



Key Message Points of The American Legion 2006 - 2007

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Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation

2006-2007

Message Points

Issue: Capital Asset Realignment For Enhanced Services-CARES

Resolution No. 432-2004 National Convention

Message Points:

- Since the beginning of the CARES process, The American Legion has been involved at the local, state and national levels.
- The American Legion will remain involved in the CARES implementation process at the local, state and national levels.
- The CARES implementation process must be an open and transparent process that continually and fully informs the veterans Service Organizations of CARES initiatives, criteria, proposals and time frames.
- VA&R Staff has worked closely with Magazine Staff to publish stories outlining those facilities that have been ignored by the CARES process

Issue: Annual State of VA Medical Facilities Report

Resolution No. 206-2004 National Convention

Message Points:

- The first hand information gained through site visits by the National Commander to VA Medical Centers across the nation has proven invaluable in The American Legion's efforts to urge Congress and the Administration to fully fund VA at a level that will enable all eligible veterans to receive quality health care in a timely manner.
- The American Legion will continue to visit VA Medical Centers and health care facilities nationwide and provide full reports of all findings. As of 2005, we had finished a complete survey of all VA medical centers and started anew in fiscal year 2006.
- The information gathered in these reports, coupled with the answers to questionnaires filled out by VA facility leadership will be compiled in a final "State of VA Facilities Report".
- The fifth National Commander's "State of VA Medical Facilities Report" will be presented to Congress and the Administration in August 2007.

The Department of Veterans Affairs Budget: Fiscal Year (FY) 2008

Message points: Below are The American Legion's Budget Recommendations for FY 2008

Program	Current	President's	House Passed HR 5385	Senate Approp	Legion's FY 2008
Medical Care Including:	\$31.4 billion	\$30.7 billion	\$28.4 billion	\$ 30.9 billion	\$36 billion
• <i>Medical Services</i>	\$21.6 billion	\$22.4 billion	\$23.1 billion	\$25.5 billion	
• <i>Medical Administration</i>	\$2.9 billion	\$3.2 billion	\$3.3 billion	\$3.2 billion	
• <i>Medical Facilities</i>	\$3.3 billion	\$3.5 billion	\$3.6 billion	\$3.6 billion	
• <i>Information Technology</i>	\$1.2 billion	\$1.2 billion	\$1.3 billion	\$1.3 billion	
Medical Care Collections	(\$2.2 billion)	(\$2.3 billion)	(\$2.3 billion)	(\$2.3 billion)	\$2.1 billion*
Emergency Supplemental	\$1.5 billion				
Medical & Prosthetics Research	\$412 million	\$399 million	\$412 million	\$412 million	\$472 million
Construction	(Katrina Sup.586m)				
• Major	\$607 million	\$399 million	\$283 million	\$429 million	\$348 million
- CARES	\$532 million	(\$253 million)		(\$293 million)	\$1 billion
• Minor	\$201 million	\$198 million	\$210 million	\$168 million	\$279 million
State Extended Care Facilities	\$85 million	\$85 million	\$105 million	\$85 million	\$250 million
State Veterans' Cemeteries	\$32 million	\$32 million	\$32 million	\$32 million	\$42 million
NCA Operations	\$157 million	\$161 million	\$161 million	\$161 million	\$178 million
General Administration	\$1.4 billion	\$1.5 billion	\$1.5 billion	\$1.5 billion	\$2.2 billion

Issue: Montgomery GI Bill

Resolution No. 372 – 2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The dollar amount of the entitlement should be indexed to the average cost of college education including tuition, fees, textbooks and other supplies for a commuter student at an accredited university, college or trade school for which they qualify.
- The educational cost index should be reviewed and adjusted annually.
- A monthly tax-free subsistence allowance indexed for inflation must be part of the educational assistance package.
- Enrollment in the Montgomery GI Bill shall be automatic upon enlistment; however, benefits will not be awarded unless eligibility criteria have been met.
- The current military payroll deduction (\$1200) requirement for enrollment in Montgomery GI Bill must be terminated.
- A veteran enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill may use benefits to repay existing educational loans acquired before enlistment in the Armed Forces.
- A veteran enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill who is eligible for training and rehabilitation under Vocational Rehabilitation, shall not receive less educational benefits than otherwise eligible to receive under Montgomery GI Bill.
- Accelerated payment of all monthly educational benefits under the Montgomery GI Bill shall be allowed, with the payment provided directly to the educational institution.
- Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits should be used to pay for the cost of taking any written or practical test or other measuring device.
- Eligible members of the Select Reserves, who qualify for Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits shall receive not more than half of the tuition assistance and subsistence allowance payable under the Montgomery GI Bill and have up to 5 years from their date of separation to use Montgomery GI Bill educational benefits.

Issue: Assured Funding for VA Medical Care

Resolution No. 254-2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges Congress to designate VA health care as a mandatory spending item within the Federal Budget.
- VA health care is the only major Federal health care program that isn't funded through a fixed formula. Medicare, Medicaid and military and Federal employee health care are funded through mandatory appropriations.
- Designating VA health care as a mandatory account would base yearly funding on the actual number of veterans who are enrolled as of July 1 of each year
- Mandatory funding is one component of a combination of funding mechanisms that will ensure improved funding for VA health care.

Issue: Medicare Reimbursement for VA

Resolution No. 135 -2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) continues to seek other revenue streams to supplement annual federal appropriations.
- VHA is authorized to bill, collect and retain payments from enrolled veterans and their health insurance insurers for inpatient and outpatient care, outpatient medications, and long-term care services, except Medicare.
- Medicare is a prepaid, federally mandated health insurance program for all eligible Americans.
- Medicare-eligible veterans should have the same opportunity as every other Medicare participant, to use their Medicare coverage in the health plan of their choice.
- The American Legion continues to urge Congress to pass the necessary legislation to allow Medicare Reimbursement to VA for the treatment of non-service connected conditions of enrolled veterans.
- The Indian Health Service has demonstrated the ability to bill and collect Medicare Reimbursement.

Issue: Support for Homeless Veterans Programs

Resolution No. 374 – 2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion will seek and support any legislative or administrative proposal that will provide medical, rehabilitative and employment assistance to homeless veterans and their families.

- The American Legion will urge Congress to provide adequate resources to insure the future of the Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program, the Homeless Domiciliary Program and the Compensated Work Therapy Rehabilitation Program.

Issue: Licensing and Certification

Resolution No. 373 – 2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports efforts to eliminate employment barriers that impede the transfer of military job skills to the civilian labor market.
- The Armed Forces and the Department of Defense must take appropriate steps to ensure that at the time of training, service members are informed about any licensure or certification they may be required to meet when they enter the civilian workforce.
- The American Legion supports making the Montgomery GI Bill eligibility available to pay for all necessary civilian license and certification examination requirements, including necessary preparatory courses.
- The American Legion supports efforts to increase the civilian labor market's acceptance of the occupational training provided by the military.

Issue: Support Small Business Services for America's Veteran Entrepreneurs

Resolution No. 127 – 2006 National Convention

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the efforts of the Small Business Administration's Office of Veterans' Business Development in its initiatives to provide enhanced outreach to veterans.
- The American Legion will seek legislation that would permit the Office of Veterans' Business Development to enter into contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to further its goals.
- The American Legion supports the Small Business Administration's efforts to provide entrepreneurial information to all service members who are separating from the military.



Foreign Relations

2006-2007

Message Points

Issue: Support for the U.S. Department of State

Message Points:

- The American Legion is a strong supporter of the U.S. State Department and the various functions it performs for the American public overseas. The United States Department of State is the first line of defense of the nation in combating the myriad of security threats that face America from abroad. The State Department and its affiliated organizations are charged with an number of important missions; managing diplomatic coalitions with other countries and international institutions, promoting peace and stability in regions of vital interest, bringing nations together to address global challenges, creating jobs at home by opening markets abroad, and helping developing nations establish stable economic environments that provide investment and export opportunities.
- The State Department has historically been allocated just little more than 1% of the total federal budget to accomplish all of these tasks in contrast to the approximately 16% spent on defense. However, in recent years the State Department's responsibilities have expanded enormously to include combating threats from terrorism, international crime, and narcotics trafficking.
- The American Legion vigorously supports funding for the United States Department of State in order that it can maintain a credible initial deterrent to international threats to the United States and effectively promote American interests abroad.

Issue: The War And Sovereignty In Iraq

Message Points:

- The American Legion applauds the turnover of sovereignty and responsibility for governing of the Iraqi people to indigenous authorities and urges the responsibilities for infrastructure rebuilding in Iraq be turned over to competent authorities as soon as practicable.
- The American Legion urges the involvement of all Iraqi citizens and groups in the formation of a new government and expresses the expectation that elections of the new government be free, fair, and inclusive for Iraqi citizens of all ethnic backgrounds.
- The American Legion encourages efforts by the United States to continue to involve as many nations as possible under the appropriate multinational alliance umbrella to support the rebuilding efforts in Iraq and to deploy military forces to provide security as to lessen the burden for United States forces in Iraq and reduce potential resentment toward the international security force.

Issue: Terrorism

Message Points:

- The American Legion condemns all forms of terrorism domestic and international, especially the brutal and cowardly attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001. For three decades The American Legion has strongly opposed terrorism in resolutions calling for the U.S. Government to not make concessions to terrorist and to use all available means to punish terrorists and terrorist groups.

- We urge the U.S. Government, in concert with allies and friendly nations, to embark on a campaign using military, diplomatic, economic, intelligence and other resources to systematically and completely eliminate terrorism.

Issue: American Legion POW/MIA Policy

Message Points:

- The POW/MIA issue is of paramount concern to The American Legion. The Legion's Mandate on this issue commits us to keep the spotlight on securing the full accounting for all POW/MIAs from the Gulf War, the war in Southeast Asia, the Cold War, the Korean War and World War II. Full accounting means the return of live POWs, the repatriation of their remains, or convincing evidence why neither of these is possible.
- With regard to Vietnam in particular, The American Legion has always believed that the Vietnamese have the knowledge and the capability to account for the fate of many more of our POW/MIAs from the War in Southeast Asia. Moreover, only Vietnam, by taking unilateral actions to repatriate remains and to provide relevant information from wartime records, documents and the oral history program, can help account for many still missing Americans.
- The American Legion continues to oppose the normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam. We remain unconvinced that Vietnam is cooperating in full faith on POW/MIA issues. We are also concerned about the poor state of human rights in Vietnam, especially for ethnic groups such as the Montagnards that were American allies during the war.
- The American Legion supports the continued declassification of all POW/MIA information, the strengthening of joint commissions with Russia, North Korea and China, and adequate resourcing of investigative efforts and field operations to resolve POW/MIA issues. The American Legion has also worked continuously with both Congress and the Defense Department to improve the policies and programs for the accountability of missing persons. For years The American Legion supported a National POW/MIA Recognition Day, which is now recognized annually on the third Friday in September.
- The American Legion will continue to speak out and exert maximum pressure on both the Administration and on the Congress to fully account for America's POW/MIAs.

Issue: Selected other Foreign Relations issues

Message Points:

The United Nations

- The American Legion has remained supportive of the United Nations since its inception. However, ongoing reforms must make the UN more effective. In addition, we are concerned with certain UN policies that affect the US directly. An equitable fiduciary relationship between the UN and the U.S., UN programs or policies do not infringe upon ensuring U.S. sovereignty. And the ineffectiveness of recent UN peacekeeping missions due to the lack of coherent force engagement policies.

The War on Drugs

- The American Legion is extremely concerned about the destruction caused by the infusion of illegal drugs into our communities. Realizing that much can be done to reduce demand here at home, we also support robust efforts to stem the production and flow of illegal drugs from their source and transit zones in Latin America and in Afghanistan.

Taiwan (Republic of China)

- The American Legion has vigorously supported Taiwan and its right to self-determination since 1949. Since that time we have also supported the sale of armaments to Taiwan so they can maintain a credible self-defense capability.

Human Rights in Vietnam

- The American Legion supports Congressional legislation that would highlight the human rights situation in Vietnam and seek to compel the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to improve the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, especially in the Central Highlands, in order that they can enjoy the basic freedoms that all humans deserve.

Cuba

- The American Legion urges the U. S. Government to continue to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, continue intelligence overflights over Cuba, remain firm in opposition to export of revolution by Cuba, continue broadcasting true news and information to the Cuban people, and encourage the development of democracy and a free market economy in Cuba.

Issue: American Legion Statement of U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives

Message Points:

- We believe U.S. foreign policy should embody 12 principles as outlined in Resolution "Principles of U.S. Foreign Policy". These principles are:
 - 1) Recognition of U.S. responsibilities as leader of the Free World;
 - 2) Achievement of world peace by a peace through strength posture;
 - 3) Support for a global war on multiple fronts to eliminate terrorism;
 - 4) Support the promotion of democracy and human rights around the world;
 - 5) Participation in collective security alliances;
 - 6) Negotiation and implementation of equitable, verifiable arms control agreements, which improve U.S. national security;
 - 7) Opposition to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means including ballistic missiles;
 - 8) Opposition to terrorism and drug trafficking;
 - 9) Support for international organizations, which support U.S. interests;
 - 10) Participation in an increasingly interdependent world trading system;
 - 11) Recognition that the President is the chief architect of U.S. foreign policy and that Congress performs important oversight functions.
 - 12) Support for the appropriate resources to promote and protect U.S. vital national interests worldwide.



Internal Affairs

2006-2007

Legion Race Car
Membership

National Emergency Fund
Son of the American Legion

Issue: American Legion Racing

Message Points

- Since our sponsorship started with Team Johnson Motorsports in 2005, they have been on the track in five different races. Tracks included are; Dover, DE, Nashville, TN, Milwaukee, WI, Loudon, NH and Fontana, CA. The best finish was 32nd at Loudon and on the lead lap.
- **FUNDING** -- More merchandise sold—more speed – more races. More Legion awareness. Purchase the merchandise to help fund the race team. Get your programs going in the Posts. Purchase Post Packs at wholesale price and the Die Cast car for Post fundraisers.
- Your Post can help the American Legion Racing Team and raise money for the Post as well. New merchandise is available for purchase from National Emblem Sales to include shirts, caps, posters, polo shirts, cap pin and can coolers. Until they are able to bring on associate sponsorship, the main funding for this program is the purchase of merchandise through Emblem Sales.
- Join in the fun and excitement in the NASCAR Busch series and through your support become a member of the race team. Over 75 million race fans now know that The American Legion has a racecar. Now is the time for every Legion member to stand up and let our great nation know who The American Legion is and to salute our service men and women around the world by cheering on The American Legion #76 Freedom Car.

Issue: Membership

Message Points:

- The American Legion is comprised of 55 state-level "departments" in each of the 50 states as well as the District of Columbia, France, Mexico, Philippines and Puerto Rico. There are approximately 14,500 local "posts" throughout the state level.
- Facts about membership in The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization.
- The 2006 current national membership tally — roughly 2.6 million — is consistent with the year-end totals for 1954 through 1986.
- The American Legion extended its service in communities across the country through the development of 82 new, revitalized posts from January 2005 to December 2005.
- One of the newest and fastest growing activities in The American Legion, Legion Riders, raised close to \$200,000 in support of the American Legion Legacy Fund—a fund which provide scholarships to the children of active duty troops who died in the war on terrorism since September 11, 2001.
- The American Legion attracts younger veterans. Active-duty members are eligible to join - and they are joining. In fact, The American Legion has over 548,520 members who joined under the Persian Gulf, Lebanon/Grenada and Panama War periods of eligibility. Today's active duty service members continue to join. The American Legion created a program known as "TS2" Troop Support Services as an opportunity for its members to interact with the total force — active duty, National Guard and Reserve.
- The American Legion created a task force especially designated to assist Persian Gulf veterans and their families. The task force has helped individuals receive direct compensation and needed support through the service provided by The American Legion.
- The American Legion is "Still Serving America." This is only a part of what The American Legion did "for God and Country" in program year 2005-2006.
- Donated more than 2.1 million hours of service to communities.
- Post Service Officers handled more than 116,000 cases of veterans seeking benefits and just compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

- Devoted more than 1.0 million hours of volunteer service to Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals.
- Donated more than 90,000 pints of blood to collection centers nationwide, making The American Legion the nation's single largest blood donor.
- Annually spends nearly \$33 million on programs benefiting children and youth.
 1. Awarded nearly 6,000 medals to Junior ROTC Students
 2. Sponsored nearly 14,168 American Legion Boys State delegates.
 3. Sponsored nearly 1,900 Scouting units serving 72,000 youngsters.
 4. Sponsored more than 2,300 American Legion Baseball teams and an additional 1,700 youth baseball squads.
 5. Awarded more than \$4 million in college scholarships to deserving students.

Issue: National Emergency Fund

Message Points:

- The National Emergency Fund was well challenged during the latter part of 2005 into 2006. The three hurricanes, which occurred between August and October 2005, were the busiest and most destructive in history. Last year, a record amount of grants totaling more than \$2 million went to 2,512 individuals and posts with the majority of grants awarded in response to the hurricanes.
- The total amount of grant monies awarded since the NEF was reinstated in 1989 is more than \$6.6 million.
- We currently have more than \$1.5 million available in the fund.
- Our Posts have stepped up to assist in their communities. We continue to receive checks and electronic transfers on a daily basis from our Departments, Districts, Posts, and individuals.
- Our true story of “Mutual Helpfulness” is at work in the time of need.
- A new incentive program will be presented at the Fall National Executive Committee Meeting.

Issue: Sons of The American Legion (SAL)

Message Points:

- The Sons of The American Legion was established as a non-political, non-sectarian civilian organization at the 14th National Convention of The American Legion in Portland, Oregon, September 12-15, 1932.
- The Sons of The American Legion is a program of The American Legion with over 5,568 Sons of The American Legion Squadrons located throughout the United States, France, and the Philippines with a total membership of over 310,000 plus members.
- The major goal of the Sons of The American Legion is support to our nation's veterans and their families as well as support to The American Legion.
- The Sons of The American Legion has adopted by resolution to support The American Legion Child Welfare Foundation and since 1987, the year of adoption, the Sons have made donations well over \$3 million dollars.
- The Sons of The American Legion annually contributes over \$3.1 million in cash and goods to our nation's veterans in VA facilities with over 177,000 volunteer hours each year.
- The Sons of The American Legion program is a key component to the Legion family in support of The American Legion and all veterans.



Americanism

2006-2007

Message Points

Issue – Supports the placement of United States Flags in school classrooms

Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to encourage the placement of United States Flags in school classrooms. Resolution 23 (October 2003) titled “Display Of The Flag Of The United States In School Classrooms” encourages The American Legion, at all levels, to support efforts to display the Flag of the United States in the nation’s school classrooms.
- The American Legion believes that at an early age, children should begin to develop an appreciation for the Nation and for what the Flag of the United States represents. Respect for the Flag of the United States is a foundation upon which to build an understanding of the sacrifices made by the Nation’s forefathers and veterans.
- Many classrooms in the United States do not display the Flag of the United States and do not participate in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- Many state governments have legislation mandating the display of the Flag of the United States in school classrooms.

Issue -- The United States Constitution

Message Points:

- The American Legion's members pledge their unwavering support for the United States Constitution when they recite the Preamble to the Legion's Constitution prior to organization meetings and gatherings. The American Legion was formed as an organization to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution in a manner not unlike those who defended the Constitution by paying the supreme sacrifice, with their lives.
- The American Legion is particularly vigilant in opposing attempts to dilute the rights outlined in the First Amendment. The following is the official position of The American Legion in regards to free speech in the United States:
 1. The right of free speech is essential to keep a people free. A people cannot long remain free if they cannot fairly object to the conduct of those they have themselves placed in authority. This guarantees freedom not only to the ones who agree with us, but also to the ones who disagree with us. Such is the proud constitutional heritage of America.
 2. But, like all other rights, the right of free speech must be exercised in a civilized community with due regard to the rest of the community. A right granted by the people for their own protection creates no right to destroy the people. Hence, free speech must not incite to violence and crime or to corrupt the public morale. Reasonable limitations to this end are lawful as protection to freedom of speech.
 3. The American Legion remedy to end violations of the right of free speech is not the use of lawful force, but the use of lawful methods. Complaint should be made to the duly constituted authorities; and if one is lawfully deputized, such authorities may be directly aided.
 4. The American Legion remedy to overcome the preaching of unwise doctrine, though in a lawful manner, is not unlawful suppression of the preaching, but education in wise doctrine. Wisdom in the end will always overcome folly, and meanwhile an orderly society will be preserved.
- The American Legion believes that the weakening of any one individual right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights weakens all rights guaranteed by the document and when individual rights are gone, then all rights reside with the government.

Issue - Opposes policy of prohibiting the placement of American Flags on individual veteran's graves in national cemeteries.

Message Points:

- The American Legion, an organization of wartime veterans, has an ongoing position to oppose attempts that would prohibit the placement of flags on individual graves. This was made clear in 1978 at the National Convention in New Orleans when delegates passed Resolution 498 titled “Oppose Any Plan to Stop the Decoration of Individual Graves in any National Cemetery” and by Resolution 214, passed in 1997 at the National Convention in Orlando entitled “Oppose Policy of Prohibiting the Placement of American Flags on Individual Graves in National Cemeteries.”
- President Abraham Lincoln, in 1862, signed legislation creating the national cemeteries and through the years it has been traditional and customary to decorate the individual graves with the U.S. Flag. The flag represents the country for which they served and by displaying the National Symbol, the country expresses a degree of appreciation to that veteran; that it remembers his or her service.
- The American Legion believes it is wrong that some national cemeteries have adopted policies prohibiting the placement of the flags while, at the same time, allowing floral and other items to be placed on the gravesites.
- National Cemeteries are symbolically “American Cathedrals” where the living respect the memories and service of the veterans and family members interred therein. There is no more fitting remembrance of veterans and their service to this country than the U.S. Flag.

Issue -- Pledge of Allegiance

Message Points:

- The American Legion supports the Pledge of Allegiance in its current form and is adamantly opposed to any and all attempts to revise it beyond the version that was approved by the Congress of the United States in 1954.
- The American Legion is opposed to the ruling by certain liberal federal judges who have declared the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance in our nation's schools to be unconstitutional because of its references to God.
- The American Legion, in 1983, spearheaded a national effort to teach and encourage all U.S. citizens to recite the Pledge of Allegiance correctly. The campaign also called on Legionnaires to introduce the necessary information into the public schools and to other youth groups to ensure that future generations of Americans are able to recite the Pledge of Alliance correctly.
- Both Houses of Congress begin their sessions by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It is customary in the opening of public meetings to also recite the pledge, particularly on Flag Day, June 14, as part of a national show of respect to Old Glory.
- The American Legion is recognized as one of the foremost authorities on proper display, care and respect for the United States Flag. The American Legion, along with more than 140 other organizations, are involved in a campaign led by the Citizens Flag Alliance, Inc. to give Congress the authority to protect the flag from acts of physical desecration.

Issue -- The Star Spangled Banner

Message Points:

- **The Star Spangled Banner** became our National Anthem on March 3, 1931, when President Herbert Hoover signed Public Law 823.
- The American Legion believes that many millions of Americans cherish and respect the currently accepted version, both words and music, of **The Star Spangled Banner**, our National Anthem. This traditional version was first used in 1918 as the “Service Version” by the War Department for use in Army and Navy song books.
- Many Americans have been offended by disrespectful and unconventional playing and singing of the National Anthem at sporting events. The American Legion encourages the playing of the National Anthem in its original customary and traditional rendition.
- Some celebrities and public figures have voiced their opinions that **The Star Spangled Banner** should be replaced with **America, the Beautiful** or another song. The American Legion opposes any changes in the words and music of the National Anthem as adopted under Public Law 823 of the 71st Congress.
- The American Legion urges radio and television networks and stations to desist from preempting with commercial advertisements the singing and playing of our National Anthem and the raising and/or lowering of our Flag.
- The American Legion has joined with a coalition of groups and organizations in the National Anthem Project, coordinated by the National Association for Music Education (MENC). The goal of the project is to teach 150 million Americans the history and meaning behind the National Anthem. It began in the Fall of 2005 and featured the National Anthem as a marker in our country’s historic events and popular culture. It also featured a major presence at major celebrations throughout the United States, including professional sporting events, mobile marketing tours and a presence on major media outlets.
- The American Legion believes **The Star Spangled Banner** should be performed in the English Language. (Res. 5, NEC May 2006, “Oppose Changes to the National Anthem.”)

Issue -- The American Legacy Scholarship

Message Points:

- The American Legion established the American Legacy Scholarship in honor of those service men and women who died in the September 11 terrorist attacks on America. The scholarship will benefit the children of military personnel killed on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.
- The American Legion has established a Trust to fund scholarship. Legion family members, corporations and individuals are encouraged to donate to the fund. Annual interest from the trust will determine the number and dollar amount of the scholarships. The larger the trust fund the greater the scholarship aid.
- America's "total force" military is comprised of active duty military, Guard and Reserve Units from across the Nation. Sixty-five percent of the service men and women are married and many have children.
- According to the Department of Defense "Report of the First Quadrennial Quality of Life Review" May 2004, slightly more than half of the Active Duty and Reserve personnel are married. About 44 percent of the Active Duty force has children, totaling more than 1.2 million dependent children between the ages of birth and 23 years. More than one-third of the children are between birth and five years of age. Over 71 percent are under eleven years of age. A typical Active Duty family is stationed in the U.S., lives in off-base housing, has two children with an average age of 5.7 years.
- Tax-deductible donations may be sent to: The American Legacy Scholarship Fund, The American Legion Finance Division, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Issue - School Prayer

Message Points:

- The American Legion believes Congress should take steps to correct problems resulting from court rulings that have prohibited “prescribed” prayer in schools. A Constitutional Amendment to permit voluntary school prayer is an alternative warranting consideration.
- The American Legion believes in a person's right to use the Bible in public places, over the air waves and while traveling in space.
- The American Legion also believes it should be the right of every human being to publicly express his faith in God and the Bible without fear of reprisal from the government or any other power.
- U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the early 1960's have severely restricted the practice of public prayer even though those decisions simply addressed prescribed or compulsory prayer and not prayer of a “voluntary” nature.
- The U.S. Supreme Court in 1985 rendered a decision that cited an Alabama law which authorized one minute of silence in public schools for “meditation or voluntary prayer” as being unconstitutional. In 1992, in **Lee vs Weisman**, the Supreme Court affirmed, 5-4, a clear separation between church and state by ruling that it is unconstitutional to allow prayers as part of a public school graduation ceremony.
- Through the years since the Supreme Court rulings, numerous measures have been introduced in the Congress that were intended to express the sense of Congress for a period of silence in public schools; or which seek a Constitutional Amendment to allow voluntary school prayer.
- The American Legion has always placed one's belief in a Supreme Being as paramount to a healthy nation. It is reflected in the first clause of the Preamble to The American Legion's Constitution that reads "For God and Country...."

Issue- Illegal Immigration

Message Points:

- The American Legion, since the organization's first convention, has recognized the threat of illegal immigration to this country's security and well-being. It has continually passed resolutions calling on Congress and other governmental agencies to pass and enforce effective immigration laws that will restrict entry of illegal immigrants.
- The American Legion is unalterably opposed to illegal immigration and urges Congress and the states, the U.S. Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security to take the necessary action to stop the invasion of this country by illegal immigrants. Specific actions to achieve this goal include the following steps:
 1. Hire and train additional border patrol agents with employment preference afforded former military personnel.
 2. Urge Congress to pass legislation to empower all the nation's law enforcement personnel to apprehend, hold and incarcerate those individuals who are in this country illegally.
 3. Initiate immediate deportation proceedings at major points of embarkation for those arriving in this country without valid passport visas.
 4. Require that all legal aliens carry a counterfeit resistant registration card and that they be required to report, in a specified length of time, to local officials their location and place of employment.
 5. Petition the President of the United States and the Congress to expand and strengthen the Customs and Immigration Services and the U.S. Coast Guard, and enact such emergency measures as will prevent smuggling of illegal aliens and stop, detain and deport potential terrorists or those with ties to terrorist groups.
 6. That, as appropriate, military resources be employed to assist in stopping the flow of illegal aliens into the country, and all of the resources of the United States be utilized to enforce the security of our country's borders.
- The American Legion urges Congress to seek ways in which to ease the strain on federal, state and local forms of public assistance by reducing or eliminating demands on these services by illegal immigrants.

- The American Legion supports strict enforcement and heavy penalties for U.S. employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens.
- Delegates to The American Legion's 87th Annual National Convention in August 2005 passed Resolution 1 titled "Call for Action on Illegal Immigration Issue" which called for Congressional action to take steps necessary to secure the borders of this country. It also requested an accountability of our elected officials on illegal immigration issues and to use all possible means to bring solution to the challenges faced by the United States because of illegal immigration.

Issue - English as the Official Language

Message Points:

- The American Legion strongly urges Congress and State Legislatures to designate English as the official language of government in the United States. As of September 2006, 27 states have adopted English as their official language of government.
- The American Legion believes naturalized citizens should have the ability to speak and understand the English language. It also believes bilingual programs and ballots printed in another language are counterproductive, costly and tend to discourage immigrants from entering the mainstream of American life.
- The American Legion urges Congress to encourage and fund alternative bilingual education programs to serve, as was originally intended, as a short intermediate step to achieve a proficiency in the English language. Bilingual education programs that provide primary instruction in the student's native language relegates English to secondary status.
- The American Legion believes all election ballots should be printed in the English language and that all Citizenship Naturalization Ceremonies also be conducted in the English language.
- The American Legion believes that the promotion of another language over English in the United States contributes to separatism rather than unification of purpose. It believes that legislation designating English as the official language of this country would help unify the different cultures and facilitate the learning of English by immigrants.
- The American Legion adopted its first formal resolution calling for English as the official language at a national convention in 1983. A follow-up resolution, adopted in 1994, made reference to the belief that "the English language is undergoing gradual displacement in this era of high immigration."
- The American Legion recognizes the desire of immigrants to maintain a cultural link with their native country by speaking their native language. This is understandable and appropriate when the individual also possesses a proficiency in the English language at a level conducive to normal conversation. The American Legion encourages immigrants to achieve a proficiency in multiple languages.
- Ninety two percent of the world's countries (178 of 193) have at least one official language. English is the sole official language in 31 nations (16 percent). An additional 20 nations recognize English as one of two or more official languages. (Source: www.us-english.org)

Issue -- Patriotic Holidays

Message Points:

- The majority of Americans view Memorial Day as a time for relaxation and leisure recreation rather than as a solemn occasion and a time to reflect and pay tribute to the American servicemen and women who sacrificed their lives in defense of our Nation. This has occurred due, in part, to the changing of traditional holiday dates to create “three-day weekends.”
- The American Legion believes that these time-honored traditional observances of these holidays have eroded because of the changes in dates and commercialization of the holidays. The American Legion believes that the importance of these holidays warrants their observance on the traditional dates.
- The American Legion encourages Congress to restore the official observance of Washington's Birthday to February 22, Memorial Day to May 30 and Columbus Day to October 12 each year.
- The American Legion urges the passage of federal legislation that would result in an annual Presidential proclamation calling on all American institutions, public and private, to toll their bells for one minute, beginning at 11 a.m. on May 30, in remembrance of the servicemen and women who died defending our Nation and our freedom.
- **“National Moment of Remembrance”**: The American Legion supports a “National Moment of Remembrance” and encourages all Americans to pause for a moment of silence at 3 PM (local time) on the federally observed date of Memorial Day.
- **Armed Forces Day**: The American Legion supports the annual observance of “Armed Forces Day.”
- **VJ Day**: The American Legion urges our government to not be influenced by the Japanese or intimidated by them to delete the term “VJ Day” from our vocabulary.
- **Veterans Day**: The American Legion encourages the nation's schools to conduct Veterans Day observances on or near November 11 each year. The American Legion has pledged to assist in this activity by providing speakers for such observances. It also opposes any and all efforts that would designate Veterans Day on any day other than the traditional November 11th date.



Children & Youth

2006-2007

Message Points

Issue - National Family Week

Message Points:

- One of the guiding principles of The American Legion Children & Youth program is to maintain the integrity of the family home. As the most basic unit in our society, the family must be strengthened against the negative pressures pushing against it every day.
- In order to have the means to survive, two income families are the norm rather than the exception in our economy today.
- The numbers of divorced families, step or blended families, and single parent families have reached all time highs and more teenagers than ever now hold part time jobs.
- Children are now being placed in day care centers at a much earlier age and young children are home alone after school (latch key) until a parent gets home from work.
- Our family week program suggests ways for better family interaction and requests that Congress designate a permanent annual observance of National Family Week during the traditional Thanksgiving holiday week.

Issue - Child Abduction/Missing Children

Message Points:

- Each day in the United States, an average of 2,185 children, 17 years and younger, are reported missing or disappear by abduction, run away or are lost to some unknown cause.
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) was created in 1984 as a central resource and data clearinghouse for law enforcement, victims and their families, fighting for safe recovery of missing children and the protection of all children from sexual exploitation.
- Due to the tireless work of NCMEC and law enforcement, today more children come home safely than at any time in our nation's history, law enforcement is better prepared, and families are more alert and aware than ever before.
- Although NCMEC has made a significant impact in tackling this daunting problem, there is much that remains to be done, for too many children still do not make it home, and too many are still victims of sexual predators.
- The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to provide adequate annual funding for the continued operation and expansion of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, America's best resource to combat the national crisis of child victimization.
- Departments and Posts seek to increase the public's awareness of child victimization and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society and cooperate with credible organizations and agencies that seek to locate missing children in their state and communities.
- The American Legion supports the America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response (AMBER) and the national AMBER Alert Network Act of 2003 to help missing children to be returned to their homes.

Issue – Child Care Services

Message Points:

- The American Legion is deeply concerned about the quality of life issues surrounding our children and youth.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics there are approximately 21 million infants, toddlers and preschool children under the age of six in the United States, with more than 12.9 million of these children in childcare.
- The Carnegie Report finds that quality childcare enables a young child to become emotionally secure, socially competent and intellectually capable.
- Consistent studies have found that childcare at most centers in the United States are poor to mediocre and childcare licensing standards, designed to assure minimal standards for health and safety, vary widely from state to state.
- Departments and Posts seek to cooperate with the state and community public or private agencies with day care responsibilities to the end that licensed childcare facilities will be available to all children in our nation.
- Departments and Posts seek to encourage the adoption and implementation of safe and consistent licensing standards for childcare in facilities throughout this nation.
- Departments and Posts are assisting in raising the level of understanding among the general public about the needs of adequate childcare and seeking to encourage the public to commit more resources to achieve a level of quality that is necessary for children to grow in a healthy and safe environment.

Issue – Fireworks Safety

Message Points:

- Hospital emergency rooms in the United States treat nearly 10,000 fireworks-related injuries each year, with 45 percent of these injuries occurring among children under the age of 15.
- Fireworks can result in severe burns, fractures, lifetime disfigurement or death.
- Every type of legally available consumer “safe and sane” fireworks has been associated with serious injury or death.
- Fireworks typically cause more fires in the United States on the Fourth of July than all other causes of fire combined on that day resulting in direct property damage in excess of \$25 million annually.
- Departments and Posts are assisting to alert, inform and educate parents, children, community leaders and others, about the dangers of fireworks.
- Departments and Posts encourage children and their families to enjoy fireworks at public fireworks displays conducted by professionals, rather than purchase fireworks for home or private use.

Issue - Protecting Children from the Unrestricted Media

Message Points:

- A recent study shows that the number of U.S. children online has tripled in the past three years to more than 25 million. The number is expected to increase in the next five years by 70 percent.
- Children, especially teens, are more likely to encounter sexual conversations and materials on the Internet, according to a congressional study. One in five youths online face invitations to engage in cybersex or receive other risqué solicitations.
- The study also found that one in four children encounter pornographic pictures while researching homework topics or checking their e-mail.
- The producers of our nation's movies, TV shows and TV news and the Internet have become very explicit in describing and depicting various types of violence, also.
- The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation to restrict the excessive use of violence, vulgarity and other forms of moral depravation in movies, TV programs, TV news and the Internet.
- Departments and Posts of The American Legion conduct awareness campaigns to educate their members, their families and the general public about the potential dangers the Internet and other forms of electronic media pose to children and teenagers.

Issue – Child Safety

Message Points:

- According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, unintentional injury remains the leading cause of death and disability among children ages 14 and under in the United States.
- Every day, more than 39,000 children are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment, totaling more than 14 million children each year.
- The top cause of unintentional injury-related deaths and disabilities among children and adolescents are: automobile accidents, drowning, fire, falls and poisoning.
- Based on the specific needs of individual communities, a combination of factors – education, environmental improvements, engineering modifications, enactment and enforcement of legislation and regulations, economic incentives, community empowerment and program evaluation – have been proven effective in reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional death and disability.
- The American Legion supports appropriate federal and state legislation aimed at preventing or reducing unintentional injury among children and adolescents.
- Departments and Posts seek to provide leadership on organized safety commissions and actively promote child safety at the state and local levels.

Issue - Child Maltreatment

Message Points:

- The American Legion has been concerned about child maltreatment from the very beginning of our organization. Our major emphasis has always been the education of adults who come in contact with children to recognize the signs of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.
- Teachers, coaches, administrators and others responsible for children while they are away from their parents should familiarize themselves with the warning signs of all forms of child maltreatment and, when necessary, report any suspected maltreatment to the proper authorities, and ensure that these children are referred to the appropriate child protective service in their community.
- All laws and penalties relating to child abuse and neglect should be reviewed to determine if they are adequate, based on current model programs as determined by their state.
- The American Legion continues, at all levels, to educate the public of their obligations and duties with respect to reporting suspected cases of child maltreatment.
- Departments and Posts should cooperate in all ways possible with organizations and agencies that advocate for child maltreatment prevention, and promote and increase the public's awareness of child maltreatment and its detrimental effects on the children and youth of our society.

Issue – Sexual Exploitation of Children

Message Points:

- The sexual victimization of children is overwhelming in magnitude, yet largely unrecognized and underreported.
- Statistics show that one in five girls and one in ten boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood, yet less than 35 percent of those child sexual assaults are reported to authorities.
- According to *Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey* conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice “one in five children (10 to 17 years old) receive unwanted sexual solicitations online.”
- By far the most prevalent exploitive act reported is the production and distribution of pornographic images of children.
- The impact of these terrible acts can devastate families and put children at risk of depression, disassociation and post-traumatic stress – symptoms that can last well into adulthood.
- The American Legion supports appropriate state and federal legislation aimed at the prevention, investigation and prosecution of child sexual exploitation.
- Departments and Posts seek to raise community awareness about the prevalence of sexual exploitation of children and cooperate with law enforcement agencies, government entities and public/private organizations that seek to empower the public to take immediate and direct action to enforce a zero tolerance policy regarding child sexual exploitation.

Issue - Catastrophic Illness among Children

Message Points:

- A catastrophic illness is any illness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by a private insurer, federal or state health care assistance, or other financial source.
- Many children are not receiving needed medical treatment because their families have been unable to afford the cost of catastrophic illness to one of their children. While many of these families have hospitalization insurance, even major medical, they cannot meet the cost of a major illness.
- Several states have enacted legislation to establish Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds to help families bear the excessive financial burdens associated with the care of children with special health needs and disabilities.
- These funds have proven effective and are designed to act as a safety net for families from all walks of life who have excessive expenses related to a child's medical needs.
- The American Legion urges the federal government to enact legislation to financially assist families faced by the catastrophic illness of one of their children, thus preserving the family's financial integrity and their ability to cope with the responsibilities that accompany significant health problems in children.
- The American Legion, through Department and Post leadership, urges state governments to enact legislation including, but not limited to, state specific Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Funds, to assist financially those individual families faced by catastrophic illness of one of their children in order to maintain the integrity of the family.

Issue - Immunization

Message Points:

- The American Legion has recognized the need for immunizations being available for all children for many years.
- Medical advances in vaccines have eliminated many serious diseases over the past several years. As a result, many parents neglect to immunize their children because of a false belief that there is no longer a danger present, or they cannot afford the cost of the shots.
- Most school systems now make it mandatory for children to be immunized before enrolling in school as many diseases are reappearing in larger numbers because of this apathy toward necessary inoculations.
- There are federal programs available to provide free immunizations to those families which are not able to pay and The American Legion supports the continued funding of these programs so all children can be protected from disease.

Issue - Juvenile Delinquency

Message Points:

- The American Legion continues to be seriously concerned about the violent crime committed by juveniles in this nation.
- Juveniles account for approximately twenty-five per cent of our population and account for fifteen percent of violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) as reported by the 2003 FBI Uniform Crime Reports.
- Numerous government-supported institutions nationwide, specifically schools and housing, are still experiencing serious, violent acts of crime and criminal damage.
- Any instance of crime or violence at school not only affects the individuals involved, but may also disrupt the educational process and affect bystanders, the school itself and the surrounding community.
- Every child has the right to attend a school that is safe and secure, conducive to learning and free of fear.
- The American Legion recommends that school boards and national and state education agencies, in conjunction with parents and community members, develop and implement programs that create effective violence prevention strategies, to include consistent, fair and responsible “zero tolerance” policies.
- Local law enforcement is urged to implement effective programs for the amelioration of juvenile delinquency in coordination with the Department of Education, community citizenry and other agencies within the criminal justice system.
- Posts continue to urge and assist those in the educational community and criminal justice system to work closely together with communities and families in efforts to reduce the development and prevailing patterns of juvenile delinquency in schools and our communities.

Issue – Policy Statement on Family and the Institution of Marriage

Message Points:

- A guiding principle of The American Legion's Children & Youth Program is to strengthen and maintain the integrity of the family, defined by the World Congress of Families II as the fundamental unit, inscribed in human nature and centered on the voluntary union of a man and woman in a lifelong covenant of marriage.
- A child's biological connection to a married father and mother increases the likelihood that they will identify with the child, be willing to sacrifice for the child, and thereby reduce the likelihood that either parent would abuse the child.
- Children are dependent on a mother and father for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. The existence of a marital bond between a mother and father is vital for the child's overall well being.
- The American Legion recognizes that marriage is a fundamental institution that predates the law and the Constitution of the United States and opposes all efforts to undermine, alter or otherwise corrupt the institution of marriage, which is the cornerstone of a healthy family.
- The American Legion urges the President of the United States and the Congress to ensure that the institution of marriage is preserved and protected, either through appropriate federal legislation or through an amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Issue - Youth Suicide Prevention

Message Points:

- Youth suicide is a serious problem across the United States and The American Legion was one of the first organizations to bring the problem to the attention of communities through our Posts and volunteers.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10 – 25 year olds and the third leading cause of death for those ages 15 – 24.
- Eleven people between ages 15 and 24 kill themselves everyday, accounting for over 4,000 deaths per year.
- The American Legion provides a brochure called “Warning Signs” that can be used to educate children and adults on what to look for and what can be done to prevent this senseless tragedy.



Citizens Flag Alliance (CFA)

2006-2007

Message Points

Issue: Flag Protection Amendment

Full language of the amendment: ***“The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States.”***

Message Points:

- By judicial decree in 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court amended the United States Constitution by “inserting” flag burning into the Bill of Rights. That decision took from the American people a fundamental right that had been exercised from our beginnings as a Nation – the right to protect our flag.
- The American flag is a national treasure. It's our one unifying symbol of national unity. Traditionally and legally it had been protected from desecration, and most Americans think that protection should be restored. In fact, all fifty states have asked for the amendment.
- Protection of our flag from physical desecration impairs no one's free speech. It does not prevent a single idea from being expressed. It involves no censorship of an idea. The amendment would prohibit conduct with respect to one unique object, the Flag of the United States.
- The frequency of flag burning has nothing to do with the evil of flag burning. Laws in this nation are based on right and wrong, not on the frequency of occurrence. Flag burning has never been widespread in our society, but when it did occur it was generally punishable. And that's the position of most Americans: if you desecrate the flag, you shouldn't go unpunished.
- A flag amendment has passed the US House of Representatives six times since 1995, and fallen just short of passing in the US Senate. All that stands between the people and protecting their flag is a few Senators.
- Opponents often ask, “What's a flag?” Congress, for the purpose of a law, agreed in 1989 that the term “flag of the United States” means any flag of the US, or any part of one, of any substance, of any size in a form commonly displayed. That should make it clear that we aren't talking about ties, or bikinis, or birthday cakes with representations of the flag on them. No one would place a tie, or bikini or birthday cake on the coffin of a veteran.
- Desecration of the flag desecrates our values as a nation. Burning the flag is wrong, but what it teaches children is worse. It teaches that outrageous conduct of a minority is more important than the will of the majority. It teaches that our laws need not reflect our values, and it teaches disrespect for the values embedded in a Constitution that is embodied by the flag.
- The Constitution is too important to be left to the Courts and so is the flag. They both belong to the people and it is time to let the people decide, through the process of ratification, if their flag is worthy of protection.