

# The Internet Observer



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## Pay attention Congress - We Still Need The Selective Service System

By: Tom Bock, PNC

We hear all the time that only 1% of our population, actually serve in the United States Armed Services.

When you think about it, it's is pretty sad. After all, we all enjoy the freedoms that US citizenship guarantees us. Yet, we rely upon that 1% and a "Volunteer Force" to protect them.

At our 2011 Department Convention we passed a resolution titled "Retention of the Selective Service System". This resolution addresses the SSS as an "inexpensive insurance policy – in a still dangerous and uncertain world – against underestimating the number of military needed to fight and win a future crisis".

The budget for the Selective Service System is a miniscule \$24 million annually. And,

when you compare that amount to the Trillions spent by our Congress every year, it is just a drop in the bucket. Actually,



the SSS one of the nation's best national security bargains.

It is the only time-proven means of mobilizing America's manpower for a significant crisis in a timely, orderly manner.

The Selective Service System and its program of draft

registration for America's 18-year old men, ensure that any future draft, if needed, would be fair and equitable. Since

1980, our Nation's young men have overwhelmingly complied with the requirement to register. At least 91% of men 18 through 25 are registering.

With the close of the war in Iraq and the planned draw-down of our standing military, the need to preserve this historic link between the

all volunteer military and society-at-large becomes more important. On a daily basis, the Selective Service System directly supports the all-volunteer recruiting effort of our military as a part of its draft registration program by informing our young men that they can serve Americas today in the US Armed Forces.

Now, they are proposing dramatically reducing the size of our military. All this while we have troops stationed in some 130 countries around the world. Iran is threatening, Korea is a constant menace and in countless areas around the globe freedom is being challenged and suppressed. In a testimony before Congress on the Selective Service System, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said "... you know my view is that we ought to maintain the registration aspect because, particularly as we go through these budget cuts, particularly as we go into the future, if we – if we face you know, one of those surprises, if we face one of those crises that suddenly occurs, we've got to have some mechanisms in place in order to

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**Department Employment Committee's Job and Resource Fair**

**January 26, 2012 - Plaza Hotel and Conference Center - Longmont - Get the Word Out!!!**

## A Message From The National Commander

**Principles Above Personalities**

By: Fang A. Wong, National Commander

***“From the outset, The American Legion kept out of politics. As a result, it rapidly acquired great political power.”***

- Richard Seelye Jones, “A History of The American Legion,” 1946

Founders of The American Legion understood exactly what they had by the first national convention. Less than eight months after the idea for a new association of wartime veterans was first proposed, Legion membership had ballooned to 684,000 and growing. More than 5,000 posts had sprung up in towns and cities from coast to coast by November 1919. A union of patriots was suddenly sewn into the fabric of the nation, poised to become a major influence over local, state and national politics. The founders, as well as the politicians, realized that the Legion could lobby everywhere at once, and in great numbers.



National Commander  
Fang A. Wong

The temptation to send the Legion’s burgeoning membership marching onto the battlefield of partisan politics was difficult to resist. At the first national convention, and in subsequent years, Article II, Section 2 of the Legion’s Constitution was the subject of heated debate. It reads: ***“The American Legion shall be absolutely nonpolitical and shall not be used for the dissemination of partisan principles nor for the promotion of the candidacy of any person seeking public office or preferment.”***

This meant that the Legion could not endorse candidates at any level. It meant that Legionnaires seeking elected office, or working on campaigns, could not simultaneously hold office in the Legion.

Legionnaires were free to support candidates of their choice, or run for elected public office themselves – and many did – if they kept their Legion membership separate. Some saw Section 2 as a missed opportunity to get friends of the organization elected and keep enemies out. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed. Politicians have come and gone, but the Legion’s principles have endured.

I ask that we all remember Section 2 as the 2012 election year unfolds. Legion posts are now planning candidate debates, town-hall meetings and voter registration drives, and setting up to serve as polling stations. As these activities are undertaken, it is essential that party affiliation be checked at the door. Legionnaires who attend political rallies, fund-raisers or party conventions are not to wear their Legion caps or otherwise identify themselves as Legionnaires at the events.

Section 2 was the essential first step in a journey that has led to VA’s creation, the passage of the GI Bill, the establishment of the world’s strongest military, compassionate health care, benefits for veterans and numerous other successes, none possible if the organization had ever taken up with one party over another.

Combine the Legion’s nonpartisan mandate with an organizational structure that empowers individual members to propose policy changes that truly get enacted at the highest levels (the resolution process), and you have a large part of what has made the Legion thrive for more than nine decades. In the coming months, as party politics cast their usual election-year spell over us, let’s remember the power of principles.

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Publisher/Editor-in Chief:  
Charles P. Smith

Contributors:  
The American Legion  
Dispatch

Design and Layout and Editor:  
Darrell Myers



## Still Serving America

Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community? Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?

Drop us a line and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America.

In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There’s a good chance the information you send us will make it into The Observer. Please send to: Still Serving America, The American Legion, 7465 East 1st Ave. Ste D Denver, CO 80230.

## A Message From The Department Commander

### Through Education We Will Advance

By: Jim Gillis, Department Commander

Hope everyone had a lovely Holiday Season and A Happy New Year. We all can be proud of the first half of the National Legion Year, 01 July thru 31 December 2011.

We have continued to provide support to our needy Veterans, Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve personnel and their families.



Jim Gillis  
Department Commander

Our membership is at over 86 per cent and we are several hundred members ahead of this time last year. A very special thanks to everyone.

We as American Legion members must or should know what the Four Pillars of the American Legion are and know and understand what the American Legion stands for and its overall operation, from

National through Department, District, Post, all the way down to the actual members, all should know how every level is interwoven.

To help our Legion members obtain more information we must

hold more training through the Department. The American Legion National College holds a week long training session each year at National Headquarters in Indianapolis during the month of October, each year. Every year, two or three of our Colorado leaders are selected to attend this week of American Legion training. Everyone has an opportunity to be selected.

Three years ago we, The American Legion State of Colorado, started our own Colorado American Legion College (CALC). During class the following topics are covered: The Four Pillars, leadership styles and opportunities, mentoring, writing resolutions, proper way to run post meetings, strategies to promote Legion programs, recruiting new members and how to keep current members and many other topics.

At the Legion Mid-Year Conference on 28 January 2012 Saturday from 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. there will be a two hour CALC training session. Everyone is welcome! Please come and take part in learning more about our Legion. This year we will be holding two CALC training days. We will be doing Legion College I and II. Legion College I will be in Colorado Springs and Legion College II will be in the Denver Metro area. We are planning to have one session in April and one in May. Word will be coming out on Legion College I and II in the near future. Please plan on attending, learning about the Legion, and sharing information and your experience with other legion members. This will be a great opportunity, don't pass it up.

### Defense Bill Controls Fee Increases

The 2012 Defense Bill complies with The American Legion's opposition to arbitrary TRICARE fee increases by tying any such increases directly to military retirement pay raises.

Specifically, the National Defense Authorization Act, signed Dec. 31 by President Obama, reads, "Whenever after September 30, 2012, the Secretary of Defense increases the retired pay of members and former members of the armed forces... the Secretary shall increase the amount of the fee payable for enrollment in TRICARE Prime by an amount equal... to the percentage increase in such retired pay."

"This is a victory for those of us who have fought to keep

the government from increasing the out-of-pocket cost for military retirees using TRICARE," American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong said. "Health-care benefits are the reward for a career well spent in the U.S. Armed Forces. Increasing out-of-pocket costs without increasing retirement pay would reduce the value of that reward."

Another aspect of the Defense Bill that relates to TRICARE, and was supported by the Legion, aims to ensure there is an adequate number of health-care providers honoring the benefit to meet the military retiree community's needs. "Considering the traditional shortage of such resources, this is welcome news," Wong said.

**2012 Mid-Year Conference**  
**Plaza Hotel - Longmont, Colorado**  
**January 27-29, 2012**

## A Message From The Department Adjutant

**Busy Times - But Important Times!**

By: C. Pat Smith, Department Adjutant

**H**appy New year to all! The new year will hold many new challenges for The American Legion. But, what else is new. For over 93 years our members have faced the challenges with determination and excitement. We will begin this year with the same spirit that has permeated our organization since 1919.

Our first major event for this year will be the mid-year conference in Longmont, Colorado, January 26-29, 2012. Our Thursday event will focus on finding employment for veterans, teaching veterans about their choices in the market place and helping to navigate the Veterans Administration system. This event will take place from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on Thursday January 26 at the Plaza hotel in Longmont. You can find more information on this event in the pages of this Observer publication.



C. Pat Smith  
Department Adjutant

The mid-year is a time for all of our committee's and leaders to get together to assess our progress and success in all of our programs. It becomes the time to make any course corrections as we complete the Legion year in June of 2012. The Oratorical Committee, Boys State Committee, Baseball Committee and the Service Office will hold sessions to educate our members on those programs. All of this will take place on Saturday January 28. In addition to that there will be an update on the legislative issues that will face us in the future. We expect to get a status report on the new VA hospital scheduled for construction on the Fitzsimons campus in Aurora.

A real important session at the mid-year is the mini-college, which

will be held on Saturday at 1:15 pm. The leadership committee will be instructing our members on the basics of the organization to include, structure, resolutions, constitution and by-laws, programs and the four pillars. There is something for everyone at this session. Be sure to attend.

Friday evening will be the 4th annual U.S. Army troop induction ceremony. The U.S. Army Recruiting Command in Denver will induct about 130 brand new troops. Although this is an Army event the American Legion is proud to sponsor and support the event. Be sure to be there and meet these new troops and their parents. This is part of our re-connect effort with our troops. National Vice Commander Merv Gunderson will be a featured speaker.

As the year rolls along the District Conventions will become the focus. This is truly the grass roots level of the organization. At the district conventions the delegates will consider resolutions that can affect our policy, both at the state and national level. And, they will elect new leadership. Check with your district commander and plan on attending your convention.

Then in June, in Grand Junction, the delegates to the department convention will consider those resolutions forwarded by the districts, and they will elect your new state officers and a new Legion year will begin.

So the next 6 months will be busy. Your involvement is important. If you are not attending your local post meetings make it a point to add those dates on your calendar. We can be successful only if we are involved. If you have any questions email our public relations department at [theobserver@coloradolegion.org](mailto:theobserver@coloradolegion.org). Should you have a more immediate need for information don't hesitate to call at 303 366-5201 or toll free at 800 477-1655. Until then may you have a great 2012!

**Hey Legionnaires!!!**

I am still working on the silent auction for the midyear conference January 27-29, 2012. I still need items for the silent auction. Please work with your posts and members to put together items.

Boys State is in real need of financial help. Together we can make a difference in the lives of these young men and in our future governments.

Let's all pitch in.  
Thanks Carol

## Boys State

Legionnaires,

As we begin our new year of 2012, many new Legion programs will be starting too.

Our 2012 Boys State kick-off will be at Midyear at The Longmont Plaza Hotel and Post 32 during the weekend of 27-30 Jan 2012. It is time now for our Posts to select a Boys State Chairman and send their name and contact info (phone and email) to us at Department. The other two things we need is for that chairman to go to the schools in your vicinity and speak with the boys about Colorado Boys State Program and we need the Post to have some fund raisers to help finance the boys that attend.



Carol Kennedy  
Department Jr. Vice  
Commander

Last year we allocated \$275 for each boy and the actual cost was \$400 for each boy. We NEVER ask the boys, their families or their school to provide any of these expenses.

Colorado American Legion funds the entire cost. This year we are allocating \$300 per boy and are searching for grants, gifts and other means of financial support.

So for now here's what we need:

- Post contact name and info to Dept.
- Post member to speak with the schools and boys about the program
- Financial assistance.

Below is a bit of information you can use to put together your talk with the schools/boys:

- Young men must have completed their junior year of high school (by June of that year) and be eligible to graduate the upcoming year.
- They should have the desire to attend Boys State.
- It is a week in June, held at CSU Pueblo and all expenses are paid by Colorado American Legion.
- They live in the dorms with all the other boys that attend from all over Colorado. Usually 4 boys share a bath and two boys share a room.
- They eat all meals in the cafeteria of the college.
- They attend the programs in the college classroom.
- They are divided into cities (8-12 cities); they elect a mayor, city police and fire chief, Etc.
- Then 3-4 cities are combined as a county, they elect county commissioners, etc.
- By the Thursday they are into the 51st state and they elect their governor, Lt. Governor and two US Senators.
- They write resolutions that will be presented to the House of Representatives and Senate (they will be divided into these two groups).
- They develop their own party caucus and platforms.
- They run elections and the entire process just as the state of

Colorado runs its government.

- They learn Parliamentary Procedure and how voting is done and counted as well as how to vote with an Absentee ballot.
- They may take the ASVAB test (a vocational test) during this week for free.
- AFTER they complete the week, they can apply for 4 college credits and if they return the next year as a Junior Counselor they can apply for an additional 6 credits -information is provided during the week.
- The two US Senators that are elected will go -all expenses paid to Washington, DC for Boys Nation where they will repeat the same things only as a country.
- They will attend with 2 boys from every state in the nation, except Hawaii.
- They will meet with the Colorado House and Senators and get to meet the President of the US.
- This program on their resumes and college applications really helps get them into colleges and military academies.
- It will also be a big deal all of their lives on job interviews and applications. This is a very prestigious program.

Have them go the Colorado Boys State website for additional details and online applications.

They can go to The American Legion Boys Nation website for details about that program.

Americanism and Children and Youth are two very important pillars of The American Legion and it is our duty to teach our young men and women (Auxiliary sponsors Girl State) about how our form of government. They are our future leaders. Step up and take a position with Boys State.

WE can make a difference in the lives of these young men.

Carol S. Kennedy  
Chairman 2012 Boys State

**ATTEND THE BOYS STATE  
BREAK OUT SESSION  
DURING THE MID-YEAR  
CONFERENCE  
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM  
IN THE CONFERENCE  
CENTER'S SUMMIT ROOM**

## Obama Administration Announces Decline In Homelessness In 2011 Colorado's Homeless Population Declines

*“More than 3,000 communities report number of homeless individuals, families and veterans”*

On a single night last January, 636,017 people were homeless in the United States, a 2.1 percent decline from the year before. In Colorado, 15,116 people were found homeless, 2.3% less than last year from 15,482 persons. That's the key finding of a new count on homelessness announced today by U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. Donovan made the announcement at a meeting of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness where he was joined by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Labor Secretary Hilda Solis.

Regional Administrator Rick M. Garcia said, “HUD's annual “point in time” estimate of the number of homeless persons and families is based on data reported by more than 3,000 cities and counties. While the number of homeless persons vary from community-, these communities are reporting modest declines in homelessness in every category or subpopulation including individuals, families, veterans and those experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness.”

Donovan, who personally participated in the 2011 nighttime count said, “It's remarkable that in the wake of the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression, we're witnessing an across-the-board drop in homelessness. This tells us that the Obama Administration's homelessness strategy is working and the results spur us to continue working to end homelessness in America once and for all.”

“These numbers are a step in the right direction, especially for some of our more vulnerable populations such as veterans,” said Secretary Solis, who served as chair of the Interagency Council in 2011. “With many working families continuing to struggle, the President's plan will allow us to redouble our efforts to end and prevent homelessness.”

“Reducing homelessness among Veterans by 12 percent since January 2010 is a clear sign of progress, but our work is not complete until no Veteran has to sleep on the street,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We have been successful in achieving this milestone due to strong leadership from the President and hard work by countless community organizations and our federal, state, and local partners who are committed to helping Veterans and their families get back on their feet.”

During one night in late January of 2011, local planners or “Continuums of Care” across the nation conducted a one-night count of their sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations. These one-night ‘snapshot’ counts are then reported to HUD as part of state and local grant applications. While the data reported to HUD does not directly determine the level of a community's grant funding, these estimates, as well as full-year counts to be released later next year, are crucial in understanding the scope of homelessness and measuring progress in reducing it.

The Obama Administration's strategic plan to end homelessness is

called Opening Doors – a roadmap by 19 federal member agencies of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness along with local and state partners in the public and private sectors. The plan puts the country on a path to end veterans and chronic homelessness by 2015; and to ending homelessness among children, family, and youth by 2020. The Plan presents strategies building upon the lesson that mainstream housing, health, education, and human service programs must be fully engaged and coordinated to prevent and end homelessness.

“Over the last 18 months, we've seen unprecedented levels of collaboration within the federal government,” said U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness Executive Director Barbara Poppe. “The federal government is partnering more effectively with states and local communities across the nation to align our efforts to make progress on the goals of Opening Doors.”

The reductions reported today are attributed in part to the impact of HUD's \$1.5 billion Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP), a program designed to assist individuals and families confronted by a sudden economic crisis. Funded through the Recovery Act, HPRP spared more than one million persons from homelessness by offering them short-term rent assistance, security and utility deposits, and moving expenses. The US Conference of Mayors has described HPRP as “fundamentally changing” the way communities respond to homelessness.

In addition, HUD and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are collaborating on a joint program called HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH). To date, this targeted rental assistance program provided more than 33,000 homeless veterans permanent supportive housing through rental vouchers provided by HUD along with supportive services and case management by VA. The national estimate announced today reveal a particularly large decrease in the number of homeless veterans – nearly 12 percent.

Key Findings of HUD's national estimate (Colorado stats –by CoC-found at: HUD's 2011 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness, including community-level data):

On a single night in January 2011, HUD and its partners found:

- 636,017 people were homeless, a reduction of 2.1 percent (649,917) from January 2010, and 5.3 percent (671,888) since 2007.
- Veteran homelessness fell by nearly 12 percent (or 8,834 persons) since January 2010.

Homelessness among individuals declined 2 percent (or 13,900) from a year ago and 5.6 percent since 2007. Meanwhile, the number of homeless families fell 2.8 percent from last year and 8 percent since 2007

- Street homelessness (“the unsheltered homeless population”) declined by 13 percent (or 36,786 people) since 2007. than 30,000 beds between 2010 and 2011, and by more than 83,000 since 2007.
- Persons experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness declined 2.4 percent (or 2,664) from last year and 13.5 percent (or 16,635 persons) since 2007. This steep reduction in chronic homelessness is largely attributed to the sharp growth in the supply of permanent supportive housing units – more Five states accounted for half of the nation’s total homeless population: California (21.4 percent); New York (10 percent); Florida (8.9 percent); Texas (5.8 percent); and Georgia (3.3 percent).

## Defense Bill Includes Legion Initiatives

The defense authorization bill passed by Congress on Dec. 15 includes several American Legion-backed provisions, including an increase in research funding for Gulf War illnesses, a measure that will expand health-care access for servicemembers, tying TRICARE fee increases to military retirement pay increases, and a study for the creation of a Unified Medical Command.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) includes \$10 million in funding for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs on service-connected illnesses of Gulf War veterans – “a 25 percent increase from last year. “That’s pretty remarkable in the current fiscal environment,” said Tim Tetz, The American Legion’s Legislative director. “The House approved that funding level last summer, and we worked hard to get the Senate to agree.” Tetz said the Senate, initially, provided no funding for the research.

Provisions of the Servicemembers’ Telemedicine and E-Health Portability (STEP) Act are also part of the NDAA, and will go far in extending mental health-care services to active-duty personnel and to veterans – “especially those living in rural areas. The STEP Act will provide much-needed flexibility by removing the requirement for health-care providers to be licensed by the state(s) in which their patients are being treated.

“You have this awkward kind of situation where a VA or DoD health-care provider in Chicago needs to treat some patients via telemedicine in Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska,” Tetz said. “Under the current rules, you’ve got to have licenses from all three of those states, in addition to Illinois, where you’re physically located. But that will all be changed by the STEP Act provisions, so that telemedicine and e-health applications can be used across state borders.”

Early on in the debate over TRICARE fee increases, The American Legion urged Congress to link any payment hikes to cost-of-living allowances (COLA) for military retirement pay. That is precisely what is included in the new NDAA. Some proponents wanted to link fee increases to those reflected in the National Health Care Index, which are typically higher percentages than COLA.

Creation of a Unified Military Command is also established by the defense bill, a concept endorsed by the Legion’s membership in a May 2010 resolution that urged Congress “to direct re-organization of the Military Health Care System into a Unified Military Medical Command preceded by a study, if necessary, to determine the operational gains and cost savings of this proposed command structure.”



The National Defense Authorization Act includes \$10 million in funding for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs on service-connected illnesses of Gulf War veterans – “a 25 percent increase from last year.

Part of the NDAA tackles the military’s downsizing requirements in the wake of the Iraq War. Several incentives have been authorized for DoD use to reduce the number of America’s men and women in arms: a 15-year retirement option (instead of the current minimum of 20), voluntary retirement or separation pay and early release from active duty for enlisted members.

“Some of these incentives were used in the 1990s to reduce DoD forces after the fall of the Soviet Union,” Tetz said. “But the real question we should be asking is not whether these incentives are good or bad ideas, but whether it is a good idea to reduce our force levels at all.”

The American Legion passed a resolution last October that strongly opposed further reductions to America’s armed forces, calling such a move a threat to our national security.

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*Selective Service (Continued from Page 1)*

be able to respond. And while, you know, right now I have to tell you the volunteer force is the best ~ I wouldn't trade it for anything. It really has served its purposes. But I think we always have to be ready for that possible contingency in the future if we suddenly had to face an unexpected event."

Former military leaders told then President Ronald Reagan in urging him not to end draft registration, "the All-Volunteer Force is a peacetime force." But today we have continue to use it during wartime. I don't know about you, but I have concerns

for our national security. In today's dangerous world, it is extremely important that we as an organization, and especially all of us as veterans who have served our country in the military, constantly remind and urge Congress to continue the current SSS registration program, provide the necessary funding to operate the Selective Service System at its current level of service and to continue its partnership with the Department of Defense in order to maintain its present reduced state of readiness as an important part of a cost-effective overall national security.

That's my story and I'm Stickin To It!

## Who Will Fill The Gap?

A strong American Legion membership means a stronger voice in the nation's capital when it comes to lobbying on behalf of U.S. servicemembers and veterans. Financially, it means a stronger bottom line for the organization.

But a lack of a strong membership and a plan for future growth means the multitudes of Americans impacted by Legion programs may have to look elsewhere for help.

That was the general sentiment that came from the National Membership & Post Activities Committee during its Jan. 6 annual meeting in Indianapolis. Committee members discussed the role the organization played in the past in the creation of the GI Bill of Rights, its positive impact on hundreds of thousands of young men and women who've participated in American Legion youth programs, and the hundreds of families helped each year through the Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance.

Membership must remain strong, the committee said, to continue to offer services such as department service officers and effective lobbying on behalf of America's veterans and servicemembers.

"The mission of The American Legion is serving America, serving veterans and serving their families," Committee Chairman Denise Rohan said. "When people find out what we do, it encourages them to want to become a member of The American Legion."

During the meeting, National Commander Fang Wong tasked members of the committee to poll Legion departments on membership tactics that are working or failing. He said he'd ask the Legion's national vice commanders to take a similar approach with department commanders.

"My hope ... is that we can learn from this year's membership program by understanding what has changed, what has not changed, and what has worked, what has not worked," he said. "Hopefully by the time we get to the Washington Conference (Feb. 26-29) we can get some kind of feedback as to how you're doing. In order to

do that, we need to come up with some sort of standard for what we want them to tell us.

"What do we really want to know? What do you really want to know from each department? How are they doing this year so far? What have they learned, have they tried? What do they think they're doing well? Once we get that information from them ... we can do a year-end report card (at the National Membership Workshop in July). If this particular committee can do that consistently through the year, we'll build up a lot of information we can pass on each successive year to each commander as they come along. Lessons learned."



Ohio Legionnaire Michael Davey makes a point during the annual Membership & Post Activities Committee meeting in Indianapolis Jan. 6. (Photo by Steve B. Brooks)

Leading candidate for 2012-2013 national commander Jim Koutz explained the membership incentive program, Lucky 13, that he'll implement if elected in September. Legionnaires who renew five members, sign up three new ones, transfer three members from a headquarters post and reinstate two former members will receive a Lucky 13 pin.

Dan Dellinger, the committee's Legislative Commission consultant and a former M&PA Committee chairman, said the way to bring recently transitioned servicemembers into the organization is to focus on their needs. "They're thinking about having a job and getting an education so they can raise a family and be a productive member of our society," he said. "I'm a believer in membership," Koutz said. "Let's make it happen."

National Internal Affairs Commission Chairman Larry Besson told the committee that 36 Legion departments had achieved the Jan. 19 80-percent target date goal, and that another 10 could hit the mark by the date. "We need to keep this rolling along," he said. "We need to keep energized, and we need to keep enthused."

The committee also was briefed on the MyLegion.org program ([www.mylegion.org](http://www.mylegion.org)), the newly developed American Legion Extension Institute online presence and online renewals. Greg Roth, director of Membership Support Services, said that to date, more than 120,000 Legionnaires have renewed online.

## A Chance to Defuse

By: John Raughter

Many came from “downrange,” a catch-all term for Afghanistan and Iraq. Others were recovering from injuries or illnesses incurred outside the war zones, but still worthy of medical attention. For at least one day, the recent trip to the infamous Berwartstein “Boogeyman” Castle in Germany’s Palatinate Forest was designed to help a dozen American heroes forget the horrors of war or pressures of being a deployed U.S. servicemember.

Funded in part by The American Legion’s Operation Comfort Warriors program ([www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort](http://www.legion.org/troops/operationcomfort) [2]), the cultural “retreats” are a frequent occurrence organized by the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center’s Pastoral Division.

“These trips help people regain their situational awareness,” explained Chaplain Manuel Mak, a Navy commander. “They may be here physically, but emotionally many are still downrange. Trips to some of these cultural and historical sites provide the opportunity for servicemembers to de-stress before reaching a crisis point.”

The Berwartstein Castle is a medieval fortress dating back to the 12th century. Used as base by robber barons named von Berwarstein, legend has it that terrified villagers referred to the head of the crooked clan as the “Boogeyman.” It is only one of many destinations that Landstuhl chaplains use to help outpatients – “and a few inpatients –” escape the confines of the hospital grounds or nearby wounded warrior barracks.

“By talking to chaplains or behavioral health specialists, it gives them a chance to defuse,” said Maj. David Kirk, a U.S. Army chaplain. “They are out of the theater of war. They are in a safe place here with us. These trips offer them an opportunity to talk to a chaplain or each other. Some reconnect with their religion, even though we don’t ever force it on them. They visit places like the Rhine River, castles and caves. You can see the change in them as they go from being really tight and tense in the morning to being more relaxed in the afternoons. It’s very encouraging.”

Some of the destinations are used to demonstrate a life lesson, as Mak highlighted during a stop to a field of intimidating steel anti-tank barriers built by the Germans during World War II near

the Maginot Line. “These tank traps are also known as – ‘dragon’s teeth,’” Mak told the wounded warriors. “They were supposed to stop these iron behemoths from crossing the line. But the allied tanks overcame them fairly easily. Do you know how? They simply put dirt on top and rolled over them. Now think about the obstacles that you have had to face and ways that you can overcome and adapt.”

Most patients treated at the LRMC are transferred back to their original units, stateside medical facilities or home within two weeks of their arrival. Because of the brevity of their stay, most of the wounded warriors are only recent acquaintances that have had little time to bond with each other. Yet after a day of exploring castles and countryside, the chatter among comrades

increased noticeably as stories from Afghanistan, Iraq and other military spots dominated the discussion on the ride home.

“I never trusted those TCNs (third country nationals) driving those buses in Afghanistan,” said one vet, making reference to the clear threat posed by suicide bombers.

“I walked a lot,” a Marine from downrange quickly agreed.

A little weary by the end of the day, the servicemembers of Landstuhl’s Medical Transcient Detachment offered positive reviews of their adventure.



Wounded servicemembers recovering at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center tour a German battlefield on a Legion-sponsored retreat. (Photo by John Raughter)

“I was little skeptical about getting up and coming this morning,” said Staff Sergeant Ken Wood, an Army Reservist from Quincy, Mass. “But even though I was on the fence about going, I had a great time. It was good talking to the other soldiers on the trip and on the ride home. The chaplain’s office takes really good care of us and this trip was definitely worthwhile.”

Wood was being treated for blood clots that he believes could be the result of deep vein thrombosis, possibly incurred from bouncing around in convoys while in Afghanistan. Like most at Landstuhl, he is anxious to return to his unit and from there, to his hometown where he is employed as a police officer.

“We had my going-away party at my American Legion post, Post 382,” he said. “My father has been a member and I never looked back from joining. They have been extremely supportive of my family – “ my wife and three kids.”



## Department of Colorado Mid-Year Conference January 26-29, 2011

*Plaza Hotel and Conference Center  
1900 Ken Pratt Blvd.  
Longmont, Colorado*



### Draft Agenda

#### Thursday January 26, 2012

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Veterans Job and Resource Fair –Conference Center Fairview and Summit Rooms

#### Friday January 27, 2012

1:00 pm

Legion and Auxiliary DEC Meetings - Longmont Post 32

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Troop Induction Ceremony – Front Range @ Hotel

7:30 pm – 10:00 pm

Post 32 - American Legion Family “Minute To Win It” Night  
Benefits go to Fisher House

#### Saturday January 28, 2012

7:00 am - 8:00 am

Breakfast - Longmont Post 32

9:00 am

**JOINT OPENING SESSION** - Plaza Hotel – Summit Room

Commander Jim Gillis

President Rhonda Larkowski

Commander Scott Garrett

Posting of Colors – Legion Riders

Invocation - Chaplain Tim Grabin

Pledge of Allegiance – Sr. Vice Commander Larry Decker

National Anthem

POW/MIA Empty Chair – Jr. Vice’s: Robb Smith/Carol Kennedy

Preamble – President-elect Karen Boehler

Call to Order- Cmdr Gillis, President Larkowski, Cmdr Garrett

Introductions –

SAL Detachment Officers - Scott Garrett

Auxiliary Department Officers - Rhonda Larkowski

Legion Department Officers - Jim Gillis

Fisher House Video

Fisher House Director – Joy Weyna- King

Colorado State Senator Brandon Shaffer

Candidate for National Commander – Dan Dellinger

Bob Caudell – Deputy Director, N’1 Child Welfare Foundation

Candidate for National SAL Commander – Chris Huntzinger

10:15 am

**Break to separate sessions**

10:30 am –5:00 pm

Auxiliary Session - Longmont Post 32

10:30 am –5:00 pm

Sons of The American Legion Session - Longmont Post 32

10:30 am –11:45 am

**LEGION SESSION** - Plaza Hotel- Summit Room

10:30 am –11:15 am

Committee reports (10 minutes each)

VA&R Charles Bogle, IBOT Report

11:15 am - 12 Noon

Membership Training – Larry Decker

12:00 Noon -1:15 pm

**Past Commanders Club Lunch - Silverthorne Room**

1:15 pm - 3:15 pm

American Legion Jr. College – Summit Room

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Boys State Training – Summit Room

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Service Office Training - Dean Casey/Chuck Terry - Arapahoe Room

3:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Legion Riders - Robb Smith - Shoshoni / Ute Room
3:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Oratorical Training – Apache Room
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Social Hour - Longmont Post 32
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Jeff Luginbuel Media Awards Banquet - Longmont Post 32
9:00 pm	Music and Dancing - Longmont Post 32

### Sunday January 29, 2012

7:00 am	Breakfast - Longmont Post 32
8:30 am	Joint Memorial Service - Longmont Post 32
9:15 am	“A New Beginning” Rally Commander Gillis, President Larkowski, Commander Garrett
10:00 am	Adjourn

## Legion Applauds Guard Seat On JCS

The American Legion firmly supports the addition of the National Guard’s voice on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That and other Legion-backed initiatives were included in the 2012 National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law by President Obama on Dec. 31.

“The National Guard has been essential to the success of our military operations at home and around the globe for the past decade,” American Legion National Commander Fang A. Wong said. “Hundreds of thousands of Guard members have been mobilized during the global war on terror, and they certainly deserve a direct voice in planning and decision making at



Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Craig R. McKinley will serve as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (U.S. Army photo)

the highest levels.”

Chief of the National Guard Bureau Gen. Craig R. McKinley will serve as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which previously consisted of only a chairman and vice-chairman and heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

“The National Guard, while not a separate military service branch, does have distinct roles and missions that warrant a seat at the table among the top leaders in the Pentagon,” Wong said. “This action properly recognizes the unique but connected role the National Guard and all our reserve components play in today’s military affairs.”

## SAL: Wreath Laying Ceremonies In DC

The 52nd annual American Legion Washington Conference will be held Feb. 26 – Feb. 29 at the Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20009.

The National Sons of The American Legion memorial wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns, located within the Arlington National Cemetery, is scheduled for Feb. 26 at 11:15 a.m. (EST).

The memorial wreath will be placed by SAL National Commander James K. Roberts III, and members representing various detachments will also be present to honor veterans of all wars. Other members of The American Legion family are encouraged to attend and join the SAL in observance of this solemn ceremony of honor.

Detachments will also have the opportunity to present wreaths at

the various memorials visited by the SAL, which include Women in Military Service for American Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, the Vietnam War Veteran’s Memorial and the National World War II Memorial.

The SAL National Legislative Commission would like to thank all those who have participated in the various wreath laying and the commission meetings in the past and look forward to seeing you in 2012. This year’s bus transportation will be available to a limited number of members on a first come, first serve basis. A box lunch will also be available to those participants of the wreath laying on Sunday. Advance reservation for memorial wreaths, bus seats and box lunches is mandatory.

David W. Lee  
National Sons of The American Legion  
Legislative Commission Chairman

**This Summer your \$1 donation will help honor every Colorado veteran who gave their Life defending our freedom.**

**Are you in?**



Since 1876 over 6000 Colorado veterans have been killed in military action defending the freedoms we're enjoying all Summer long. Help us honor their memory by contributing \$1 to build a Memorial dedicated to their courage and sacrifice. It's our One For Freedom campaign and together we can make this monument come true for the families left behind. Are You In?

**Visit [www.cfmf.net](http://www.cfmf.net) to learn more.**



# SAL Squadron 21 Wild & Tame Dinner

**Date: February 5, 2012**

*Time: 12:30 pm until 4:00 pm ?*

SAL Annual Wild & Tame Dinner this year is raising funds for VA&R (Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation). The cost of the meal is free, but **Cash Donations** will be accepted for VA&R. A \$5 donation per person would be appreciated.

- Elk
- Venison
- Trout
- Pheasant
- Antelope
- Ham



Public Welcome to enjoy the annual "Feast on the Beast"! Assist us in our efforts to help America's Veterans. We support the Fisher House, the VA hospital and the various Veterans' nursing homes in the state.

**SAL Squadron 21  
American Legion Taylor-Miller Post 21**

500 9th Street  
Golden, Colorado 80401

Phone: 303-279-6200

## A Message From The Department President

### Mid-Year Conference 2012

By: Rhonda Larkowski, Department President

I hope you're all planning to attend the Mid-Year Conference in Longmont on January 27-29. I'm hoping to have an informative and informational agenda for this meeting.

We're working on some important changes that impact our department as a whole, will be welcoming two new units from Highlands Ranch and Simla to our ranks, and on Saturday afternoon we'll be learning more about the Pods programs as well as having 2 breakout sessions dealing with the updating of our Constitution and Bylaws/standing rules or focusing on Working within the generations in our organization. It will be a busy time but hopefully you'll come away inspired to finish out the year full steam ahead.



Rhonda Larkowski  
Department President

Membership is always a concern. The next national goal is 70 percent by February 1st. I'm sure we can reach this one as we're in sight of it, but still need nearly 2000 members to make our national goal for the year. If you have a ways to go please start working just a little harder to get those renewals. Our membership luncheon will be on Saturday the 28th at Post 32, and I know we'll have a few awards to make at that time. Maybe your unit could be one of them!

Thanks to all of you who participated in making blocks for my quilt



project to benefit the Fisher House building fund. A special thank you to Diane Erickson for doing the quilting! I hope many of you have seen the flyer that was e-mailed and have purchased tickets, but tickets will also be available throughout the conference. The winning ticket will be drawn on Sunday morning the 29th. Good luck to you all.

If your Post, Unit, Squadron haven't as yet made plans for a fund-raiser for our joint fund-raising project, Fisher House Building Fund, please do so soon. Commanders Jim and Scott and I are hoping to be able to present a large amount to them at the end of the year.

I also wanted to remind you that if you want to make a contribution to National President Kris Nelson's project, the ALA Foundation, please send those contributions in soon. The check for those contributions will be presented to her at the Awareness Assembly in Washington at the end of February.

Again, thanks for all you do in support of our Veterans. You are making a 'Patchwork of Progress' in Colorado.



## American Legion Auxiliary Midyear Conference Longmont – Post 32 January 27 – 29, 2012



### Tentative Schedule

## Come Celebrate All of Your Accomplishments

#### Friday January 27

12:00 pm	Executive Committee Meeting – Post 32
1:00 - 4:00 pm	D.E.C. Meeting – Post 32
5:00 - 7:00 pm	Troop Induction – Plaza Hotel
6:00 pm	Post 32 serving Dinner
7:30 pm	American Legion Family – Minute to Win It – Evening

Held at Post 32 and Benefitting Fisher House - Come Enjoy the Fun & Laughter with your Legion Family

#### Saturday January 28

8:30 am	Joint Opening Ceremonies – Plaza Hotel
	Welcome - Cmdr/Pres/SAL

10:00 am	ALA Session – Mid-Year Reports – Post 32
12:00 Noon - 1 pm	Membership Luncheon – Everyone Welcome – Luncheon held at Post 32 – Cost \$5.00
1:10 pm	ALA Session-Mid Year Reports – Post 32 Reconvene Five Generations of Members Working Together New Annual Report Forms (Pods): <b>Adjourn</b>
7:00 pm	Jeff Luginbuel Media Awards Banquet – Post 32
9:00 pm	Music and Dancing Afterwards – Post 32 Cash Bar @ Post 32 Shuttle Service Will Be Provided for all meetings

### Sunday January 29

8:30 am	Memorial Service @ Post 32 American Legion Family Rally
10:00 am	Joint Closing
11:00 am - 2:00 pm	Girls State Board Meeting

## A Message From The Detachment Commander

### Help Me Out Here!!!

By: Scott Garrett, Detachment Commander

The holidays are over. I expect some people, including myself, are breathing a sigh of relief while others might have enjoyed it a little longer. Now it's time to get back to work, and there is a lot to be done.

Fund-raising should be put into high gear. Child Welfare is doing well, but we can do better. The new Fisher House Campaign, the



Scott Garrett  
Detachment  
Commander

Commanders Project sponsored jointly by myself, Commander Jim Gillis, and President Larkowsky has raised a lot of money aided by extensive publicity at the District conferences, but still has a long way to go. By the way, there is a wager! Whoever raises the least money between the three of us must buy dinner for whoever raises the most. The person in the middle must buy their own. I do NOT want to buy a dinner other than my own. Help me out here!!

We have a National Candidate Challenge Fund under way to support ANY officer who wishes to run for national office. In particular, we have a viable candidate for National Commander. I cannot give his name until it is announced by National that he is being considered. However, we need to show that Colorado CAN and WILL support a National Candidate. Not by large donations from a few, but donations of any size from Posts, Units, and Squadrons from across the state.

We have a list of current donors, but we are not listing specific amounts donated. Anything will help.

Let's not forget our other fundraisers, Boys State, National Emergency Fund, Oratorical, Dream Weavers, Junior Shooting, and others.

Membership is doing well. We are very close to our January goal of 60%. Let's keep up the good work.

Mid-Year Conference is upon us. The SAL meeting will be at Post #32 at 1:30 pm on Saturday, January 28. We have guests! Leading Candidate for National Commander Chris Huntzinger will be present at our meeting and Opening Ceremonies, Saturday morning at 9:00 at the Plaza Hotel. Also, we have Robert Caudell, Executive Secretary of The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation attending. And we will have a presentation by the Fisher House manager, Joy Weyna-King.

Another event at our meeting will be the presentation of a New Charter to Squadron #134, Peetz Colorado. And, under regular business, we will be selecting the host squadron for the November 2012 Awards Banquet.

See you at Mid-Year  
"In God We Trust"

**DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICE**  
**155 Van Gordon St., Room 364**  
**Lakewood, CO 80228**  
**Phone: 303-914-5585 - FAX: 303-914-5588**

Patchwork of Progress Quilt  
 Support President Rhonda's Project  
 Fisher House Building Fund

Tickets \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. For pre Mid Year ticket sales send your request with your check to:



American Legion Auxiliary Department of Colorado Quilt Project- 7465 East 1<sup>st</sup> Ave, Suite D Denver CO 80230-6877

Please include e-mail address if available. Ticket stubs will be sent by return mail or E-mailed. Requests must be received by Dept. by January 20<sup>th</sup> to be included in the drawing.

Drawing will be held at Mid-Year Conference on Sunday January 29<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 A.M.  
 Need not be present to win.

**TAKE NOTE**

The TRICARE appointment number has changed

**524/526-CARE**

Make appointments anytime at:  
[www.tricareonline.com](http://www.tricareonline.com)



# May 19, 2012 Armed Forces Day Healing Our Heroes



**Support Our Guardians of Freedom  
Suffering From Traumatic Brain Injuries & PTSD**



## *American Legion Riders Dist. 5 Poker Run*

*9:00 AM Registration at Post 178 located at 1655 Simms St.,  
Lakewood, CO \$15 per rider, \$5 per passenger*



## *VFW Post 4171*

*Fund Raiser & Tribute  
for Our Wounded Warriors*

*Located at 15625 W. 10th Ave., Golden, CO 4:00 PM—Food, Music Band,  
Tribute to Our Wounded Warriors, Raffles, Auctions and More.*

**Information Contact: Rick Baum 720-838-3726 or  
email [les.metcalf@yahoo.com](mailto:les.metcalf@yahoo.com)**

**Department Mid-Year Hotel Reservations**

**Plaza Hotel**  
**1900 Ken Pratt Blvd**  
**Longmont, CO 80501**  
**303-776-2000**



Thursday, January 26, 2011 - Saturday January 28, 2011

*Please tell them The American Legion Rate*

**All rooms are \$79.00 + 8.04 tax = \$87.04 per night.**

Check in time is 3:00 pm - check out is 11:00 am. Cut off date for this rate is December 28, 2011. Please mail the enclosed form or call the hotel directly for reservations. If you are calling the hotel, please mention The American Legion to receive the rates quoted above. Hotel has free hot breakfast and free internet

King Room        \$87.04   # of rooms \_\_\_\_\_  
 Double/Double   \$87.04   # of rooms \_\_\_\_\_

Handicapped room \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Method of payment: (First nights deposit required)

Arrival date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departing date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cash \_\_\_ Credit card: Visa \_\_\_ M/C \_\_\_ Discover \_\_\_  
 American Ex \_\_\_ Dinners Club \_\_\_ other \_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ expires \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please plan on attending  
 the American Legion  
 Auxiliary's  
 Mid-Year Conference**

**January 27-29, 2012**

**You will find the attached  
 room reservations  
 form right next to this  
 advertisement.**

**Please share this form  
 with everyone who will be  
 attending.**

**We look forward to seeing  
 you there.**

**Also Friday will be the  
 American Legion Family  
 Minute to Win It - Evening  
 Held at Post 32 Longmont**

**Come Enjoy the  
 Fun, Laughter and  
 Entertainment  
 With your Legion Family.**

**Rhonda Larkowski  
 Department President**



The Colorado American Legion Employment Committee  
**Invite all Veterans to the Mid-Year Conference**

# JOB AND RESOURCE FAIR

\* The Fair is FREE and open to all veterans - Active, Guard, Reserve & former service members!

\* Attend the FREE Resume writing for federal jobs seminar presented by Avue Technologies - preregistration is required!

\*Attend the FREE Starting a small business seminar presented by the Colorado SBDC - preregistration is required!

\*VA Regional Office, VA Hospital and VA Voc Rehab will be there to assist veterans with claims and Medical Registration!

\*Veterans Service Officer will be present to assist veterans with questions and provide assist!

\*Business will be looking to hire. So please come prepared with resumes and dress professionally!

**Thursday**  
**January 26, 2012**  
**10:00 am - 3:00 pm**

**Plaza Hotel**  
**Conference Center**  
**1900 Ken Pratt Blvd.**  
**Longmont, Colorado 80501**

For more information or for  
Veteran's Seminar Preregistration or for  
Employer/Education/Resource Organization  
Registration Go To

<http://www.cololegionveteransresources.org>  
or call 303-366-5201

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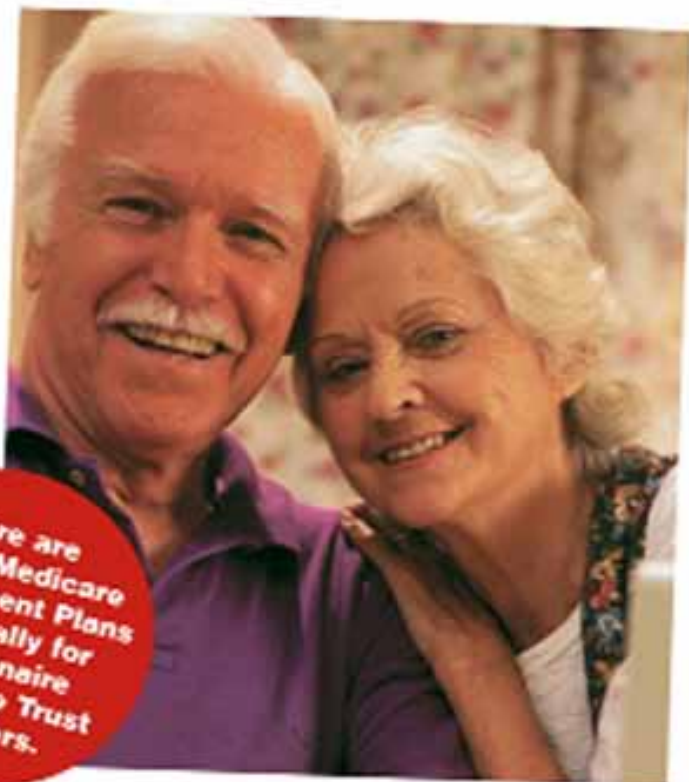
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