're going to head into recess and hope to see everybody back there at the celebration. We're going to in a minute.

*... Gavel.*

### **Adjournment and Salute to Colors**

With the Colors of our country being in place, render a right-hand salute.

Two.

We now stand in recess.

*... At 12:44 p.m., Saturday, August 24, 2024, the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion adjourned until 9:00 a.m. Sunday, August 25, 2024.*

-oOo-

Day 3

... At 8:00 a.m., the members  
re-assembled for the 52nd Annual National  
Convention, and the following proceedings were had:

**Call to Order**

Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., National Commander

Sergeant-at-Arms, please secure the  
doors.

Good morning, everyone.

... Gavel.

With the Colors of our Nation being in  
place, join me in offering a right-hand salute.

Two.

At this time, I'll ask National Chaplain  
Jeffrey Hicks to invoke the blessing to God. Please  
uncover.

**Invocation**

Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain

Good morning. As we've been doing the  
past couple days, just to continue to keep in your  
prayers William Barnett of Idaho had a stroke at  
the age of 31; continued prayers for the National

Commander for healing; Past National Commander Richard Cook of Oklahoma, who's in the hospital with an infection; our SAL national liaison Kevin Mook, still in the hospital recovering; and Jeff Lee from Virginia, ANEC, who's dealing with cancer, and all others we're not aware of. Let us pray.

Dear Lord, as we gather for this meeting, give us the use of your gift of peace and understanding that we may approach the matters we must handle with sincere and just hearts. May you watch over and guide our tongues that we may not hurt our comrades with whom we work for the betterment of our organization and our country. Keep us always true to the principles on which The American Legion was founded.

We ask all this in your holy name, amen.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: In memory of our departed comrades and the comrades of all veterans, let us stand in silence.

*... Moment of Silence.*

I now call upon National Sergeant-at-Arms Mark Fayer to lead us in reciting the Pledge of



Allegiance.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mark T. Fayer (MD), National Sergeant-at-Arms

*... The Convention recited the Pledge of Allegiance.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Please be seated.

I now call upon National Adjutant Anthony Wright -- but I've got to tell you a story real quick. Anthony Wright and I were in Illinois. They were telling everybody this is Tony Wright, our national agitator.

*... Laughter.*

My mistake. But at this time our national agitator will now call the roll.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Thank you for that wonderful story, Commander. We won't talk about you dressing up as Abe Lincoln now. And don't start on me about me dressing up as Abe.

**Roll Call**

*Anthony W. Wright (PA)*

**National Commander**

Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., Maryland

**National Vice Commanders**

North: John R. Cook, New Hampshire

South: Linwood A. Moore, Virginia

Central: Robert L. Bristo, Minnesota

Midwest: Terry A. Harris, Kansas

West: James R. Fischer, Sr., California

**National Adjutant**

Anthony W. Wright, Pennsylvania

**National Assistant Adjutants**

Harold E. Thompson, Jr., Nebraska, Emeritus

**National Assistant Adjutant**

James E. "Ed" Sheubrooks, Florida

Robert J. Avery, New York

Scott A. Williams, Virginia

Scott J. Thornton, Ohio

Clifford E. Hall, Georgia

**National Chaplain**

Jeffrey E. Hicks, New Jersey

**National Parliamentarian**

Gary B. Leach, California

**National Historian**

Jeffery Thorne, Maryland

**National Sergeant-At-Arms**

Mark T. Fayer, Sr., Maryland

**National Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms**

Brian K. Waters, Pennsylvania

Gregory A. "Greg" Falco, New York

Lyle G. Larson, Kansas- Excused

Matthew W. Griffis, Arizona

Timothy Brower, New York

**National Commander's Aide**

Thomas G. "Tom" Deal, Maryland

**Past National Commanders**

Christopher A. Carlton, Indiana

Michael K. Seaton, California - Excused  
Robert A. McBride, Ohio - Excused  
J.R. Stillwell, Illinois - Excused  
John J. Smolinsky, Massachusetts - Excused  
Robert H. Faust, California - Excused  
Gregory D. Reis, Illinois - Excused  
Grant M. Jamieson, Michigan - Excused  
Charles E. Gannon, Maryland  
John M. Sherrard, California - Excused  
David P. Stephens, Indiana  
Christopher R. Cerullo, New York - Excused  
Frederick L. Hartline, Sr., Ohio - Excused  
Douglas P. Bible, Minnesota  
Richard L. League, Maryland - Excused  
David R. Faust, Wisconsin  
Robert A. Worrel, Indiana  
Eugene L. Sacco, California- Excused  
Joseph M. Mayne, Minnesota  
John T. Dietz, Kentucky - Excused  
Jack E. Jordan, Texas - Excused  
William E. Matoska, Maryland  
Byron J. Robichaux, Louisiana  
Richard L. Cook, Oklahoma - Excused  
Kevin N. Winkelmann, Texas  
Clifford A. Smith, Massachusetts  
Neal C. Warnken, Kansas  
Michael J. Deacon, Iowa  
William L. Sparwasser, Maryland - Excused  
Earl R. Ruttkofsky, Minnesota  
Raymond P. Giehll, Jr., Indiana- Excused  
Thomas E. Cisna, Illinois  
James K. Roberts, III, Florida - Excused  
Joseph W. Gladden, Maryland  
Michael W. Moss, Colorado - Excused  
Kevin L. Collier, Alaska  
Brian J. O'Hearne, Massachusetts - Excused  
Jeffrey C. Frain, Arizona - Excused  
Danny J. Smith, Nebraska - Excused  
Greg K. "Doc" Gibbs, New York  
Clint D. Bolt, Virginia - Excused  
Joseph A. Paviglianti, New York - Excused  
Michael C. Fox, California

**Detachments**

Alabama  
Alaska  
Arkansas  
California  
Connecticut  
Delaware  
Florida  
France  
Georgia  
Hawaii  
Idaho  
Illinois  
Indiana  
Iowa  
Kansas  
Kentucky  
Latin America  
Louisiana  
Maine  
Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
Nebraska  
Nevada  
New Hampshire  
New Jersey  
New Mexico  
New York  
North Carolina  
North Dakota  
Ohio  
Oklahoma  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania  
Puerto Rico  
Rhode Island  
South Carolina  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Texas

Utah  
Vermont  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin  
Wyoming

Commander, that completes roll call. You have a quorum.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I wasn't sure if it was a quorum or a zoo.

*... Laughter.*

At this time, we are lucky enough to have our youth champions with us, so we need to take out some time to recognize these tremendous youth from across our country. We bring Drew Godby to the stage for our introduction of our youth champions.

**The American Legion Youth Champions**

*Accompanied by Drew Godby Youth Program Manager*

Thank you for inviting us and the Youth Champions. It is a pleasure to be able to talk with members of the SAL. It's my pleasure to introduce to you the Youth Champions of the 2024 year. Our

first Youth Champion is our 2024 American Legion boy nation president from Oklahoma, Morgan Johnson.

MORGAN JOHNSON: Thank you. Good morning. My name is Morgan Johnson, and I am honored to be here in the great city of New Orleans representing my state and my country as the president of Boys Nation.

*... Applause.*

Coming from a small town in rural Oklahoma, an ideological bubble, Boys State and Boys Nation provided the civil discourse and the diffusion of knowledge that expanded my horizons and prepared me for this dynamic world that challenges us every single day.

The relationships and the friendships that I built at Boys Nation will last a lifetime, and the opportunity to witness 100 of the most driven, opportunistic young men in this country has inspired me to continue my life pushing myself to the best that I can be.

Legion family, your work, be it in the halls of this convention or the streets of your

community, has provided a platform for young people like myself to be the best versions of ourselves that we can be, and I cannot thank you enough for the impact that you have had on my life.

*... Applause.*

I look forward to meeting all of you individually over these next few days, and I'm honored to be here. Thank you so much.

*... Applause.*

DREW GODBY: Up next is our 2024 Junior Air Rifle Sporter National Champion from the state of Virginia, Alexandra Orr.

ALEXANDRA ORR: Good morning, everybody. My name is Alex Orr. I'm from Virginia, and I'm honored to be speaking with y'all today. I'm The American Legion Sporter Air Rifle National Champion, and I'd like to thank the Sons of the American Legion for providing me with scholarship money that will help continue my education four years from now.

I would also like to thank the Sons of the American Legion for their ongoing support for

veterans and other youth sports. Have a blessed day.

*... Applause.*

DREW GODBY: Up next is our 2024 High School Oratorical National Champion from the great state of Washington, Aubrey J. Moore.

*... Applause.*

AUBREY MOORE: We are gathered here in New Orleans for The American Legion's 105th National Convention, and I could not be here without the generous time, money, and energy The American Legion, the Sons of the American Legion, The American Legion Auxiliary, and the various posts and departments have given me.

Today I might stand before you the oratorical champion, but I am simply a small representation of hundreds of intelligent young men and women across the country who participated in the oratorical contest. Each of us prepared two separate speeches, diving into the history, strength, and structure of the United States Constitution.



In the spirit of service, The American Legion has continuously invested in America's youth. A group of people who have made the greatest sacrifice of all, to lay down their life for their country, has continued to sacrifice for the next generation. They've instilled in each of us a pride in our country, the confidence to communicate, and the determination to carry on.

All of the American Legion members I have met have been kind and passionate about our country. They've built in me the assertion and confidence to become the leader I know I can be.

Thank you for believing in us young people because now you have made us believe in ourselves. Nelson Mandela once said that the youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. Today I hope to offer you encouragement that what you are doing here, the sacrifices that you are making will not be ignored because what you are doing at the Sons of the American Legion will create America's leaders of tomorrow. Thank you.

... *Applause.*

DREW GODBY: Up next is our 2023 American Legion Baseball All-Academic Team Captain from the great state of Illinois, Dylan Provenzano.

DYLAN PROVENZANO: First and foremost, this is quite the honor to be here today. Of course representing The American Legion as the all American academic team captain. I discovered my American Legion baseball program shortly after moving to a new town, Post 158 in Barrington, Illinois.

It wasn't long after starting to play that I understood that this was a great opportunity to challenge myself and keep my love of baseball going after my high school career ended and before my collegiate baseball career started. I was able to be a part of a team that wanted to win, to challenge others, and most importantly, represent our Commander Fred Schaffer, World War II veteran. Playing for yourself is one thing, but representing a hero is another.

I learned that the American Legion community especially prides themselves on giving

back. I too pride myself on giving back. I am honored now to add the Legion name wherever I go to keep forward in both of our missions.

I especially need to thank the Sons of the American Legion for the honor and opportunity that your scholarship program has allowed me to be the first in my family to attend college, play baseball for Carthage College, all while still being able to keep my mission alive. Thank you all.

DREW GODBY: Up next is our 2024 American Legion Eagle Scout of the Year from the great state of Pennsylvania, Lauren Tyree.

*... Applause.*

LAUREN TYREE: Wow, this is an impressive crowd. Scouts taught me to be prepared, but I don't think it prepared me to speak to such an incredible crowd of passionate leaders. Maybe I should have taken that public speaking merit badge. My name is Lauren Tyree, and I am truly honored that a group as esteemed as you would recognize my accomplishments. It proves that I'm doing something right.

I've done a lot to earn this award. I've started three nonprofits, volunteered over 4,000 hours, recruited a team of over 150 volunteers, and raised over \$300,000.

*... Applause.*

I'm only in high school now, but in college I want to study public policy. I want to learn about the policies in my grandparents' house that made it possible for over 150 foster kids to turn their life around and become wildly successful.

But I think the reason I'm standing here today is the same reason that makes The American Legion so great. It's the lessons I learned in my first time scouting. I was in a tent by myself in a camp site where I knew no one, ready to give up on scouting the very first time I wore the uniform, but I turned that week into one of the best weeks of my life with three lessons I learned from my scoutmaster.

Don't do it alone. Everyone's little bit of service adds up to something great.

Don't do it all at once. You understand that we won't solve the world's problems overnight.

And the third lesson I learned in my first time scouting, which may or may not apply to you, is don't forget extra toilet paper. I hope that doesn't warrant further explanation.

As a Legionnaire myself in the Women's Auxiliary, I am so honored to join the work that you all have been doing for so long. Thank you for all that you do to support your post, your community, and most importantly, the veterans. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

DREW GODBY: On behalf of our 2024 Junior Air Rifle Precision National Champion, she is unable to be here due to her college team competing this week, but she wanted me to send her condolences and thank you for allowing her to be able to compete in the competitions and all that. So thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have just

made all of them Distinguished Guests here today. If you would, please rise as they leave and give them another big hand because our future is bright, folks.

*... Applause.*

For some of you folks that may not have understood what some of them said, there will be a debriefing so you can know what those big words were later on today. I seen some looks, even up here on stage, like what did he say?

At this time, we'll call Harold Thompson Jr. For a credential committee report.

**National Convention Credentials Committee**

*Harold Thompson, Jr., Chairman*

Good morning. Credentials report is going to be short and sweet. There is no changes. As credentials chairman Harold Thompson Jr., I duly elect a delegate to the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion, I move for acceptance of my report.

LUCAS HERRING (VT): Lucas Herring, Vermont. I second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Vermont  
seconds.

All those in favor, say aye.

Any opposed?

Report accepted. Thank you, Harold.

At this time, we will move on to our  
Memorial Service. I call upon National Chaplain  
Jeffrey Hicks.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please lock the door.

*... Sons convened for National Convention  
Memorial Service.*

RONNIE GRIST (GA): Commander Hall?

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Yes, sir.

RONNIE GRIST (GA): Past National  
Commander Ronnie Grist from Georgia, can I take a  
personal privilege moment right here in the  
memorial service?

Most of you have not noticed I'm wearing  
two POW/MIA bracelets, which we honor through this  
organization. The reason I am standing before you,  
this one on my right is the last time I can wear  
it. The remains of my grandmother's cousin

Phillip's body was returned to us in May of this year. So this bracelet is being retired as part of the memorial service for this convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Thank you.

If I could have National Chaplain Hicks come back up. There's no better service than somebody that puts their soul into it and does what they feel is right. So at this time, I'd like to make our chaplain a Distinguished Guest of our convention.

*... Applause.*

At this time, I'd like to call upon Americanism Chairman Chris Casey to give a report for our National Youth Academy.

While he is coming forward, we know there is some donations that are going to be wanted to be given this morning before we get into our elections.

So anybody who wants to make donations, I'd like to lead off with Louisiana over here, then anybody else can get in line over here while Chairman Casey gives his report.



**Oral Report and Awards**

National Convention Americanism Committee  
*Chris M. Casey (NE), Cmte. Chair*

Good to see you all again. I don't know why I touch this thing because it never goes up, like I said yesterday.

So the Children --

FROM THE FLOOR: We can hear you.

CHRIS M. CASEY (NE): You can hear me. Good. All right. The National Children and Youth Academy was the responsibility of the Americanism Commission this year with the help of the Children and Youth Committee.

I want to single out one specific person from the Children and Youth Committee that was put on as a representative, and that is Jeff Trout of Illinois. Jeff, stand up.

... *Applause.*

Jeff was a huge help to the Americanism Commission, as well as all the Americanism Commission members. It's a lot. We had nine participants. But you're going to see in a second a few of these guys, these little guys, have some

energy. So we were wiped out yesterday.

Like I said, nine participants, came from Alabama, California, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. I'd like to challenge Florida. What I've seen is we struggle to have local participation. If we're getting about 10 kids from around the country, it would be great to have 20 kids from Tampa Bay, or that area, because about 30 kids in this class would be good. As a former teacher, 30 kids is about all you want to handle.

So I do think that we can do better. And I'd ask the Detachment of Florida to help the actual Legion family of Florida to think about that next year.

So we did have flag education that we provided all the kids. Obviously, I said we were going to do that. That was a goal of the Americanism Commission nationally.

We did have Purple- and Red-level Americanism patches from the Junior Auxiliary Patch Program awarded to four participants. They actually earned their patches. The other kids got

a start. We signed off on things.

But the older kids have considerably more to accomplish to earn those patches. So they'll go home, and we hope that they finish those patches.

We did have a visit from National President Lisa Williamson, presentation from Louisiana State Patrol. The Louisiana State Patrol was amazing. I don't know if you guys saw them out on Andrew Higgins and Convention Boulevard, but they had a SWAT team truck out there, BearCat. The motor division had a cruiser, a motorbike.

One of the troopers, Xavier Martin, was outstanding. He was the contact for us. They really saved us. That was the kids' favorite part. I asked them. And I was okay that they didn't say it was flag education.

... *Laughter.*

But they were all folding their flags. They all get 3-by-5 flags to take home. A lot of fun stuff. But the SWAT team BearCat I think was their favorite. It was my favorite.

And so we're going to go ahead and bring

the kids up, all nine of them, and they get a certificate for completing the academy. And so we'll have the kids come on up.

They did a great job, too. I had a *Jeopardy!* game to test their knowledge and kind of reinforce what we taught them, and they were answering the questions. I was amazed.

We piloted this in Nebraska, and I don't think that says anything about the Nebraska kids. The game was harder. They struggled a bit.

But these kids just knocked it out of the park. So if we could give them a round of applause, they did a really great job.

... *Applause.*

And I'll get out of the way so you can see them.

If we could give all these young ones another round of applause. This is the future for sure, and there's a lot of smart kids in this group.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Where's Doc

Gibbs at? I know you have to be happy to see that, don't you, sir.

At this time, we're going to take any donations that we have from the floor.

I know Past Commander Byron Robichaux wanted to say a few words.

PNC ROBICHAUX: Good morning. Hopefully, you have had a wonderful time here in Louisiana, and the people behind me that are coming on stage are the people from Louisiana who have worked and put this together. They're the ones you've been seeing handing out beads, coordinating and stuff and so forth.

So we hope that we've made this enjoyable for you. We have a special presentation to give to the Commander, a few things, and I'm going to bring forward after I give the Commander one of the pins from this convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Thank you, sir.

PNC ROBICHAUX: I'll bring forward our assistant adjutant, Mr. Rob Higgins, who lives closer to New Orleans, and he has the connections.

And a lot of what happened this weekend, he had connections with it, and he's got some stuff to do.

ROB HIGGINS (LA): First and foremost, we're glad you're feeling better. Sorry that -- Friday night most of you all attended a social that we put on for y'all. We hope you all had a great time. We hope you had fun. While we were there, we sort of passed around a little bucket, and for your project we have collected \$1,200.

*... Applause.*

We auctioned off some king cakes to raise some money. We auctioned off some king cakes. Since you weren't there to enjoy them, here's your own personal king cake.

You weren't able to enjoy the second line the other day, so here's your handkerchief for the second line.

You have been distinguishing people all weekend, so you are now distinguished as an official Cajun of Louisiana. And we like to do it a little blingy. And we have something else in here. If you want to share it, that's up to you.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I don't think we will.

*... Laughter.*

ROB HIGGINS (LA): Thank you, Commander Hall. Appreciate it. Enjoy.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Thank you.

How about a big applause for the fellows from Louisiana who did all the work for us this weekend. Thank you all.

*... Applause.*

JOHN HOOK (NH): John Hook, Detachment of New Hampshire, I'd like to present on behalf of my Squadron 13 back in Greenville, New Hampshire, a check for CWF for \$620.

*... Applause.*

JOSHUA ISON (OR): Good morning, everybody. Joshua Ison, Detachment of Oregon. This was just thrown on me. So a thousand dollars, Veterans and Children's; \$1,115 for CWF. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

## DETACHMENT OF MISSISSIPPI:

Mr. Commander, I have several checks to present to you, American Legion charities. This one is for Veterans and Children's donation, \$716.73, by the Detachment of Mississippi.

This one is Child Welfare Foundation for \$304.92, Detachment 165. This is for Child Welfare Foundation, \$75, from Squadron 79.

This is Child Welfare Foundation, \$306, Squadron 1995. This is for Child Welfare Foundation, another check from Squadron 1995, \$300.

And finally from our biggest squadron, Squadron 24, this is from the Sons' piggy banks that they passed around every meeting they had, \$500 for Child Welfare Foundation.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: No other donations?

**Rules of the Election**

We've come to a very special item of business, the Election of National Officers.

At this time, I call upon National



Parliamentarian Gary Leach, who will read the Rules of the Convention governing the Nomination and Election of Officers.

NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARIAN LEACH: Good morning. The rules for the nomination and election of national officers are as follows.

Rule 17: Prior to the election of national officers, the National Commander shall appoint, subject to the approval of the National Convention, a judge of elections and such number of tellers as deemed necessary, provided that the total number of tellers so appointed shall be an odd number. In a contested election, candidates going on the ballot shall be entitled to one teller of their choice.

Rule 18: Nominations for national officers shall be from the floor on roll call of the detachments alphabetically arranged. Each detachment may present as many candidates as it chooses.

Rule 19: Nominating speeches for national officers shall be limited to five minutes

each. Not more than two seconding speeches shall be made for any candidate, and said speeches shall be limited to three minutes.

Rule 20: When more than two candidates are nominated for any office, balloting shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes of the National Convention, except in the election of national vice commanders.

Rule 21: In a contested election for national vice commanders, balloting shall continue until, A, majorities and, B, pluralities are established for one or more candidates under the following provisions:

If on any ballot less than five candidates receive the necessary majority to elect, the candidate or candidates receiving a majority vote shall be declared elected, and a new ballot shall be taken for the remaining number of places to be filled.

The candidate receiving the lowest number of votes on the preceding ballot shall be disqualified, except should two candidates remain

to fill one place, a new ballot shall be taken.

Rule 22: The National Convention will nominate and elect a National Commander and five National Vice Commanders, in this sequence.

Mr. Chairman, this completes the reading of the Rules of the Convention pertaining to nomination and election of national officers.

**Appt. of the Judge and Tellers of Election**

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: At this time, I will -- at the convention, will appoint the following election officials:

Judge of elections: Harold Thompson from Nebraska; Ed Sheubrooks from Florida; Robert Avery From New York; Scott Thornton from Ohio.

I will entertain a motion to accept the appointments of the judge of tellers of election.

At this time.

... *Laughter.*

STEPHEN ENGLAND (VT): Steve England, NEC from Vermont, makes that motion.

JON COAKLEY (OH): Jon Coakley, Detachment of Ohio, seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Who was the first? John Dumont?

FROM THE FLOOR: Steve --

FROM THE FLOOR: Steve England from Vermont.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Steve England from Vermont. We have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, all those in favor of the appointments of the judge of tellers for the election signify by saying "Aye." Any opposed say "Nay." Motion carries.

If these gentlemen would take their places on the stage, we'll begin the nomination and election process.

National Adjutant Anthony Wright will now call the roll of detachments for the purpose of roll call to receive nominations for National Commander in the Sons of the American Legion.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: During the nomination process, each detachment will be called alphabetically. Each detachment has the option to

nominate a person for office, second a nomination, or pass.

I believe we have four microphones that are set up. Prior to starting the roll call, I'm going to request that everyone uses a microphone to voice their nominations.

We're going to begin the process.

Alabama.

THOMAS GLANDER (AL): Alabama yields to New Mexico for purposes of a nomination.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Is that you, Mr. Glander, that made that?

THOMAS GLANDER (AL): Yes. Tom Glander, Alabama.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Alabama yields the floor to New Mexico.

New Mexico.

### **Election of the National Commander-Elect**

ROBERT FRESQUEZ (NM): Mr. Commander, Robert Fresquez, delegate of New Mexico. Mr. Commander, I request that the Chair recognize Tony Navarreté for the purpose of nomination for

high office of National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Granted.

Mr. Navarreté.

TONY NAVARRETÉ (NM): National Commander Hall, National officers, Past National Commanders, delegates, alternates, guests, and fellow Sons to this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion, my name is Tony Navarreté. It is a proud moment and humble heart to stand before you this morning.

With your permission, I ask for a moment of personal privilege so I may share some words on Joseph. Joseph is one of two sons, he being the eldest. Joseph's accomplishments began many years ago at Otero-Garcia Post 72 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

At eight he witnessed the dedication of the new post home. After several years of working out of a community center, my dad, Tony Frank Navarreté, worked those years mentoring the new Vietnam veterans about The American Legion programs, protocols, and leadership character.

I still remember his words: Son, there's a time to work and a time to play. He led by example and was respected by all. He influenced his fellow World War II and Korean post members that these young men deserve respect for their service and should have the opportunity to join. Yes, me included.

I joined right after I was discharged in 1969. My dad did not get to see the fruits of his work when the new post home opened in April of 1987. We believe his spirit was with us that monumental moment when the U.S. flag was raised, Joseph being at our side.

Years later, the membership unanimously voted to change the name of the post charter. It now reads Otero-Garcia-Navarreté.

Gracias for allowing me to share this message. Joseph is a charter member with 35 years of continuous membership in the Otero-Garcia-Navarreté Squadron 72. His eligibility in the Sons of the American Legion is through me, his father. I served in the U.S. Army

during the Vietnam era.

He is also a charter member of The American Legion Riders Chapter 23. At the squadron and detachment level, Joseph has held several offices including Commander, Vice Commander, finance officer, historian, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

At the national level, Joseph served as National Vice Commander, 2017-2018. He's also served as Alternate NEC and NEC and is a National Management Institute graduate.

Joseph was a member of the Subcommittee on Resolutions, Committee on Committees, special ad hoc committee on leadership development, and chairman of the Membership Committee, Veterans Employment and Education and the Americanism Commissions.

Joseph's working career continues in IT operations in management positions and presently is employed by Mortgage Finance Authority, a quasi-governmental entity that provides financing for housing and related services for low to moderate income and underserved families throughout



New Mexico. He oversees the entire IT department.

He has obtained a bachelor's and master's degree in computer science information systems and a second master's in business administration.

Joseph and his wife, Loretta, share a family of seven children and eight grandchildren. He is proud of his heritage and culture, and his motto of "Todo es posible con Dios y la familia," Everything is possible with God and family, will enhance the growth in membership and represent over 391,000 members and, most importantly, work hand in hand with The American Legion Family in being Be the One with its programs.

I, Tony Navarreté, a duly elected delegate from the Detachment of New Mexico to this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion in New Orleans, Louisiana, now have the honor and privilege to place the name of my son, Joseph Navarreté, for the position of National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion for the administrative year 2024-2025.

Another note, it will be history in the

making if he's elected; he will be the first National Commander of the Sons out of New Mexico. And another little added note, his mother was National President of The American Legion Auxiliary 14 years ago, in 2009 and 2010. So it will be the first mother and son combination in those positions.

Thank you, Commander.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: New Mexico nominates Joseph Navarreté for National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion 2024-2025.

Alaska.

CHRIS BEDEL (AK): Chris Bedel, Alaska, yields to Maryland for the purpose of nominations.

JASON MILLER (MD): Mr. Commander, Jason Miller, delegate from Maryland. Mr. Commander, I request the chair recognize Past National Commander Joseph Gladden for the purpose of seconding the nomination for the high office of National Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: So noted.

PNC JOSEPH W. GLADDEN (MD): Good morning. We come here today to elect a new National Commander, but being from Maryland, I first want to say how proud I am of the incredible year that my dear friend JR Hall had during his year as National Commander. But his year has come to a close.

As it says in Ecclesiastes 3:1, For everything there is a season, and for every matter under heaven.

And now is the time for our next candidate, Joseph Navarreté, to be elected National Commander.

Joseph has served on all levels of the Sons of the American Legion, including Squadron Commander and Detachment Commander of New Mexico.

At the national level, Joseph has served on Membership Committee chairman, Veterans Employment and Education Commission chairman, National Executive Committee chairman, National Vice Commander, and other positions.

Joseph has grown up in a Legion family

with his mother, Rita, being National President in 2009-2010.

The truly unique thing about Joseph is that for all he's done in the organization, he doesn't go around talking about it. But that's just Joseph.

I didn't know that Joseph and his brother, Steven, are members of the boards of directors of the New Mexico Boys State. But that's just Joseph.

I didn't know that Joseph is a father of seven children. But that's just Joseph.

I didn't know that Joseph was involved in swimming and cross country and the band when he was in high school. But, once again, that's just Joseph.

I didn't know that Joseph was a member of the American Legion Riders in New Mexico and has a bad ass looking motorcycle. But that's just Joseph.

If you're noticing a theme, Joseph is not the guy walking around talking about himself and

his accomplishments. Joseph is the guy that's out there just doing the work that needs to get done. But that's just Joseph.

We as an organization are lucky to have a man like Joseph step up to the helm of our ship and take charge. It's no easy task navigating the waters of the organization. Countless hours are spent during the course of the year serving as National Commander.

Joseph has looked at all these sacrifices that have to be made, has conferred with his family, and says: Yes, I'm ready to serve. Yes, I'm ready to lead. And, yes, I'm ready to be the one to make the difference in the lives of those with whom he comes in contact with. But that's just Joseph.

With that, I, Joe Gladden, delegate to this Convention and Past National Commander, take the great honor of seconding the nomination of Joseph Navarreté for the Detachment of New Mexico for the high office of National Commander for 2024-2025.

God bless you; God bless the American

Legion family, God bless Joseph, and God bless America.

Thank you.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Maryland seconds the nominations of Joseph Navarreté for National Commander 2024-2025.

Arizona.

Start lining up at the microphone, gentlemen.

CHRIS BALSLEY (AZ): Mr. Adjutant, Chris Balsley, delegate chairman from Arizona, seconds the nomination.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Arkansas. Arkansas. Arkansas.

California.

DETACHMENT OF CALIFORNIA: California proudly seconds the nomination.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: California seconds.

Connecticut.

STEPHEN PINTARICH (CT): Steve Pintarich,

NEC from Connecticut, pass.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Connecticut  
passes.

Delaware.

JAMES STEWART (DE): Mr. Adjutant, James  
Stewart, NEC for Delaware, second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Delaware  
seconds.

District of Columbia. District of  
Columbia. District of Columbia.

Florida.

GERARD SAMBETS (DC): Gerard Sambets,  
Detachment Commander, proudly endorses and seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Florida  
seconds.

Georgia.

DETACHMENT OF GEORGIA: Detachment of  
Georgia. We proudly second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Georgia  
seconds.

I skipped over France. I apologize.

DETACHMENT OF FRANCE: Detachment of

France proudly endorses the nomination.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: France  
seconds.

Hawaii.

FRANCIS RIDDELL (HI): Fran Riddell, NEC,  
Detachment of Hawaii, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Hawaii  
seconds.

Idaho.

JACK YOUNGS (ID): Jack Youngs, A-NEC,  
Idaho, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Idaho seconds.  
Illinois.

MICHAEL VOZAR (IL): Michael Vozar,  
Detachment of Illinois, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Illinois  
seconds.

Indiana.

DELEGATE FROM INDIANA: Indiana seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Indiana  
seconds.

Iowa.



DETACHMENT OF IOWA: Iowa seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Iowa seconds.

Kansas.

DETACHMENT OF KANSAS: Kansas proudly  
seconds the nomination.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Kansas  
seconds.

Kentucky.

BRANDON K. CURRY (KY): Brandon Curry  
from Kentucky proudly seconds the motion from  
Detachment of Kentucky.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Kentucky  
seconds.

Latin America.

DETACHMENT OF LATIN AMERICA: Latin  
America proudly nominates -- seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Latin America  
seconds.

Louisiana.

DAN MORIN (LA): Dan Morin, Detachment of  
Louisiana, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Louisiana

seconds.

Maine.

DETACHMENT OF MAINE: Maine seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Maine seconds.

Massachusetts.

DETACHMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS:

Massachusetts seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Massachusetts

seconds.

Michigan.

TODD VANDAM (MI): Todd VanDam,

Detachment of Michigan, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Michigan

seconds.

Minnesota.

DETACHMENT OF MINNESOTA: Detachment of

Minnesota, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Minnesota

seconds.

Mississippi.

RONALD ROBERTS (MS): Ron Roberts,

delegate from Mississippi, proudly seconds the

nomination of Joseph Navarreté.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Mississippi  
seconds.

Missouri.

DETACHMENT OF MISSOURI: Detachment of  
Missouri, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Missouri  
seconds.

Montana.

ANDREW RICE (MT): Andrew Rice,  
Detachment of Montana Commander, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Montana  
seconds.

Nebraska.

ELDON KRAMER (NE): Detachment Commander  
Eldon Kramer, we proudly endorse, second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Nebraska  
seconds.

Nevada.

DETACHMENT OF NEVADA: Detachment of  
Nevada, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Nevada

seconds.

New Hampshire.

DETACHMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE: Detachment  
of New Hampshire seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: New Hampshire  
seconds.

New Jersey.

DETACHMENT OF NEW JERSEY: Detachment of  
New Jersey, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: New Jersey  
seconds.

New York.

PETER DEANGELIS (NY): Peter DeAngelis,  
Detachment of New York Commander. New York proudly  
seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: New York  
seconds.

North Carolina.

DETACHMENT OF NORTH CAROLINA: Detachment  
of North Carolina, we proudly second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: North Carolina  
seconds.

North Dakota. North Dakota. North  
Dakota.

Ohio.

DETACHMENT OF OHIO: Ohio seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Ohio seconds.

Oklahoma.

DETACHMENT OF OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma proudly  
seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Oklahoma  
seconds.

Oregon.

ROB LIEBENOW (OR): Rob Liebenow,  
detachment commander from Oregon, we second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Oregon  
seconds.

Pennsylvania.

DETACHMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA: Detachment  
of Pennsylvania, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Pennsylvania  
seconds.

Philippines. Philippines. Philippines.

Puerto Rico.

JUAN CRUZ-RODRIGUEZ (PR): Juan  
Cruz-Rodriguez, delegate for the Detachment of  
Puerto Rico, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Puerto Rico  
seconds.

Rhode Island.

MICHAEL GRAICHEN (RI): Michael Graichen,  
Detachment Commander, Rhode Island, proudly  
seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Rhode Island  
seconds.

South Carolina.

ROSS POLSON (SC): Ross Polson,  
Detachment Commander, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: South Carolina  
seconds.

South Dakota.

SHANE LAMER (SD): Shane Lamer,  
Detachment Commander for South Dakota, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: South Dakota  
seconds.

Tennessee.

WILLIAM "PAT" UNGER (TN): Pat Unger,  
Detachment Commander, we second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Tennessee  
seconds.

Texas.

ROYACE FOWLER (TX): Roy Fowler,  
Detachment of Texas, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Texas seconds.

Utah. Utah. Utah.

Vermont.

DETACHMENT OF VERMONT: Vermont proudly  
seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Vermont  
seconds.

Virginia.

KEVIN CHAPLIN (VA): Kevin Chaplin,  
Detachment of Virginia, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Virginia  
seconds.

West Virginia.

JACOB MCCARTY (WV): Jacob McCarty, NEC  
West Virginia, seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: West Virginia  
seconds.

Wisconsin.

ALLEN WATRY (WI): Allen Watry,  
Detachment of Wisconsin, we proudly second.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Wisconsin  
seconds.

Wyoming.

CHARLES KEITH (WY): Charlie Keith,  
Alternate NEC from Wyoming, proudly seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Wyoming  
seconds.

We're just going to run back through the  
detachments that did not answer.

Arkansas -- I'm sorry, Alabama.

DETACHMENT OF ALABAMA: Alabama seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Alabama  
seconds.

Alaska.

DETACHMENT OF ALASKA: Alaska seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Alaska  
seconds.



Arkansas. Arkansas. Arkansas.

District of Columbia. District of  
Columbia. District of Columbia.

Connecticut.

DETACHMENT OF CONNECTICUT: Proudly  
seconds.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Connecticut  
seconds.

North Dakota. North Dakota. North  
Dakota.

Commander, this completes roll call of  
the detachments for nominations for the office of  
National Commander. There is one candidate,  
unopposed, Joseph Navarreté, from the Detachment of  
New Mexico.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I now recognize  
the floor from Microphone 1.

FRANCIS RIDDELL (HI): Mr. Commander,  
Fran Riddell, delegate from the Detachment of  
Hawaii.

Mr. Commander, I move that we suspend the

rules of the convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination and election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of the National Vice Commanders.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: There's a motion before us to suspend the rules of the Convention pertaining to the election of the National Commander and the nomination of the election of the National Vice Commanders, which rules shall be automatically reinstated at the conclusion of the election of National Vice Commanders.

Is there a second?

JUAN CRUZ-RODRIGUEZ (PR): Juan Cruz-Rodriguez, NEC, Detachment of Puerto Rico, seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Juan Cruz from Puerto Rico seconds.

Hearing a second, all those in favor -- hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and

requires a two-thirds vote. I'm sorry.

All those in favor motion by saying  
"Aye." Any opposed? Motion passes.

I now recognize from the floor,  
Microphone 2.

SHANE LAMER (SD): Mr. Commander, Shane  
Lamer, delegate from the Detachment of South  
Dakota.

Mr. Commander, I move that nominations  
for the office of National Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a  
motion that the nominations for the office of  
National Commander be closed.

Is there a second?

CARL RADOSEVICH (NM): Commander, Carl  
Radosevich, NEC, New Mexico, I second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: New Mexico  
seconds.

Hearing a second, the motion to close  
nominations is non-debatable motion and requires  
two-thirds vote.

All those in favor signify by saying

"Aye." Any opposed? Motion passes.

I now recognize the floor for  
Microphone 1.

JUAN CRUZ-RODRIGUEZ (PR): Mr. Commander,  
Juan Cruz-Rodriguez, delegate from the Detachment  
of Puerto Rico.

Mr. Commander, I move that the National  
Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote  
representing the entire delegate strength of this  
Convention and that Joseph Navarreté be elected  
National Commander of the Sons of The American  
Legion by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a  
motion that the National Adjutant be authorized to  
cast one vote representing the entire delegation  
strength of the Convention that Joseph Navarreté be  
elected National Commander of the Sons of The  
American Legion by acclamation.

Is there a second?

CARL RADOSEVICH (NM): Commander, Carl  
Radosevich, NEC, New Mexico, I second.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: New Mexico

seconds.

Hearing a second, there is a motion before us that the Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote representing the entire delegation strength of this Convention and that Joseph Navarreté be elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion by acclamation.

All those in favor signify by saying "Aye."

We will hear no opposition. No.

Is there anyone opposed? Motion passes.

I now call upon the National Adjutant.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: As National Adjutant, I, Anthony Wright, cast one vote representing the entire delegate strength of this National Convention for the election of Joseph Navarreté as National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

*... Cheers and Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL:

Sergeant-at-Arms, Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of

the American Legion, Joseph Navarreté, to the podium, along with the Past National Commanders.

*... Applause.*

SPEAKER FROM CHEVERLY, MD: Joseph, we're an organization that's 92 years old this year. This is our 52nd National Convention annual convention. Many traditions have been founded through this organization through the past commanders that stand behind you.

We know that you will not let us down and you will carry us on with those traditions and some of your own that you sign. Let me make you a Distinguished Guest of the 52nd National Convention.

*... Applause.*

JOSEPH NAVARRETÉ: Wow, it wasn't too long ago where my brother JR here said not to get used to that. I think I'm going to get used to it.

*... Laughter.*

First of all, I just want to step back and just look at everybody and take a breath in.

What an amazing sight for all of us to be

here. I also want to take a moment and thank every person that made it possible for us to be here, and that's our veterans. We must never forget each and every one of them. They're in our hearts, those that are with us, those that are not with us. We can never forget why we are here.

I want to thank my father, Tony.

... *Applause.*

They always say that our parents are proud of their children. But let me tell you, I'm very proud of you and everything that you've done.

... *Applause.*

By instilling the values and respect for veterans and showing what hard work means to us, it continues each day.

I'm not going to take a lot of time. I also want to thank all the detachments that are here supporting this journey. You're all part of the success. Several of you have heard that my theme has been honoring our heritage and also family. And as we say in New Mexico, la familia.

... *Applause.*

Honoring our heritage will lead us through the year and continue what my brother, Commander Hall, started with, always remembering our why.

I want to thank Commander Hall for all the advice and support he's given throughout the years and continues to give. I can't tell you how many times he's called me and spent just a little bit of time letting me know what was going on, what was happening and what to look out for.

I've shared those calls with Mr. Clancy from New York, and we continue to have those calls, and we continue to pass down those traditions and the information from each of us.

I would also like to thank Past National Commander Joe Gladden and again my father for those nomination speeches. It's an honor to represent them and be here in front of you.

There will be a lot more to come this afternoon, and, again, thank you as always. Todo es posible con Dios y la familia. Everything is possible with God and family.



Thank you.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: While Joseph is hugging everybody -- you can form the line to hug Joseph over there so we can get him off the stage here.

... *Laughter.*

### **Election of the National Vice Commanders**

Would everybody, please, for the election of National Vice Commanders go to the microphone so we can prepare to move along as quickly as we can.

At this time I recognize Michael Graichen from Rhode Island.

MICHAEL GRAICHEN (RI): Mr. Commander, Michael Graichen, Detachment Commander, Detachment of Rhode Island.

Since the Rules of this Convention have been suspended, I move that nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be made from the floor of this Convention.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: There is a motion before us for nominations of the National

Vice Commander be made from the floor.

Is there a second?

CLIFF HALL (GA): Cliff Hall from Georgia seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: Cliff Hall from Georgia seconds. The motion is seconded. Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote.

All those in favor of the motion signify by saying "Aye."

Any opposed?

I will now entertain nominations for the office of National Vice Commander and turn the podium back over to our National Adjutant, Tony Wright.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Thank you very much once again, Commander.

I'd like to recognize Microphone 2 for the purpose of a nomination for the Northeast region.

JASON MILLER (MD): Mr. Commander, Jason Miller, delegate from Maryland.

Mr. Commander, I request the chair recognize Past National Commander Joseph Gladden for the purpose of nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Yes, sir.

PNC JOSEPH W. GLADDEN (MD): Good morning again. This weekend we have gathered to commemorate the end of another year, but we've also gathered to start another year.

Our next National Vice Commander candidate from the East is Bob Manzo from Maryland. Bob will be carrying on a long tradition of National Vice Commanders from my state.

Bob gets his eligibility through his father, Daniel Manzo, Sr. Daniel served in the Army during World War II in the Pacific Theater.

Bob comes from a family of service. His father was an honorary life member of Parkville Post 183, and his mother was an honorary life member of Parkville Unit 183.

For Bob's part, he's a 23-year member of the Sons of the American Legion, but he also is a

27-year member of The American Legion. Bob served in the Army from 1982 to 1988 and was honorably discharged. Pursuing his SAL career, Bob served as Parkville Post 183 Commander, Baltimore County Commander, and Northern Central District Commander for The American Legion.

Bob also served as a -- Bob could have been the Department Commander, but being younger, he was not in a position to take the time off from work because of his job. This is where the Detachment of Maryland got lucky.

After completing his term as Legion District Commander, Bob started pursuing opportunities in the Sons. Bob became a two-time Squadron Commander of Parkville Squadron 183 and was elected as Northern Central District SAL Commander in 2011.

After working his way up through the ranks in the Detachment of Maryland, Bob was elected Commander in 2019 and 2020. Bob served as the only two-time SAL Detachment Commander in Maryland's history.

During Bob's first term, his theme was Generations of Service. At the end of the year, he gave his officers a picture of the person that gave them their eligibility in the Sons.

In my case it was a picture of my father who served in the Army during World War II. My mother, my sister, my brother, and me were also in the picture. This picture was taken at Parris Island when my brother was graduating from the Marines boot camp. Just three months after that picture was taken, my father passed away. To this day, it is one of the most thoughtful and special gifts I've ever received.

Bob also followed up his second year in office with a theme of SAL Stronger Together, a statement that is so simple but so true.

Bob has many SAL and Legion accomplishments, but having been given the honorary life membership in both Parkville Squadron 183 and Post 183 are probably his greatest.

Bob is a Legion family, with his wife, Carol, of 35 years being a Past Unit President of

Parkville Unit 183 and Past District President of the Northern Central District. Bob is the father of four children and grandfather of two, all of whom are members in The American Legion Family.

Bob has been employed by the BW Papersystems for over 40 years and serves as a technical support specialist.

I truly believe that we, the SAL, are lucky to have Bob in our world. Bob has been a hardworking member of the squadron all the way through the detachment and is truly a dear friend to all that he comes to know. No matter how you spell Bob, backwards or forwards, Bob will always be Bob, the guy that will give his all to whatever task or job he is given.

With that, I, Joe Gladden, delegate to this convention and Past National Commander, take great honor in placing the nomination to Bob Manzo from the Detachment of Maryland for National Vice Commander for the year 2024-2025.

God bless you; God bless The American Legion family, God Bless Bob, and God bless

America. Thank you.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Maryland nominates -- I'm going to call you Robert Manzo. At this time I'd like to recognize the Detachment of Louisiana for the purpose of a nomination.

PNC ROBICHAUX: Byron Robichaux, Past National Commander from Louisiana. As a delegate to this convention, I ask the Commander allow Past National Vice Commander Camille LeJeune to approach the podium for the purposes of a nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Granted.

PNVC LEJEUNE: Good morning. John C. Lawrence hails from the great state of Louisiana where John has been a lifelong resident in the New Orleans area. John and his wife, Sylvia, reside in Belle Chasse, Louisiana. They have one daughter and one son and three grandchildren. His son and two grandsons are members of the Sons.

John has been a member of the Sons of the American Legion for the past 23 years. John's

eligibility is through his grandfather, who served in the U.S. Army during World War II from June 1945 to December of 1945, and from his father, Conrad Lawrence, who served in the Louisiana National Guard.

John has served the Sons of the American Legion in many positions at local, state, and national levels. John has served as Alternate NEC for the Detachment of Louisiana since 2018. John is serving on the National Children and Youth Committee as Vice Chairman and served on this committee since 2016. He is the Commander of Bayhi Ravey Squadron 329 since its inception in '21 and was instrumental in getting this charter established.

John has served the national organization of the Sons of the American Legion as a member of the Americanism Commission for two years, Children and Youth Commission for six years. John has served the Sons of the American Legion Detachment of Louisiana as Commander from 2015 to 2018, Vice Commander from 2013 to '15, the Detachment



Assistant Adjutant in 2013, as well as Americanism chairman, Internal Affairs chairman and Constitution and Bylaws.

John has served as Squadron Commander, Squadron 218, and Squadron 64, for most of his time in the Sons and is currently Squadron Commander at Squadron 329.

John has completed the National Management Institution training in 2018. John has also attended commander's training, NEC training and adjutant trainings here in Atlantis.

I'd like to nominate John C. Lawrence for National Vice Commander for the Southeast region.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Louisiana nominates John Lawrence for National Vice Commander.

We'll go into the nomination for the Central Region.

MICHAEL VOZAR (IL): Mr. Adjutant, Michael Vozar, Detachment of Illinois, and delegate. I request the chair recognize PNC Tommie Cisna for

the purpose of nomination of the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Granted.

PNC CISNA: Good morning. I'm Tommie Cisna from Illinois. In Illinois we have a favorite son, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States.

In my mind, Illinois has another favorite son, Butch Ray. Butch has learned the rich history and traditions of the Sons of the American Legion, and what better way than through his squadron mate, our very own Past National Vice Commander, J.R. Stillwell.

Butch's eligibility is through his father, Harl H. Ray, who served honorably in the Army in the Persian Gulf during World War II.

I see that many of Butch's Illinois American Legion family members are here to support him -- his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Marty and Sharon Conatser, Past American Legion National Commander and Past American Legion President, and many current and past department and detachment

leaders as well.

Is Illinois in the house?

*... Cheers and Applause.*

I also see his three wives who are here, whom he dotes on constantly, to support him: My long-suffering wife of 39 years, Past Department President Kathy Cisna; Past Department President Patti Williamson, the long-suffering wife of 44 years to Bruno Williamson; and Past Department President Pam Ray, the very supportive wife of 45 years to Butch.

Now, come Wednesday, Pam hopes to be elected and installed as National Vice President for The American Legion Auxiliary.

*... Applause.*

Congratulations and good luck, Pinky.

Butch has served the Sons for over 40 years. Throughout those years of service, Butch has learned that the work we do for our veterans and children is not a handout but a hand-up.

Butch understands that when he has a good idea and shares it and somebody says, "Yeah, that's

a good idea, but what if we looked at it from this direction," that it becomes a great idea.

Butch also sees the value of a member inviting him to a meeting or activity or to assume a chairman's position because that builds comradeship.

Butch has served at the squadron, district, division in Illinois, detachment and national level with distinction, a Past National Chaplain, and this past year a Central division Membership chairman.

Now, on that note, I don't recall the last time I anxiously awaited for a National Membership report to come out. The report that Butch sends out is a work of art. I mean, yes, it's numbers and where we are and how much work needs to be done, but the presentation is stunning.

In my opinion, his July 11th impact report is his finest work. If you're not on his email list, get with some of the Central area guys. It's worth a read.

All those years of service, Butch has

touched many lives, and they are better off for it. All that knowledge has paid off, helping Butch become a better Sons of the American Legion member.

And now here he is at the doorstep of a national office that I know he will excel at.

Okay. Here comes the good part. I, Tommie Cisna, being a duly elected delegate from Illinois to this 52nd National Convention here in New Orleans, I nominate Harl "Butch" Ray for the high office of National Vice Commander.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Illinois nominates Harl "Butch" Ray for National Vice Commander.

At this time I'd like to recognize the Detachment of Iowa at a microphone.

JIM LASTOVKA (IA): Mr. Adjutant, Jim Lastovka, delegate from Iowa.

Mr. Commander, I request that the chair recognize PNC Michael Deacon for the purpose of a nomination for the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Granted.

PNC MICHAEL J. DEACON (IA): Good morning. Delegates and guests to this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion, I come before you to place in nomination a young man who I think will do a very, very great job at this office.

Mike is a quadruple member of The American Legion family. He served in the Navy as Gunner's Mate 2nd Class. His American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary memberships are in the Walter Sayer Post Squadron Unit 182 located in Eldora, Iowa.

Mike is also an American Legion Rider for the Polk City, Iowa, Chapter 232. Mike was a three-time Detachment Commander because of COVID. During those three years, we received two more triple nickels.

His Sons eligibility comes from his grandfather, Howard, who served in the Army in World War II and was part of the Normandy invasion on June 6, 1944. His other grandfather, Oden,

served in the Air Force during Korea.

While Mike has opportunities to serve in any part of The American Legion family, he chooses the Sons because he says it needs to be the voice of his grandfathers who no longer are there to advocate the rights of veterans.

Mike is also a life member of the VFW, the DAV, and is a member of Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association. As a disabled vet himself, Mike wants to sit down with anyone over a cup of coffee and talk about what he can do to help veterans with their rights, what they need.

When not advocating for veterans rights, Mike can be found watching the Oklahoma Sooners. Sorry about your luck. He is also a firefighter EMT, engineer and instructor for CPR, fire and EMT training.

As a delegate to this National Convention, it is with great pride that I place -- that I nominate Michael D. Monserud for the office of National Vice Commander 2024-2025.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: The Detachment of Iowa nominates Michael Monserud for National Vice Commander Midwest.

At this time I'd like to recognize a delegate from Arizona at the microphone.

CHRIS BALSLEY (AZ): Mr. Adjutant, Chris Balsley, delegate from Arizona. Mr. Adjutant, I request the chair recognize Past Vice National Commander Joe Roberts for the purpose of nomination of the high office of National Vice Commander.

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Granted.

PNVC ROBERTS: Good morning. For those who don't know, my name is Joe Roberts, and I'm the NEC for the Detachment of Arizona. I also served as National Vice Commander many, many years ago. I think we were just out of single digits when I was National Vice Commander.

Arizona has been fortunate that we have had really strong leaders that have gone on to serve at the national level. We elected two National Commanders, we inherited a third, and numerous Vice Commanders.



I'm here today to nominate another of our leaders. If you told me five years ago that I'd be standing here today wearing my suit and powder blue Chuck Taylors with CWF socks, I'd never believe it, but here I am.

Most of you know him for his stylish footwear and light blue suit, but there's far more to him than that. He served the SAL well in his 25 years of membership. He's held nearly every office in his squadron, Squadron 91 in Chandler, Arizona.

At the Detachment level, he served as Children and Youth chairman for the past seven years, National Convention chairman, Detachment Vice Commander, and Detachment Commander. Oh, and he also was the most -- last year's Recruiter of the Year.

Some of you may remember his father, Jim Ashley, who represented Arizona well at the national level. And I'm confident that his son, Daniel, will continue with that positive legacy.

Therefore, as a registered delegate to

this 52nd National Convention, on behalf of the Detachment of Arizona, I proudly nominate Daniel Ashley for the high office of National Vice Commander 2024-2025.

*... Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: Detachment of Arizona nominates Dan Ashley for National Vice Commander West.

Commander, I'll turn it back over to you.

GERARD SAMBETS (FL): Mr. Commander, Gerard Sambets, delegate, Detachment of Florida. I move that the nominations for office of National Vice Commander be closed.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a motion that the nominations for the office of National Vice Commander be closed.

Is there a second?

STEPHEN ENGLAND (VT): Steve England, NEC from Vermont, seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a second from Vermont. Hearing a second, the motion to close nominations is non-debatable, the motion,

and it requires two-thirds vote.

All those in favor of the motion signify by saying "Aye." All opposed, "Nay."

... *Gavel.*

Motion has it. I recognize the floor for Microphone 2.

ALLEN WATRY (WI): Mr. Commander, Allen Watry, delegate from the Detachment of Wisconsin.

I move that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote five times with each representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that the nominated five candidates, Robert Manzo, John Lawrence, Harl "Butch" Ray, Mike Monserud, and Dan Ashley, be elected National Vice Commanders of the Sons of The American Legion by acclamation.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: We have a motion that the National Adjutant be authorized to cast one vote five times for each representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention and that the nominated five candidates, Robert Manzo, John Lawrence, Harl "Butch" Ray, Mike Monserud, and

Dan Ashley, be elected National Vice Commander by acclamation.

Is there a second?

JAMES STEWART (DE): Commander, James Stewart, NEC, Delaware, seconds.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: The motion is seconded by Delaware. Hearing a second, this motion is non-debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All those in favor signify by saying "Aye." Any nay?

... *Gavel.*

Motion has it.

I now call upon the National Adjutant.

... *Applause.*

NATIONAL ADJUTANT WRIGHT: As National Adjutant, I, Anthony Wright, cast one vote five times with each representing the entire delegate strength of this Convention for the election of Robert Manzo, John Lawrence, Harl "Butch" Ray, Mike Monserud, and Dan Ashley as National Vice Commanders of the Sons of The American Legion.

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I declare

Robert Manzo, John Lawrence, Harl "Butch" Ray, Mike Monserud, and Dan Ashley are elected National Vice Commanders of the Sons of The American Legion.

*... Cheers and Applause.*

Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the newly elected National Vice Commanders of the Sons of The American Legion to the podium.

*... Gavel.*

NATIONAL COMMANDER HALL: I said a little something to each one of them as I congratulated them. And I'm not going to say who, but one that was fourth from one side or another, I said, "Try not to kill nobody while you're in office, okay?"

*... Laughter.*

Ladies and gentlemen, your Vice Commanders for '24-'25.

*... Applause.*

Everybody stand up.

With the colors of our nation in place, join me in offering a right-hand salute.

Two.

The 52nd National Convention of the Sons

of The American Legion will now stand in recess until 12:30 p.m. today to allow our members to attend the Joint Patriotic Service at 11:00.

... *Recess taken.*

Day 3  
PM Session

*... At 12:30 p.m., August 25, 2024, the delegates re-assembled for the Sons of The American Legion 52nd Annual National Convention, and the following proceedings were had:*

*... Gavel.*

**Call to Order**

*Donald L. "J.R." Hall, Jr., National Commander*

If everybody would take their seats, we're going to get started here in just a couple of minutes.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please secure the doors.

*... Gavel.*

Please rise.

**Salute the Colors**

With the Colors of our Nation in place, join me in offering a right-hand salute.

Two.

Please be seated.

Before we get carried on with our

installation business, I would like to take care of some housekeeping and make sure that our adjutants that have worked this convention, our parliamentarian and Sergeant-at-Arms and assistant Sergeant-at-Arms become Distinguished Guests.

I would ask they come up, each one of them, to give them distinguished guest badges.

How about a big round of applause? Every one of these people did a lot to make this happen.

*... Applause.*

Now at this time we'll bring forth the master of ceremonies for the installation of officers, Past National Commander David Stephens.

*... Applause.*

**Introduction of Installing Officer**

*David P. Stephens (IN), Past National Commander*

Hey, Dave Stephens. Greetings from being here at the National Convention, the 52nd National Convention, along with the installation of national officers for 2024.

At this time would the Sergeant-at-Arms bring before me Past National Commander of The



American Legion, Dave Rehbein, for installation of officers.

**Installation of Officers**

*David K. Rehbein (IA), TAL Past National Commander*

Before I begin, let me tell you what an honor it is for me to be allowed to do this.

I know how important the Sons of the American Legion was to my year. I know how important the Sons of the American Legion is going to be to the next year. And to have a small part of helping that get started, it means a lot. Thank you.

Sergeant-at-Arms, please bring before me the newly elected National Officers of the Sons of The American Legion, with the exception of the National Commander.

You have been chosen to fill the various offices of the National Organization of the Sons of The American Legion.

You will, I know, vindicate the trust that has been placed in you and fulfill in every way the obligations with which that trust charges

you.

You will at once familiarize yourselves with the duties of your particular office, and you will proceed upon those duties in the same spirit of devotion and endeavor that characterized your fathers' service in any of the Great Wars, out of which came our membership for The American Legion and your membership in the Sons of the American Legion.

You must know that the welfare and success of the programs of the Sons of The American Legion depends largely upon you; and you must also know that upon your shoulders equally rests the burden of preserving the integrity of the good name of the Sons of the American Legion.

Protect and advance that good name before the people of this nation. Exalt it in their eyes. Make them know, as you know, its purposes and its policies.

Ever remember the tolerant spirit that animates its members.

There is no rank among us, for we all

serve as equals. And we all strive toward the same goal, the realization in the life of the Republic of the ideals of Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty.

Ever remember that the cardinal principles of the Sons of the American Legion are the care of the dependents of those who have answered the final call, and of those who are now suffering from disease and want, the rightful education of the children of our country, and devoted service to the community, state, and nation.

Are you now willing to assume the responsibilities of your office?

... *Chorus of yeses.*

You will raise your right hands and repeat after me, giving your names where I give mine.

... *Oath recited.*

You may lower your hands. And I was supposed to say the audience may be seated.

... *Laughter.*

Gentlemen, into your hands is placed the

duties of assisting your Commander in all of his endeavors. Stress to the membership and Nation the programs and goodwill of The Sons of the American Legion and of The American Legion.

I will now excuse you and turn it back over to SAL Past National Commander Dave Stephens, but thank you for your willingness to serve this next year.

... *Applause.*

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): At this time, we will have the placement of the caps and name badges on the National Vice Commanders.

Placing the cap on National Vice Commander Robert Manzo's head will be his wife, Carole Manzo, and son, Marc.

... *Applause.*

At this time, Sylvia Lawrence, wife of John Lawrence, will place his cap at this time.

... *Applause.*

Pam Ray, The American Legion Auxiliary VA&R chairman, will place the cap of our new Vice Commander - Central Butch Ray.

... *Applause.*

And Robin Goodlick will be placing the cap on Midwest Vice Commander Michael Monserud.

... *Applause.*

Okay. The Arizona American Legion Department Judge Advocate Jacklyn Kulfan will place the cap on Western Vice Commander Dan Ashley.

... *Applause.*

At this time I'd like to turn the podium back over to Past National Commander Dave Rehbein.

TAL PNC DAVID K. REHBEIN: Would retiring National Commander Donald "J.R." Hall, Jr., please step to this podium.

J.R., your duties as Commander of this organization have been completed; yours has been a year marked with earnest endeavor and success to a satisfying degree; yours has been a great privilege and a rich experience.

The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion have observed your faithful and untiring efforts and extend to you their sincere appreciation of the services which you have

rendered.

Beyond that, you have traveled this year. You have made many new friends. You have promoted the Sons of the American Legion in new places. You have many experiences that you can carry with you in your heart. And please carry along with that the thanks of The American Legion for the work that you've done this year. Thank you.

*... Applause.*

And I will now turn the podium back over to SAL Past National Commander Dave Stephens.

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): At this time, Bill and Shelly Matoska will place the cap and pin on our newly Past National Commander J.R. Hall.

*... Applause.*

And would Sergeant-at-Arms, please conduct the newly elected National Commander of the Sons of The American Legion and son of Tony R. Navarreté, Joseph Navarreté, to this podium.

*... Applause.*

Please be seated. Biggest little post,

Post 72.

Past National Commander of The American Legion, Dave Rehbein, please return to the podium for the installation of the newly elected National Commander.

TAL PNC DAVID K. REHBEIN (IA):

Commander-elect Navarreté, we have begun the process of changing that title to National Commander Navarreté.

*... Applause.*

But I think as we approach this moment, that moment, normally you're on the left-hand side of the installing officer, but I think for this ceremony, it's only appropriate that we change positions, and that you stand alongside the people that have stood alongside you for all these years.

We know your dedication. We know your commitment. We know the commitment that comes from your family. We know, have seen all the training, all of the leadership, all of the education that you've received from these two fine people.

It's really my privilege to stand up here

with you, too, friends for a long time, and put this fine man into the office of Sons of the American Legion National Commander.

So Commander, to you is entrusted a very sacred duty, that of teaching and protecting the cardinal principles of the Sons of The American Legion throughout the Nation.

To you is entrusted supervision of all of the duties of the other officers of this national organization.

To you will come the indigent and the distressed and it is your duty to see that no worthy comrade is turned away without full justice.

It is your duty to see that Freedom is ever the watchword of those with whom you may come in contact.

Loyalty to the National organization of the Sons of the American Legion, to its membership and to The American Legion, are requirements which you now assume.

You are more than just a presiding officer for meetings. You are guided by the



Constitution and by the decisions of the National Organization. Yet the responsibility for the success of this year's programs lies largely on your shoulders.

You must initiate and carry programs through to completion. You must thoroughly familiarize yourself with the policies and traditions of the Sons of The American Legion.

To you I extend the congratulations of The American Legion, and I wish you well.

Are you now ready to assume the responsibilities of your new office?

NATIONAL COMMANDER JOSEPH NAVARRETÉ:  
Yes, sir.

TAL PNC DAVID K. REHBEIN (IA): Please stand. Raise your right hand. Repeat after me giving your name where I give mine.

*... Oath recited.*

You may lower your hand.

Will the new National Vice Commanders please take their place by the Commander's side and face the audience.

Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the officers that have been chosen to lead the Sons of the American Legion for the next year.

I congratulate you on the selections that have been made. Now that you have chosen them to guide the destinies of this Organization, it is your duty to aid them in every way.

Help them keep the Sons of The American Legion a free organization of free men, faithful to its principles and ideals.

Mr. Commander, the title has changed. I hand to you the gavel that is your symbol of authority over the next year.

As you use that gavel, use it wisely. Use it well. But, when need be, use it.

Mr. Commander, congratulations.

... *Applause.*

Please be seated. We yield the podium to the master of ceremonies, Dave Stephens, to continue.

**Presentation**

First Lady Navarreté badge

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): At this

time, will Junior Past First Lady Margie Hall please present First Lady Loretta Navarreté with her name badge.

Mrs. Matoska will fill in for that spot.

... *Applause.*

**Presentation**

National Commander Joseph Navarreté cap and name badge

At this time, we will have the presentation of the National Commander's cap and name badge.

Will Commander Navarreté's children please place the Commander's cap on Commander Navarreté.

... *Applause.*

At this time, Tony, and Rita Navarreté will recite a special prayer for Commander Navarreté.

Please rise and uncover.

TONY AND RITA NAVARRETÉ: Es con gran orgullo y un momento de humildad como padres de Joseph Navarreté quien está por asumir las

funciones de Comandante Nacional de los Hijos de la Legión Americana.

    Mi padre y el abuelo de Joseph, Tony Frank Navarreté, un veterano de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, nos dieron la oportunidad de servir como miembros y luego líderes de esta gran organización.

    Carmen, la abuela de José, le brindaba amor y cuidados incondicionales, especialmente cuando él viajaba.

    Lleva con orgullo la medalla de San Cristóbal que ella le regaló. Lo lleva en su memoria.

    En parte, su oración fue por misericordias en el viaje, por tener una visión clara y por llegar y regresar seguros a casa. Seguimos bendiciendo a toda la familia hasta el día de hoy y recordamos siempre "todo es posible cuando se Cree en Dios.

    The pedimos en la palabra de Dios que tus viajes the protejan de daños y peligros que puedan surgir en el camino, the sweetheart, come here. El Camino Mantengan a salvo y the concedan paz durante

todo tu viaje y the devuelvan a casa con tu familia.

Amén.

*... English Translation*

*It is with great pride and a humble moment as parents of Joseph Navarreté who is about to assume the duties of National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion. My father and Joseph's grandfather Tony Frank Navarreté, a World War II Veteran, gave us the opportunity to serve as members and then leaders of this great organization.*

*Joseph's grandmother Carmen gave her unconditional love and care, especially when he traveled. He proudly wears the St. Christopher medal she gave him. He wears it in her memory. In part, her prayer was for traveling mercies, having a clear vision and for safe arrival and returning home. We continue to bless the entire family to this day and always remember "all is possible when you Believe in God."*

*We ask in God's word that your travels*

*keep you from harm and danger that may arise along  
the way, keep you safe and grant you peace  
throughout your journey and return you home to your  
family. Amen.*

*... End of translation.*

*... Applause.*

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): We'd like to  
present to you our 2024-2025 National Commander  
Joseph Navarreté.

*... Applause.*

FROM THE FLOOR: Go get 'em, Joe!

**Remarks by the New National Commander**

*National Commander Joseph Navarreté (NM)*

What an amazing moment. Can you believe  
it?

*... Applause.*

You know, on a lot of my travels that I  
made throughout this nation, as a candidate, I  
talked about, one, the number of days, which I got  
from my good brother J.R., is he still up here?  
J.R.

And it never sank in until you get to  
this point right here. History was made today.

The first time that New Mexico has had a Commander of the Sons of The American Legion.

... *Applause.*

You heard earlier from my father during my nomination speech, if you were here, that it's also another history-making moment because it's the first time the Legion Family has had a past national president and then a son being Commander of the Sons of the American Legion.

... *Applause.*

You have bestowed upon me the highest of honors. In so doing, you have honored, in a special way, all the members of the great little Detachment of New Mexico.

On their behalf, with sincere acknowledgment of their faithful support, I thank you with all of my heart.

Mere words of thanks do not begin to convey the sense of gratitude and achievement that is mine at this moment.

In accepting the office of National Commander, I accept also the tremendous

responsibility which it entails.

I would like to thank my New Mexico Legion Family that is here today. Can you please stand and be recognized?

*... Applause.*

And for my family, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, you've always been there in support, and I can't tell you how much I appreciate that. Thank you very much for being here today.

*... Applause.*

My slogan for the year is "Honoring our Heritage," and when we carry on our why representing our family's service and the sacrifices, they paid to each other and for each other and also for each and every one of us here today, it is up to us to show how much their sacrifices mean and let them know that they will never be forgotten.

At this time, I'd like to go ahead and make my family Distinguished Guests. If I could have you come up.

*... Applause.*



Without family, who are we? You look at the people that are behind me, on the side of me, and also in front of me, and they are support.

As I traveled around this nation, I got to meet people that I probably never would have had the opportunity to meet and become friends and brothers.

From my friends down in Arizona, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York -- I can't say them all because I know I'm going to forget some people out here, but I want you to know that each and every one of you are in my heart.

As Blue Cappers, we're the ones that get the job done, from \$10 million being raised to CWF and over 390,000 members, another all-time high, we know how to get the job done.

*... Applause.*

Never forget to tell your story. My mom always tells me, everybody has a story. Take time and listen, because as we all know, those stories mean something to someone. And make sure that you let them know that you appreciate hearing their

story.

Get the word out, whether it's newsletters, emails, social media. Make it known the amazing things the Sons do.

I was fortunate to be able to visit South Dakota where they were doing amazing things with membership.

Shane and Casey, your brotherhood inspired me to go back to my detachment and have our team reach out to all those who hadn't renewed and really work our Buddy Checks. Not asking them to pay their membership, but asking them how they were and letting them know that we miss them and inviting them back to an event or an activity that we were having.

I can't tell you how successful that was. Well, maybe I'll tell you a little bit.

*... Laughter.*

New Mexico's Detachment Commander Richard Fresquez and Membership Chairman Kevin Branch rallied our members and took us to first place in the nation.

... *Applause.*

Congratulations, gentlemen. Your work paid off.

There are several stories out there, and I don't have the time to call every single one out. But I want you to know, again, you are not going unnoticed.

The work that is being done in youth academies, family campouts, veterans home support, dinners and local fundraising is nothing short than amazing. Keep doing what you do and never forget the importance of our Legion Family and the values that we have.

Be the One is now the standard. We must all pledge to end suicide. Even one life is too many. That is why we will be looking to create a committee to have our members take that pledge.

This pledge will confirm our commitment to our Legion Family and with the suicide prevention training provided by Columbia University, we will be helping to end veterans suicide together.

*... Applause.*

We also look to join forces with the Legion Family in support of the Veterans & Children Foundation. We have proven that the Sons know how to raise money, and we are going to raise a goal, 500,000 we look to raise, and set that bar high to show the Legion Family that the Sons cannot only raise money for CWF but also raise money for VCF.

*... Applause.*

We are determined. We are motivated, and we are ready to get running. We will continue to support the Four Pillars challenge that our Commander Hall started. It proved that our local squadrons can make and do make a difference no matter how small or how large their donation is.

It all matters. And the programs that have never received donations before have now started to receive donations and the money is helping to continue to keep these programs alive and make them better than they were before. So thank you, Commander Hall.

*... Applause.*

Thank you, Past National Commander Dave Stephens, for helping with this installation and Past National Commander of The American Legion Dave Rehbein for providing the installation of officers. It's an honor to have you here.

At this time, I'd like to call up another part of our Legion Family. This is going to be my family for my year.

We have with us our leading candidate of The American Legion, Jim LaCoursiere, and our Vice President of The American Legion Auxiliary, Trish Ward.

*... Cheers and Applause.*

At this time, I'd like to make them a Distinguished Guest. J.R. did that for me.

Sorry.

*... Laughter.*

I don't want to forget anyone else. So I won't try to name all of everybody.

However, as I mentioned before, there's one last person I'd like to thank.

Past National Commander Danny Smith,

thank you for providing all the support and mentorship throughout the years. You are truly missed.

To anyone else, please know that you're in my thoughts and prayers and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

It's time to get to work and represent those that made it possible for us to be here in this amazing organization.

And as I said plenty of times before - [Spanish] - everything is possible with God and family.

God bless America. God bless The American Legion and God bless the U.S.A.

*... Applause.*

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): At this time I'd like to call forward now Past National Commander J.R. Hall for purposes of a presentation.

**Presentation**

*Past National Commander Donald L. "JR" Hall (MD)*

We talked about it. It started about four years ago, Michael Fox, Chris Carlton, to me,

to Joseph, to Bill. We pass along this baton of leadership, brother. We don't start over; we just keep going and growing. Have a wonderful year.

Love you, brother.

*... Applause.*

**Presentation**

Colors of Outgoing National Commander

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): Will the outgoing National Sergeant-At-Arms Mark Fayer retrieve the colors and present them to J.R. Hall (MD).

**Presentation**

Colors of Incoming National Commander

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): Will incoming National Sergeant-at-Arms Matthew Griffis please bring forward the National Colors of National Commander Joseph Navarreté.

*... Applause.*

At the Commander's order -- he wasn't ready yet -- Sergeant-at-Arms please post the new National Colors.

NATIONAL COMMANDER NAVARRETÉ: Post the Colors.

## **Installation Prayer & Blessing**

PNC DAVID P. STEPHENS (IN): At this time we will have a closing Installation Prayer and Blessing of the 2024-2025 National Officers.

... *Gavel.*

Please bow your heads.

Dear Lord, please watch over these officers as they lead not only the National organization but lead the Nation.

May you grant them wisdom to make the best decisions for us.

May you grant them patience to allow them to wait for others to understand their decisions and implement their plans.

May you grant them passion so that the grind of the job ahead does not wear them out and will allow them to inspire others.

Finally, grant them vision to see the decisions they have made, the patience they have exhibited, and the passion they have shown will allow their goals and plans to come true.

We ask all of this in your Holy Name.



Amen.

... *Chorus of amens.*

This concludes the installation of our 2024-2025 National Officers. I congratulate them all and wish them an incredible year of service.

At this time I yield the podium back to immediate Past National Commander JR Hall for the conclusion of this 52nd National Convention.

... *Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): At this time I would like to have Past National Commander of The American Legion Dave Rehbein, please step forward.

Sir, it was an honor having you here with us here today. I'd like to make you a Distinguished Guest.

TAL PNC DAVID K. REHBEIN: It's my honor.

... *Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Now we're back to business to finish our business.

### **New Business**

Is there any new business to come before

this National Convention? Any new business to come before this National Convention? Hearing none, we'll move on.

**For the Good of the Sons of the American Legion**

Is there any business for the Good of the Sons of The American Legion?

FROM THE FLOOR: Yes.

**Announcements**

PNC JOSEPH M. MAYNE (KS): Mr. Commander, Joe Mayne, delegate from the Detachment of Minnesota. I would like to yield to the Detachment of Texas for the purpose of an announcement of the new trailing candidate for National Commander.

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Thank you.

PNC KEVIN WINKELMANN (TX): Kevin Winkelmann, PNC, and a delegate to this convention. Request permission to talk to the body.

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Please do.

PNC KEVIN WINKELMANN (TX): It's with great pleasure and the utmost honor that I have the opportunity to give you the name of our newest trailing candidate for the high office of National

Commander for Sons of the American Legion, which will be the years 2026-2027 from the Detachment of Texas, Mr. Thom Skelley.

... *Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD):

Congratulations to Texas and congratulations to Thom. I know he'll move on and do well.

Is there any other further business?

The raffle? The raffle, who has the raffle?

PNC BYRON J. ROBICHAUX (LA):

Mr. Commander, Past National Commander Byron Robichaux.

This morning when we brought people forward, I forgot to recognize one person. They're not a member of the Sons, but I do need to recognize Mr. Rob Higgins' fiancée, Ms. Tracy Plasance, who did a heck of a lot of work. Give her applause for all the work.

... *Applause.*

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: Okay, folks.

It's time to make the drawing. But first of all, I

want to thank Jim Noble, John Kingston, and John Mejia for all the help they gave us in selling the tickets.

The donation total is \$1,096. So with that...

Okay. We have Ticket No. 5727726. 5727726. There we go. We got one.

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Got a winner? Somebody verify. Stop right there. We'll verify the ticket. Michael, verify the ticket.

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: 5727726.

All righty.

... *Applause.*

PNC JOSEPH M. MAYNE (KS): Mr. Commander, I took something out of order. Joe Mayne, Detachment of Minnesota, delegate.

I forgot to announce the new leading candidate for National Commander from the Detachment of New York, Bill Clancy.

... *Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Thank you Joe, for messing things up.

And thank you, Bill. I know you'll do a great job.

PNC DAVID R. FAUST (WI): Mr. Commander, David Faust, Past National Commander from Wisconsin.

I want to thank the Detachment of Louisiana for their excellent hospitality this weekend. Let's give them all a round of applause.

... *Applause.*

And I think we all owe a shout-out to our terrific musical accompaniment by Mr. Rick Pedro from New York.

... *Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Is there anything else? With no further business to come before this, I'll have National Chaplain Jeffrey Hicks will lead us in a closing prayer.

Please rise and uncover.

**Benediction**

*Jeffrey E. Hicks (NJ), National Chaplain*

CHAPLAIN: Now that this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion held

here in New Orleans, Louisiana has come to an official close, let us depart in peace and in love and charity with our neighbors, that we be joined together in the common goal of service to our God and our country.

Let us travel safely and carefully to our next destination, and may God's blessings be with us now and forever more. Amen.

*... Chorus of amens.*

#### **Adjournment & Salute the Colors**

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Please cover. Will the Color Guard please retrieve the colors.

Two!

I now declare this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of The American --

UNIDENTIFIED DELEGATE: I'm sorry to interrupt again.

I just want to let everybody know that our winner just donated all of his money back with the exception of \$100. And so --

*... Applause.*

A total donation towards the VE&E programs is \$996.

*... Applause.*

PNC DONALD L. "JR" HALL (MD): Very good.

*... Applause.*

Anybody else? I now declare this 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion adjourned.

*... Gavel.*

*... At 1:27 p.m., Sunday, August 25, 2024, the 52nd National Convention of the Sons of the American Legion adjourned sine die.*

*-o0o-*

## CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION

We, DENISE HINXMAN and JACQUIE GUTIERREZ,  
Certified Court Reporters, do hereby certify;

That on August 23-25, 2024, we were  
present and took verbatim stenotype notes of the  
convention entitled herein, and thereafter  
transcribed the same into typewriting as herein  
appears;

That said convention was taken in  
stenotype notes by us, Certified Court Reporters,  
and thereafter reduced to typewriting under our  
direction as herein appears;

That the foregoing transcript is a full,  
true, and correct transcription of our stenotype  
notes of said convention.

Dated at Reno, Nevada, this 27th day of  
September 2024.

---

DENISE HINXMAN, CSR, RDR, CRC

---

JACQUIE GUTIERREZ, RDR, CRC