



MARCH 2019 **MEMBERSHIP IMPACT REPORT**

A Report from American Legion National Headquarters



VOICES

"We rely on The American Legion in our districts and states back home, and here in Washington, D.C., to be the voice for millions of veterans. For 100 years, members of your organization have been on the front lines as a strong voice on Capitol Hill ensuring Congress fulfills its promise to veterans."

- U.S. Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, during National Commander Brett P. Reistad's testimony before lawmakers Feb. 27 during the 59th American Legion Washington Conference



\$9,700

Amount in American Legion National Emergency Fund grants disbursed in February, to provide relief for fire victims in California and those affected by Hurricane Florence in South Carolina.



31,189

Number of times the story "Mint hosts first strike of American Legion commemorative coin" was visited on legion.org in February, ranking it first among postings for the month.

11

Number of American Legion-supported career events scheduled for the month of March across the nation, including Dallas; Groton, Conn.; Detroit; St. Paul, Minn.; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.; Leavenworth, Kan.; Herndon, Va.; Chicago; Carlisle, Pa.; King George, Va.; and Tallahassee, Fla. Details on the job fairs and career events can be found at www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs online.

MEDIA

Bladensburg World War I Veterans Memorial

"I am saddened, just like everyone behind me is saddened, to be here today because those Gold Star Mothers did what they had to do, and they erected a memorial to their sons. It can't go away. The American Legion was founded to preserve the memories and incidences of the great wars. That's why we are here today — to keep remembering those heroes."

- American Legion National Judge Advocate Kevin J. Bartlett, speaking to media following a hearing by the U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 27, over the Bladensburg, Md., World War I Memorial Peace Cross which faces a constitutional challenge from the American Humanist Association, which seeks its removal. Bartlett was a guest on FOX & Friends Feb. 28, and multiple other national media outlets – including the Associated Press, NBC, National Public Radio and Stars and Stripes – covered the story. The Supreme Court is not expected to rule on the case until June.



The American Legion System Worth Saving Task Force is heading to the Southeast Louisiana VA Health Care System in New Orleans March 11-13 to assess progress at the new medical center there. The task force will be at the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks in Fayetteville, Ark., April 8-10.

 **1,600**

Minimum number of American servicemembers killed or wounded in enemy conflicts in periods not recognized by the federal government as "wartime." U.S. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., and U.S. Sen. Thom Thillis, R-N.C., introduced Senate Bill 504, the LEGION Act, which would expand recognition of wartime service, as well as membership eligibility in The American Legion. That expansion is supported by Resolution 1, passed by the National Executive Committee in the fall 2018 meetings.

 **14**

Number of veterans who commit suicide, among the 20-22 per day across the country, who did not use VA care programs, according to VA Acting Deputy Secretary of Health Care Jim Byrne, who urged Legionnaires at the 59th Washington Conference to help those at risk by connecting them with VA care.

CENTENNIAL MOMENT

The American Legion turns 100

"They were to promote an organization which would not take form until the following November. They had no funds whatever, no offices, no staff, no literature. They had been named the temporary executives of a great idea."

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



The American Legion turns 100 this month. Departments and posts across the country and around the world will celebrate a century of service to community, state and nation that began in Paris when war-weary members of the American Expeditionary Forces gathered for a "morale conference" that led to the creation of what would become the nation's largest veterans organization. Only 300 were expected to attend the Paris Caucus of March 15-17, 1919. Officially, 463 registered, but some have estimated that more than 1,000 came and went during the gathering.

The first session was scheduled to start at 10 a.m., but confusion reigned, and the meeting did not begin until 2:55 p.m., when Lt. Col. Eric Fisher Wood finally called it to order. Among the recorded attendees were Pvt. Harold Ross, a future editor of *The American Legion Magazine* and, following that, founder of *The New Yorker* magazine; future Secretary of the Treasury Capt. Ogden Mills; and future father of American military intelligence, Col. William Donovan. The first four 15-member committees of The American Legion were established: Convention, Permanent Organization, Constitution and Name. Lt. Col. Lemuel Bolles, who would become the first American Legion national adjutant, reported from the Constitution Committee the following intention:

"We, the members of the military and naval services of the United States of America in the great war desiring to perpetuate the principles of justice, freedom and democracy for which we have fought, to inculcate the duty and obligation of the citizen to the state; to preserve the history and incidents of our participation in the war; and to cement the ties of comradeship formed in service, do propose to found and establish an association for the furtherance of the foregoing purposes."

Over the following eight months, The American Legion grew to more than 685,000 members, and posts were popping up across the country and around the world, beginning a century of service and impact on the lives of millions worldwide.



355

Number of veterans who registered and participated in the American Legion-Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair Feb. 22 in Washington, D.C. Fifty-five veteran-friendly employers met with the candidates during the event, a precursor to the 59th Annual American Legion Washington Conference.



5

Number of new American Legion posts chartered in February, including Texas No. 265, Texas No. 268, Indiana No. 2019, Illinois No. 2019 and California No. 750.



\$22,500

Amount in youth scholarships awarded from The American Legion National Headquarters in February.



34,000

Estimated number of POW/MIAs, among more than 82,000 still unaccounted for, that are considered recoverable, according to a Feb. 26 address at the 59th American Legion Washington Conference from Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) Director Kelly McKeague.



1,014

Number of American Legion Baseball teams that began the registration process through February, for the coming 2019 season.



208

Number of POW/MIA remains positively identified by the DPAA in 2018, a record.



3,182

Number of minor children of military personnel and veterans who were assisted in the first two months of 2019 through The American Legion's Temporary Financial Assistance grant program, which helps families maintain shelter, pay utility bills, buy food and clothing during times of financial hardship.



135

Number of new pension claims processed by national American Legion specialists on behalf of veterans in February.



72

Number of Benefits Delivery at Discharge reviews processed in February by American Legion experts on behalf of active-duty personnel within six months of separation.



863

Number of informal VA benefits appeals cases processed by national American Legion claims specialists.



90

Number of American Legion service officers who trained in February at the national Department Service Officers School provided by The American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission and Bergman & Moore, LLC.