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FOR GOD AND COUNTRY...
Brian S. Kern, Commander

AUGUST

DANIEL B. KALLEMYN, EDITOR

2009

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

As we begin the new Legion year, I thought it important that I share with all of you my vision for Post 259 during the upcoming year. You may recall from previous newsletters my general focus on building on the Post's past, strengthening the Post's present, and preserving the Post's future. While not discounting building on the Post's past, my focus this year will be primarily on strengthening the Post's present and preserving its future. In doing so, I'd like to gain your support for the following four initiatives.

First, I'd like Post 259 to achieve 3-star status again this year. We made it last year with your help and with your help we can do it again. It won't be easy as membership is down across many levels of The American Legion. Reversing that trend starts at the Post level and a commitment by all Post members to increasing our membership. Hopefully, we can string together several years of obtaining 3-star status and eventually become a 4-star Post again.

Second, while we are not in any immediate danger, we need to be mindful of the Post's financial condition. Last year we operated at a significant budget deficit and we are likely to do so again this year. In light of this, we've asked several programs such as baseball and scholarships to become more self-sufficient through fundraising efforts. We've also had to reduce our charitable contributions and raise prices in the Canteen. Last, but not least, we eliminated some discretionary expenditures such as convention delegate fees. During the upcoming year, we'll continue to look at how we are operating as a business. Where we can cut expenses, we must. Where we can increase income, we must. All of this must be done with the understanding that the goal is not simply to keep the Post doors open, but more importantly, to ensure Post 259 continues to make a difference in the community, state, and nation through its programs and charitable contributions.

Third, I'm looking to increase education and awareness among our Post members about the ideals and purposes of The American Legion. I acknowledge that many of you have been American Legion members for many years and have a solid understanding of The American Legion, but I want to focus on our newer members. By increasing their understanding of what it means to be a member of the American Legion I hope to spur their increased involvement in Post and American Legion activities. We will continue our new member orientation dinners and, in addition, will develop a new member packet for those unable to attend the orientation dinners. Lastly, we'll include educational inserts and articles in the newsletter.

Fourth, we are going to revitalize the various Post committees. Under the Post Constitution and Bylaws, we have 15 standing committees. These include Membership, (cont. on next page)

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE (cont.): House, Ways & Means, Budget & Finance, Audit, Publicity, Service and Rehabilitation, Visiting, Athletic, Child Welfare, Defense, Constitution and Bylaws, Sons of the American Legion, Americanism, and Nominating committees. For several years these Committees while existing on paper have largely been inactive. This year we are going to reverse that trend and start the process back towards active committees and active committee membership.

As always, thanks for your continuing support, thoughts, and ideas.

In Legion Service
Brian Kern, Commander

SONS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

Hello to All and I hope that everyone is having an enjoyable summer! This is my first attempt at the newsletter as the new S.A.L. Commander. I would like to start by thanking Mr. Wayne Berbig for a job well done. He is a great asset to this squadron and we look forward to his continuing support in his new role. I will be leaning on him a great deal and with his help along with others we will try to make this transition as seamless as possible.

I am a true believer in the fact that we are all in this together. Although we are considered a "Program of The American Legion", I think that we can provide a significant amount of support with the backing of The American Legion members and The Ladies Auxiliary. This S.A.L. has members that are extremely proud of their commitment to this post and they are very passionate when it comes to showing it.

We are very excited about this upcoming year and being a part of its great tradition. The traditions past, present and future of which many of us can account for. I challenge all of our members to invest just a little more of their time and dedication to our post, that's right, our post! We have built this wonderful place into what it is and so many great memories keep us striving to

achieve new goals. There is no denying that this will not happen overnight. But I think with the people that we have in place, we are on the right track. The S.A.L. as a whole is here to support!!!

Personally, I am looking forward to sitting down with our Post Commander, Mr. Brian Kern and our Post Ladies Auxiliary President, Mrs. Toni Carr and explore new ideas. It is important that we try really hard to have our current members paid up and in good standing. But it is equally important to recruit new eligible members. Find out what the requirements are and sign someone up. Also, if you are a member of The American Legion and you're eligible for dual membership, we'd love to have your support! And last but definitely not least, if you can attend a meeting or two this year, we would welcome the company and any input they may have.

Our Annual Golf Tournament will be held on Wednesday, September 9, 2009. We are holding the tournament at Marlborough Country Club this year. Please remember, Marlborough. The cost of playing in the tournament is still only \$60 and hole sponsors are still \$100. If you know anyone who may be interested in either, please contact Mike Hunnicutt or Gary Castleman @ 301868-2550. We Look forward to your support.

Have a wonderful month.

David Hutchinson
S.A.L. Commander

CHARLOTTE HALL

We held our monthly BINGO program at the home on 8 July. The VOLUNTEERS helping me out this month were Bob Levendusky and Mike Gilbert. There were 71 veterans in attendance. The home did provide drinks for halve time. Next BINGO will be 12 Aug.

Say, "THANKS TO A VET."

Mike Strotkamp
301 645 2397

NATIONAL COMMANDER CALLS FOR URGENT CHANGES IN CLAIMS SYSTEM

WASHINGTON (June 22, 2009) - An immediate overhaul of the Department of Veterans Affairs disability claims processing system is the only way out of a fast-growing nationwide backlog of unresolved cases, American Legion National Commander David K. Rehbein said after a congressional hearing last Thursday evening.

"As the backlog of claims approaches 1 million, and the needs of deserving veterans go unmet, VA can wait no longer to institute new and workable policies and procedures," the leader of the nation's largest veterans service organization said following a House Veterans Affairs subcommittee session on the problem.

Lawmakers heard compelling testimony from American Legion member David Bohan, a Gulf War Army combat veteran from Oregon who suffered service-connected permanent damage to his left foot as well as post-traumatic stress disorder. His disability claim is one of hundreds of thousands caught up in the VA backlog. Bohan's story is among those highlighted in an extensive, three-part series of articles that debuted in the June issue of The American Legion Magazine.

The scope of the VA claims backlog problem and some potential solutions were detailed to subcommittee members by Ian dePlanque, assistant director of The American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission.

The VA's so-called work-credit system, which awards a claims processor credit in "body-count" fashion for completion of a job even if errors occur, was criticized by The American Legion representative. "To count work credit the same whether it is performed properly, or whether details are overlooked encourages corners to be cut," dePlanque said. "In the past, it has been proposed that VA count work credit when a claim reaches a final decision. In that manner, the encouragement will be to perform every aspect of the claim correctly, as appeals over missed technical details will only hamper the process and create lengthy delays in the claims process."

The American Legion has long recognized understaffing and poor staff retention as factors contributing to the VA's claims backlog, especially in light of an ever increasing number of claimants.

The Legion representative's remarks reiterated this point, and also questioned the quality of claims processors.

"The American Legion national staff has interviewed regional office employees during quality review visits," said dePlanque, "with the consistent complaints among regional office employees being: inadequate staffing levels, inadequate continuing education, and pressure to make quick decisions, (resulting) in an overall decrease in quality of work. It is an extreme disservice to veterans, not to mention unrealistic, to expect VA to continue to process an ever-increasing workload while maintaining quality and timeliness, with the current staff levels," he said. "The current wartime situation provides an excellent opportunity for VA to actively seek out returning veterans from Operations Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, especially those with service-connected disabilities, for employment opportunities within the Veterans Benefits Administration."

The American Legion reasons that employment of veterans with recent military experience would increase the speed and accuracy of processing claims because veterans would have greater understanding of military terminology and the circumstances of a claim. They would also help minimize what is termed "over-development" of claims "when the simple facts to grant (the claim) are already present ... needless exams and searches for extra records continue to drag out the process," dePlanque testified.

Commander Rehbein echoed his staff's criticism of some of the VBA's practices but reiterated American Legion support for the critical challenges VA faces with a fast growing new generation of war veterans entering the system. "By offering our suggestions for improvement, as well as our critique, we strive to work hand-in-hand with VA - as we have for decades - to improve the quality of life of some of our most worthy citizens, our military veterans."

Joseph V. Vlcek
Post Service Officer
301.292.4497

Elements of the American Legion Emblem



The Rays of the Sun form the background of our proud Emblem, and suggests the Legion's principles will dispel the darkness of violence and evil.

The Wreath forms the center, in loving memory of those brave comrades who gave their lives in the service of the United States that liberty might endure

The Star - Victory symbol of World War I, also symbolizes honor, glory and constancy. The letters "U.S." leave no doubt as to the brightest star in the Legion's star.

Outer Rings - The larger of two outer rings stands for the rehabilitation of our sick and disabled comrades. The smaller inside ring denotes the welfare of America's children.

Outer Rings set upon the star. The outer pledges loyalty and Americanism. The inner is for service to our communities, our states and the Nation

The words **American Legion** tie the whole together for truth, remembrance, constancy, honor, service, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, children and youth, loyalty, and Americanism.

DUTY CALLS: We need YOU to become a member of one of the following committees. (If interested please contact Commander Kern at brian_k540@yahoo.com or 301-877-6499)

Membership Committee - Responsible for all matters pertaining to Post membership including obtaining members, determining eligibility, and reinstating members.

House Committee - Responsible for all matters concerning Post rentals, hall scheduling, and janitorial services

Entertainment (Ways and Means) Committee - Responsible for all matters concerning social activities of the Post.

Budget and Finance Committee - Responsible for administering the financial matters of the Post including budgeting and funds expenditures.

Audit Committee - Responsible for ensuring the Post financial audit takes place every year.

Publicity Committee - Responsible for the Post bulletin and promotion of Post and American Legion programs.

Service and Rehabilitation Committee - Supervises all matters pertaining to the need of comrades in the prosecution of all just claims against the United States or state governments, employment, relief, etc.

Visiting Committee - Responsible for visiting and comforting of members of the families when sick or bereaved, and visiting ex-servicemen in nearby hospitals.

Americanism Committee - Charged with the inspiration of patriotism and good citizenship by arrangements of proper observance of the patriotic occasions, encouragement of patriotic and civic phases of instruction in schools, including oratorical contests in the schools and Boys State.

Athletic Committee - Charged with the promotion of physical development and clean sports by the organization of Post athletic teams, American Legion baseball, recreation, etc.

Sons of the American Legion Committee - Oversees the operations of the Post's S.A.L. squadron.

Child Welfare Committee - charged with aid and service to children of veterans, cooperating with other established agencies in the community, laboring for the betterment of child conditions and in coordinating service and agencies in the community for the above services.

Defense Committee - Works with and Coordinate Legion efforts with the local defense council on matters pertaining to national, civilian and home defense.

Nominating Committee - Responsible for finding qualified members for consideration in filling Post Officer positions.

Constitution and Bylaws Committee - Responsible for oversight of the Post Constitution and Bylaws.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>August 2009</h1>						1 PIG ROAST
2	3 S.A.L. 7:30 PM PGCC: 7:30 PM	4	5 Shrimp 5:30 - 7:30 PM Pinochle	6	7 BINGO Early Bird 7:15 PM	8
9	10	11	12 Shrimp 5:30 - 7:30 PM Pinochle	13	14 BINGO Early Bird 7:15 PM	15
16	17 Post Executive Committee 7:30 PM	18	19 Shrimp 5:30 - 7:30 PM Pinochle	20	21 BINGO Early Bird 7:15 PM	22
23	24 General Membership 6:30 Dinner 7:30 Meeting	25	26 Shrimp 5:30 - 7:30 PM Pimcohle	27	28 BINGO Early Bird 7:15 PM	29
30	31					