

2017-2018 Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission October Article

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Did you know that The American Legion is older than the US Department of Veterans Affairs? In fact in its first decade, The American Legion worked to convince the federal government to consolidate the many bureaus, office and agencies that had been created since the end of the Civil War, into one entity in 1930, The Veterans Administration, and it was not until the 1980's that the VA became a Cabinet Level Department.

Since that time The American Legion has worked tirelessly to make sure that the VA lives up to and follows its motto, **"... to care for those who borne the battle, his widow and orphan..."** In the decades that have followed The American Legion Family has established itself as the premier advocate for our Veterans and the care they have earned but not always receive.

This has been accomplished primarily under the direction and guidance of the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission which offers services to help Veterans and their families navigate the red tape of Federal & State VA benefit systems. More than 2,500 accredited American Legion Service Officers are assisting no fewer than 750,000 veterans at any one time. Add to this millions of volunteer hours and strong representation before the US Congress and State Legislatures to provide timely health care and other benefits; and you can really understand why the Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission is considered the 1st of the four pillars that American Legion Family was built upon.

The SAL VA&R Commission will make history by following the footsteps laid out for us by our past leadership. This month, our Vice Chairman Doug Murphy will represent the Sons of The American Legion at the VA's Voluntary Service Executive Committee meeting, a position that we will hold until December 2018. We now have an additional voice on how voluntary services are conducted at all VA facilities nationwide!

We will continue the work to reach the goal of having an SAL Representative and/or Deputy Representative in every VA facility in the nation, we will strive to reach a goal of receiving an applicant for the Charles B. Rigsby Volunteer of the Year Award from every Detachment, assistance and support of all Fisher Houses, continued support for the National Veterans Assistance Day, additional donations to Operation Comfort Warrior, and we will continue to push for a full accounting of all volunteer hours and donations to be recorded on the Squadron Consolidated Report Form.

In addition to this work we will be working on putting together a training PowerPoint presentation that explains and describes the VA&R Commission, ways to serve, and what this 99 year commission can do and does do for the Veterans of this country.

Together we, the Sons of The American Legion make a difference!