

THE AMERICAN LEGION

# Dispatch

August 2014

A National Headquarters Publication

100TH ANNIVERSARY



## PISTOL CELEBRATES LEGION'S CENTENNIAL

*Two separate pistols for departments and Legionnaires will be available for purchase beginning Aug. 22.*

By The American Legion

In 2019, The American Legion will celebrate 100 years of service to veterans, military personnel, families and communities. To honor its centennial, two limited edition pistols have been designed for departments and Legionnaires to purchase. The pistols can be kept as keepsakes, raffled to support centennial celebration efforts or used to support the department commander's fundraising project.

The American Legion Centennial Celebration department pistol (pictured above) is finished with 24kt gold, antique gold, high polished nickel and black chrome. The Legion emblem is engraved in the custom metal grip while one side of the pistol is engraved with a World War I doughboy, the "For God and Country" banner, the Legion's 100th Anniversary logo, and a 1919 48-star U.S. flag. The other side of the pistol is also engraved with the 100th Anniversary logo, "For God and Country" banner, as well as a 50-star U.S. flag and an active-duty military servicemember.

Departments are limited to the purchase of two pistols and only department leadership has authorization to make the purchase.

Cost: \$2,895

The American Legion Centennial Celebration pistol for Legionnaires to personally purchase is similar in design to the department pistol except it has a standard grip and the Legion emblem is inlaid. Cost: \$2,695

Purchase price for both pistols from A&A Engravings – an approved licensee with The American Legion – includes personalized engraving, a certificate of authenticity and a solid oak display case. It does not include sales tax or shipping and handling.

Both pistols go on sale Aug. 22 at 8 a.m. – a \$1,000 deposit is required. A&A Engraving will be taking orders Aug. 22-26 during the Legion's 96th National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., at the Charlotte Convention Center

See *Pistol Celebrates Legion's Centennial* on Page 4

## NEWS ALERT

### Certificates show your appreciation

For the 2014-2015 membership year, recognize local businesses that fly U.S. flags, Legionnaires who volunteer for American Legion youth programs, Legionnaires with continuous membership, businesses who employ veterans and many others by creating an American Legion certificate of appreciation. Purchase the Certificate Maker CD online for \$9.95: [www.emblem.legion.org/Certificates/products/160/1/0](http://www.emblem.legion.org/Certificates/products/160/1/0)

### Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program PSA

Currently, 17 American Legion departments conduct a weeklong Junior Youth Cadet Law Enforcement Program in partnership with their state police or highway patrol academy. Cadets learn officer survival techniques, defensive tactics, firearms safety, precision driving, law enforcement technology, accident and criminal investigation, and more. Learn more by watching the Legion's new PSA online: [www.legion.org/legiontv](http://www.legion.org/legiontv)

### Follow National Convention coverage

Stories, photos and videos of the 96th American Legion National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., Aug. 22-28, will be available for Legion Family members to view. Follow the coverage online:

[www.legion.org/convention](http://www.legion.org/convention)

[www.legiontv.org](http://www.legiontv.org)

[www.facebook.com/TheAmericanLegionNationalConvention](http://www.facebook.com/TheAmericanLegionNationalConvention)

## COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

# Membership gives us a seat before Congress



**Dan Dellinger**  
National Commander

In an unprecedented year, I testified four times before Congress. Most notably was my testimony on May 15 alongside former VA Secretary Eric Shinseki only 10 days after The American Legion's call for his resignation. Testimonies before Congress and the hundreds of media interviews conducted by national staff and myself regarding Shinseki's resignation and the VA scandal that plagued several facilities put the Legion's name at the top.

Our name right now is at the forefront of all veterans service organizations. We've been given an opportunity, and it's up to us to capitalize on that now. If we want to keep a place at that table in front of Congress to make sure our veterans are taken care of, it's called membership numbers. The calling for Shinseki's resignation and the Legion's fight to assist veterans that have been affected by delayed access to VA health care has resulted in an increase in membership. I had a gentleman walk up to me in Wisconsin who said he hadn't paid his membership dues in five years. But after what we did to stand up for our veterans, he was going to pay his dues. That's what I'm hearing around the country.

I also know that the call for Shinseki's resignation created some push-back from our members. Louis Celli, director of the Legion's Legislative Division, said to me, "For those members who threaten to drop their membership, I would say to them, 'We're not asking you to join for you, we're asking you to join and remain a member for those men and women who are coming home today who need our assistance. We're asking you to support this organization so we can continue to support our returning veterans, our aging veterans, and our veterans of all wars.'"

If we don't continue to grow our membership, who is going to take care of our veterans? We have a big responsibility. It isn't the cost of war, but it's that 50 years of care for our veterans afterward. That's our charge.

*Dan Dellinger*

## FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

## NEF goal: \$1 million



The American Legion's National Emergency Fund (NEF) program is National Commander Dan Dellinger's primary fundraiser this year.

A natural disaster can strike at any time, devastating the lives of men and women who honorably served their country. While we can't prevent a natural disaster, the Legion does provide relief to veterans and their families affected by devastation.

Since 1989, the NEF program has provided more than \$8 million in direct financial assistance to posts, Legionnaires and their families. The program helps with out-of-pocket expenses, including but not limited to food, temporary housing and clothing. All donations made to NEF go directly toward the program.

To donate:  [www.legion.org/nef](http://www.legion.org/nef)

## NEF Commander's Challenge

American Legion department commanders are challenged to assist in fundraising efforts for the Legion's National Emergency Fund. The departments currently in first place for their respective membership category include:

- Category 1 (100,000+): New York
- Category 2 (65,000+): Illinois
- Category 3 (40,000+): Maryland
- Category 4 (25,000+): Nebraska
- Category 5 (10,000+): New Mexico
- Category 6 (9,999-): District of Columbia

 [www.legion.org/emergency/challenge](http://www.legion.org/emergency/challenge)

## BOYS NATION

## Commander takes "selfie" with Boys Nation senators

American Legion National Commander Daniel Dellinger had dinner with the Class of 2014 Boys Nation senators July 20 at Post 136 in Greenbelt, Md. After dinner, Dellinger noted that the Auxiliary's Girls Nation program was posting selfie photos on Facebook, and he asked the senators to pose with him for a Boys Nation selfie.



NATIONAL ADJUTANT'S MESSAGE

# An Americanism summer

Youth become leaders through Boys Nation, Shooting Sports and Legion World Series.

By Daniel S. Wheeler

Summer for The American Legion and its youth signifies several weeks filled with education, leadership, competition, character development and teamwork. It's during these warm months that three of the Legion's national-level youth programs get underway: Boys Nation, Junior 3-Position Air-Rifle National Championship and Legion Baseball World Series.

On July 18, The American Legion and 98 Boys Nation senators celebrated the program's 68th year in Washington, D.C. The weeklong program educated the young men on the structure and function of the federal government while providing the senators an opportunity to visit historical landmarks around the Washington area. The delegates conducted senate sessions and party conventions, elected a president and vice president, voted on bills and heard from special guests, such as Holocaust survivor Nesse Godin. The young men also visited the National Mall and the Pentagon, met with their state senator, shook hands with President Barack Obama and had dinner at an American Legion post with National Commander Daniel Dellinger. Matthew Ellow of Lacey's Spring, Ala., was elected Boys Nation president and Louis Lombardo of Arlington, Texas, was elected Boys Nation vice president. Learn more: [www.legion.org/boysnation](http://www.legion.org/boysnation)



in either the precision or sporter category and shot with a .177 caliber air rifle in the prone, kneeling and standing position. Antonio "Andre" Gross of Webster, N.Y., won the sporter category and Michael Steinel of New Philadelphia, Ohio, won the precision category. Each winner received a \$5,000 scholarship funded by The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion. Learn more: [www.legion.org/shooting](http://www.legion.org/shooting)

On Aug. 14, the 88th American Legion Baseball World Series will swing into action in Shelby, N.C., with the top eight regional teams competing for the championship title. Fans unable to attend the World Series will have the ability to watch all games leading up to the championship game live on ESPN3.com. Now, starting with the 2014 ALWS, viewership will reach 80 million over the next five years – the championship game will be televised live on ESPNU, the first time in 35 years. This deal is a result of the perseverance and commitment of all involved to maintain American Legion Baseball's reputation as one of the most successful and tradition-rich amateur baseball programs in the world.



On Aug. 2, the Legion crowned a precision and sporter champion during its 24th annual Junior 3-Position Air Rifle National Championship at the USA Shooting Range Facilities at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. During the event, 30 competitors entered

Since Shelby became the permanent home of the American Legion Baseball World Series in 2011, records have been set annually with paid attendance and ESPN3.com viewership. Total paid attendance for the 15-game 2013 ALWS was 104,726, eclipsing the 2012 record of 101,925 and the 2011 record of 86,000. Learn more: [www.legion.org/baseball](http://www.legion.org/baseball)

The Legion's youth programs build tomorrow's leaders and help young adults better understand and honor the many sacrifices veterans made and active servicemembers continue to make.

**Follow the Legion's Veterans Crisis Command Centers:**

[www.legion.org/systemworthsavings](http://www.legion.org/systemworthsavings)

# Dispatch

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Exhibit Hall in Booth #134. Examples of the pistols will be on display at the booth.

For department leadership and Legionnaires not attending national convention, the pistols can be ordered by calling Mark Smith with A&A Engraving at (605) 430-4238. Production time for the pistols is three months.

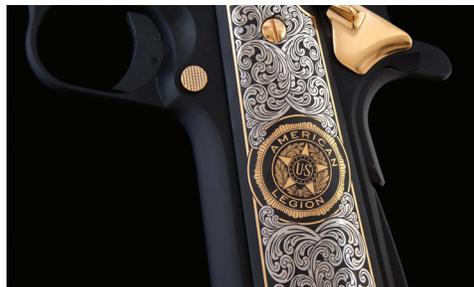
Attendees at national convention will have an opportunity to win a customized Centennial Celebration National Convention 2014 pistol. Proceeds from the pistol will go toward the Legion's National Emergency Fund. For more information, visit the Legion's Centennial Celebration Booth #300 in the exhibit hall where the pistol will be on display.

There are 100 pistols each for purchase. If after three months there is still inventory available with the department pistol, purchasing will open to districts and posts, as well as departments who wish to purchase more than two.

[www.auguns.com/american-legion-centennial/](http://www.auguns.com/american-legion-centennial/)



Legionnaire gun



## ASK A SERVICE OFFICER

# Veteran ID cards

**Q.** *Where can I get a veteran ID card to use for discounts to restaurants and retailers?*

**A.** Unfortunately, the federal government doesn't issue a veteran ID card for the purpose of discounts at retailers and restaurants. The Department of Defense only issues cards to active duty, current reservists, retired personnel and their dependents. And the Department of Veterans Affairs only issues cards to veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA health-care system.

However, many states such as Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Texas, North Carolina, Virginia and Michigan have veteran ID cards that can be used to receive discounts from retailers and restaurants. Veterans can request the ID card from their local Department of Motor Vehicles. The following information is oftentimes required:

- An honorable discharge status from the U.S. Armed Forces.
- A DD214 proving military service that displays branch of service and discharge date and status.
- A valid, unexpired driver's license.

The Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC), issued by VA, is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. It cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities.

In February 2014, VA began issuing the VHIC to newly enrolled veterans and enrolled veterans who were not previously issued the old VIC but requested an identification card. As of May, VA has been mailing VHIC to six million enrolled veterans.

Enrolled veterans who do not have the old Veteran Identification Card may contact their local VA medical center's enrollment coordinator to arrange to have their pictures taken for the new cards, or they may request a VHIC at their next VA health-care appointment. Veterans must provide proper identification in order to receive the new cards.

Email claims questions to: [askso@legion.org](mailto:askso@legion.org)

Find a Legion service officer: [www.legion.org/serviceofficers](http://www.legion.org/serviceofficers)

## CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION SPOTLIGHT

# Post 25 in Newport, N.H.

The drum corps of the Claude J. Brewster Post 25 in Newport, N.H., represented New Hampshire at The American Legion's 1929 National Convention in Louisville, Ky. Money was scarce so local and state organizations helped fund the trip for the members. Although locals could not see the band march in their red, white and blue uniforms, they listened to the performance aired over a local radio station. It was the first time New Hampshire Legionnaires marched in a parade at a national convention. On the way to Louisville, they met with President Herbert Hoover at the White House and visited Mount Vernon.



[www.centennial.legion.org/new-hampshire/post0025](http://www.centennial.legion.org/new-hampshire/post0025)

### Share Your Post's Legacy

Upload photos, print material and videos related to your post's history on the Legion's Centennial Celebration web page: [www.centennial.legion.org](http://www.centennial.legion.org)

## POST ACTIVITIES

# Flags over Fort Adams

By Marty Callaghan

Brand-new U.S. flags now fly proudly above the ramparts of the largest fort ever built in America, the result of an initiative by The American Legion Department of Rhode Island.

Fort Adams, located in Newport, R.I., was built to defend the Narragansett Bay from invaders, thereby denying them the ability to launch land attacks against the cities of Washington, New York and Boston. Completed in 1857, the fort remained active until 1950 and was used for five wars as the command and control center for Army defenses from Long Island, N.Y., to Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

About three years ago, Rhode Island Department Adjutant Gene Pytka met with representatives of the Fort Adams Trust. He learned that the fort, although declared a national historic landmark in 1976, was ineligible for federal funding because no battle had ever been fought there. Impressed by what the trustees were doing to improve the fort with public donations and a small state grant, Pytka was "also dismayed because their U.S. flag was tattered, and they didn't have the funds to buy another one," he said. "The first thing we did was put a new flag (at the fort)."

The Department of Rhode Island donated two 12-by-18 U.S. flags to Fort Adams, as well as an 8-by-12 flag that flies at the top of a 100-foot flagpole. At the foot of the flagpole is a stone marker with the Legion emblem that reads, "This flag donated by American Legion of Rhode Island." Pytka said providing Fort Adams with U.S. flags has become a permanent part of the department's annual budget.

"Some of the larger flags that we fly are very expensive," said Rick Nagele, executive director of the Fort Adams Trust. "In this part of the world they take a beating, so it's a significant program that the Legion does for us. In addition, they (the Department of Rhode Island) host some events here at the fort, and funding from those events benefits the Fort Adams Trust.

"The department has also made a cash donation from their coffers to help us protect and preserve this national historic landmark."



Photo Courtesy of Fort Adams

Lenny Reed, past department commander of Rhode Island, would like to see even more Legion-sponsored events at Fort Adams.

"It's a great way to get Legionnaires from all over Rhode Island together, and it also lets the public know that The American Legion is here, caring for our fort and making sure it has flags to fly that are in good condition," he said. Reed recently took part in a Rhode Island Boys State event at the fort where high school students learned how to fold a U.S. flag properly.

American Legion Past National Commander Richard Santos from the Department of Delaware, who recently visited the fort, said, "A lot of people think money is the key asset, but in all (Legion) departments it's the members who are the key asset. When you get Legion membership involved with a national monument such as Fort Adams, it gives them a sense of pride, and it's a very important thing for them to accomplish. It really puts the Legion out in front of the community, and that's a source of pride for any Legion member."

[www.fortadams.org](http://www.fortadams.org)



## Did you know?

Barbara Corker raised \$72,199 for Operation Comfort Warriors this past year as American Legion Auxiliary Department of New York president. She presented the check to James Ellison, program manager for OCW at national headquarters, during New York Auxiliary's 94th convention in July.

The American Legion awarded nearly \$530,000 in national scholarships to 225 students in 2013-2014.

[www.legion.org/scholarships](http://www.legion.org/scholarships)

## MEMBERSHIP

# Legionnaire personally funds memberships

Bob Greene, commander of Post 6 in Grand Forks, N.D., wanted to introduce The American Legion's mission and establish networking opportunities with servicemembers stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base. Greene accomplished his goal by proposing an idea to leadership at the Air Force base: to award a yearlong American Legion membership to the installation's "Warrior of the Week."

The Warrior of the Week program at Grand Forks Air Force Base recognizes outstanding military personnel at the base, as well as nearby Cavalier Air Station.

By providing a free yearlong membership into the Legion, Post 6 is

"rewarding servicemembers who go above and beyond their service to our country," Greene said. "It associates The American Legion with recognizing

excellence in service, and it leaves a lasting impression on the service-member."

Post 6 started providing free memberships in January and projects to award up to 50 new memberships a year. Due to being a small post with limited income, Greene is personally paying for all the new memberships – nearly \$1,638 a year. "It's the right thing to do," Greene said. "Additionally, awarding the Legion membership to the installation's Warrior of the Week continues to strengthen Post 6's relationship with Grand Forks Air Force Base."

Since January, 26 Air Force service-members have been awarded a free Legion membership into Post 6.

*Do you have a membership story to share? Please email it to: [dispatch@legion.org](mailto:dispatch@legion.org)*



## DATELINE: CAPITOL HILL

## President signs VA reform bill



**Brett P. Reistad,**  
Chairman, National  
Legislative Commission

On Aug. 7, President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Access to Care Act of 2014, a compromise measure that emerged from previous bills introduced in the House and Senate.

The American Legion welcomed the introduction of a bill in Congress that would fix longstanding, widespread problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs, which have impaired its ability to deliver timely health care and benefits to America's veterans. At a news conference July 28, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., discussed their joint sponsorship of the Veterans Access to Care Act of 2014.

Sanders, chair of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, said the bill "makes certain that we will address the immediate crisis of veterans being forced onto long waiting lines for health care. It strengthens the VA so that it will be able to hire the doctors, nurses and other medical personnel it needs, so that we can put a permanent end to long waiting lists. It addresses the very serious problems of accountability and makes certain that dishonest and incompetent senior officials at the VA do not remain employed there."

Sanders said funding for veterans' needs must be considered "a cost of war." Miller, who chairs the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, said, "We have a VA that is in crisis today. This agreement will go a long way to helping resolve the crisis that exists out there today. Helping to get veterans off of waiting lists is extremely important and this bill does that." The VA reform bill, Miller said, "starts a conversation, I think, about VA for the future. Sen. Sanders and I differ about certain things but one thing that we do agree about is that the veterans of this country deserve the best-quality health care that they can get, in a timely fashion – and that has not been the case as of late. The VA is not sacred, the veteran is."

Major provisions of the bill include:

- Authorization and funding for VA to contract with community providers to help get veterans immediate care for those who had to wait, or would have to travel excessive distances to VA facilities.
- Authorization of 27 Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.
- Increased authority for the VA Secretary to manage senior personnel.
- Expedited authority to move or fire Senior Executive Service and other senior-grade executives.
- Extension of the traumatic brain injury (TBI) resident pilot program.
- \$5 billion to help VA to hire more physicians.
- \$10 billion to help VA reduced the benefits claims backlog.
- Continued VA development of an upgraded IT patient-scheduling system.

The bill would also require the establishment of a Commission on Capital Planning for VA medical facilities in order to improve VA's capital asset processes – from facility planning and individual project management to managing the multi-billion dollar backlog of facility construction and maintenance projects. The bill would also establish another commission to examine VA health-care access issues and recommend actions to bolster capacity.

# MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES AND AWARDS

## A MESSAGE FROM MEMBERSHIP

*The key to retention of first-year members is to engage them at the post level – the worse thing we can ever do is ignore a new member. We have to engage him or her through communication, such as social media, post newsletters or personal contact. Make them feel like they are a part of the post and that their membership means more than just paying a check to the organization.*



**Kenneth Orrock**  
National Membership &  
Post Activities Committee  
Chairman



## BIG TWELVE COMPETITION

The Big Twelve Competition recognizes departments that meet or exceed their pledged membership goal percentage by the March target date. The percentage does not include members gained through DMS.

The competition is broken down into six categories. The winner in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$2,000, while the runners-up in each category will be reimbursed for computer equipment purchases of up to \$1,000.

The six categories in the Big Twelve Competition are:

- Category I – departments of 100,000 or more members
- Category II – departments of 70,000-99,999 members
- Category III – departments of 40,000-69,999 members
- Category IV – departments of 25,000-39,999 members
- Category V – departments of 10,000-24,999 members
- Category VI – departments of 9,999 or fewer members

Read more about the Big Twelve Competition by downloading the online National Membership Points Award Manual publication located under Internal Affairs.

 [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)

Learn more about membership messages from watching American Legion videos online:  [www.legion.org/recruiting](http://www.legion.org/recruiting)

## 12 DEPARTMENTS ACHIEVE 100 PERCENT REPORTING

Each year, American Legion posts around the world donate millions of volunteer hours, raise millions of dollars for the benefit of their community and Legion programs, and positively influence millions of lives. This information is captured on the Legion's Consolidated Post Report (CPR) that posts have been submitting for the past 40 years to assist departments in the documentation of activities that a specific post completed during the 12-month (June 1 through May 31) reporting period.

The 12 departments with 100 percent reporting this year are: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Virginia and Wisconsin. National Commander Dan Dellinger will recognize the respective department commanders on stage during the National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., with a plaque.

There were also seven departments who will be recognized with a certificate for achieving 75 percent or higher reporting: Alaska, California, Kentucky, Ohio, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Only 57 percent of all posts during the 2012-2013 membership year submitted Consolidated Post Reports. All American Legion national commanders testify before a joint session of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs following their election to report on American Legion hours donated, monies raised and expended to serve our veterans and our programs. Unfortunately, the numbers never depict the true picture of who The American Legion is.

However, the 2013-2014 reporting increased to 67 percent with nearly 9,000 posts submitting a CPR – an increase of 800 posts reporting from last year.

For the 2014-2015 membership year, show the many ways Legionnaires in your post are making difference in their communities and beyond by completing the CPR. When reports are due, the form can be filled out online:  [www.mylegion.org](http://www.mylegion.org) located under "Post and Department" options. Or submitted by mail by downloading it online, located under Membership Services:

 [www.legion.org/publications](http://www.legion.org/publications)

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## HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

# Signs at rest areas honor Nebraska veterans

There are 148,000 veterans in Nebraska and Bob Swanson made it his mission to express his gratitude to them.

A U.S. Navy veteran and past commander of Post 1 in Omaha, Swanson contacted state Sen. Bob Krist and the Nebraska Department of Roads to install signs that honor veterans at each of the 21 rest areas along Interstate 80. The signs feature the five military branches and read, "Nebraska honors our troops. Thank you for your service."

"It is said that sacrifice is meaningless without remembrance," Swanson said. "We have an obligation to ensure that every veteran, and their families, feels that his or her service to our country is appreciated by their fellow Americans. These signs will serve for years as a tangible acknowledgment of their sacrifice, and our appreciation."

The blue and orange signs, which are being created by the Nebraska Department of Roads, are being placed by the U.S. flag in each rest area. Swanson raised about \$3,500 for the project through donations from Post 1, organizations and elected state officials such as Krist, a veteran, who asked his fellow senators to donate to the project.

"When travelers see these signs hopefully they will think about their neighbor who has a son or daughter in the service," Swanson said. "Their families, some widowed, some orphaned, all hurting and forever changed."



Photo courtesy of the Lincoln Journal Star

## PLANNER

### AUGUST

- 22-28** 96th American Legion National Convention, Charlotte, N.C.

### SEPTEMBER

- 15** Deadline for History Book Contest entry certification forms to National Headquarters
- 19** National POW-MIA recognition day
- 19-21** National Children & Youth Conference, Indianapolis
- 26-27** National Americanism Conference, Indianapolis