



UP TO DATE - WITH 308

COMMANDER - JOHN MIKA

1ST VICE CDR. - RALPH ROSAS

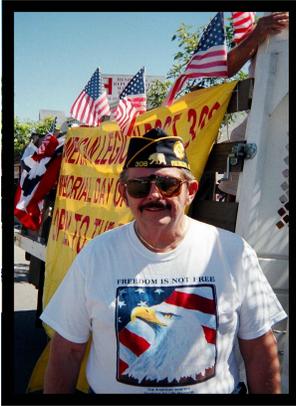
JR PAST CDR. - FLOYD STANDKE

ADJUTANT - LARRY BOWMAN

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Reseda, California

February 2009



Commanders Corner

Another month has passed and we have a new Democratic President and a new Democratic Congress. As I write this column, the economy has not improved, housing sales are at an all time low, layoffs continue, and another Economic Stimulus Aid Package is being debated in Congress, but with no bipartisan resolution imminent. What amazes me is that one would think that this important piece of legislation should only be about a Stimulus Aid Package, but when you dig down into the details, it is wrought with earmarks and other pork barrel issues.

Just recently due to Republican pres-

sure, President Obama requested elimination of the expansion of Family Planning, and restoring the National Mall be removed from the bill. Also included as part of the Stimulus Aid Package is a huge boost in aid to the nation's school districts, with spending on Child Care Centers, school renovations, special education, Head Start, and grants to needy college students that would more than double the current Department of Education current budget. Also included is a new entitlement that would allow workers and their families getting unemployment checks to qualify for Medicaid no matter how much money the family had. While some of these items may be well intended legislation, they are costly, don't effectively stimulate the economy or substantially create jobs, something this bill is intended to do and just don't belong in a Stimulus bill.

As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, we have a new Website; www.calegion308.org is the Web address. Reseda Post 308 information, history, officers, and current events are presented. Pictures of previous events are also posted. Take it for a test ride, kick the tires, and let me know what you think. If there is something that you believe is missing, be sure and let me know.

At the last General Meeting of the Post, on January 6, 2009, there was a final meeting of the Hearing Committee, to hear from you about the sale of the Post building. The Hearing Committee is putting together a final report to summarize the comments received at the Hearing Committee meetings and put forth a recommendation based on these hearings. Come to the General and Executive meetings, and learn first hand what the report and recommendations are, and bring another Post mem-

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A legacy of stepping up in tough times

National Commander's Message

Last December, we were arguably too deep into the 2008 calendar to launch much of a seasonal fundraising drive. Word, however, reached me from the Red Cross that severely wounded troops recovering at various military hospitals could use some comfort items for the holidays: sweat suits, digital music players, DVDs, and other things not directly related to patients' medical care, which is expertly provided by DoD. We immediately organized a campaign.

The economic context of the time is well understood. Recession had gripped our nation for at least a year by December. Unemployment had surged upward while stock portfolios and retirement accounts shriveled. Phenomena all too familiar to those who lived through the difficult 1930s – bank failures, foreclosures and financial distress – were back in the headlines, disheartening industrial and political leaders alike, who

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ber or sign up a new member.

Mark your calendar; as coming up on Sunday, March 15, 2009, the Post will be hosting the annual St. Patrick's Day Dance, from 5:30 PM till 10:00 PM. Admission is \$7.00 per person. Arrangements are being made to put together the details of the festivities.

Till the next newsletter,

John Mika
Commander

Department Convention June 17-21, 2009

Volunteers are needed to assist the Department Sgt-at-Arms at Convention.

You will be officially recognized and accredited with the title of:

“Assistant Department
Sgt-at-Arms”

All volunteers are requested to get in touch with Norm Clendenin

Email: 1ncc@bak.rr.com



DUES ARE DUE!

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looked to each other for answers and found few. Legionnaires looked inside themselves and acted as they always do.

I immediately authorized the purchase of 100 new sweat suits to be delivered from Legion National Headquarters to recovering troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and simultaneously set in motion Operation Comfort Warriors – an ambitious effort to raise \$50,000 to help purchase more items for Walter Reed and other facilities – before the holidays. The response was, and continues to be, amazing.

Personal phone calls and e-mails generated contributions big and small. Massachusetts kicked it off with a \$1,000 pledge on the first day, and a challenge for other departments to match it. Many did. Others reported they were already well into their own programs to assist military and veterans communities for the holidays. I thank them. Dozens of online donations for Operation Comfort Warriors were made at www.legion.org/ocw and through The American Legion Online Update. One post commander wrote that she had been searching for the right program to inspire her recession-weary members for the holidays, and this was it. She immediately began a local campaign to help.

In the eye of an economic hurricane, Legionnaires rose up and swiftly produced more than \$80,000 in an effort that will continue indefinitely. Meanwhile, the Legion just finished a record year of delivering \$705,756 in cash grants to families through the Temporary Financial Assistance program, and handling more than 2,500 Family Support Network requests.

If you think Legion membership and compassionate support for veterans can only flourish in the good times, you might be surprised by how the organization performed through the Depression. During those dark years, the Legion worked tirelessly to bring scattered veterans services under one umbrella and created the Veterans Administration. Legionnaires fought for overdue benefits that World War I combat veterans had been promised.

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Post Officers 2008-2009

Commander - John Mika
1st Vice - Ralph Rosas
2nd Vice - Ed Simmons
3rd Vice - Cecil Montes
Adjutant - Larry Bowman
Finance Officer - Joe Gattuso
Service Officer - Louise Towner
Chaplain - Patrick Jones
Historian - Larry Bowman
Sgt. at Arms - Val DeBolt
Judge Advocate - Ken Schultz
Asst. Adjutant - Don Urquidez
Asst. Sgt. at Arms - Felipe Lopez
Asst. Sgt. at Arms - Ed McCune
Asst. Sgt. at Arms - Peter Schuster
Editor - Larry Bowman
Jr. Past Commander - Floyd Standke

Executive Committeemen

Floyd Standke
Peter Schuster
Don Urquidez

House Committee

Cecil Montes
Larry Bowman
Floyd Standke
Ed Simmons
Peter Schuster

Delegates

Joseph Gattuso
Larry Bowman
Floyd Standke
John Mika
Ed Simmons
Ralph Rosas
Cecil Montes
Ed McCune

Alternate Delegates

Open
Val DeBolt
Leo Nonn
Michael Roberts
Louise Towner
Felipe Lopez
Peter Schuster
Charles Terry

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Posts sprang up across the country. Patriotism thrived. And the Legion established itself as a paragon of local service, hope and stability. Membership soared from 729,219 in 1929 to 1,136,148 in 1942.

Today, as we face similar difficulties, we have an equally important obligation to stand strong in our communities, to build our membership, and show America what it means to be a Legionnaire. Operation Comfort Warriors is an excellent example.

David K. Rehbein,
National Commander

VETERANS AGREE TO SETTLE LAWSUIT ABOUT THEFT OF COMPUTER EQUIPMENT REPORTED TO CONTAIN PERSONAL INFORMATION

WASHINGTON, DC --- Attorneys for a group of veterans filed papers today informing the Court that a settlement has been reached resolving their lawsuits for alleged violations of the Federal Privacy Act stemming from the May 3, 2006, theft of computer equipment reported to contain personal information.

The agreement filed with the United States District Court for the District of Columbia contains a proposed \$20 million settlement with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and certain Department employees in their official capacities. The settlement will fund payments for actual damages incurred by veterans, some spouses of veterans, and military personnel, as a result of the May 2006 theft. Remaining funds, if any, will be donated to veterans' charities agreed to by the parties (the Fisher House Foundation, Inc. and The Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund).

On May 3, 2006, computer equipment reportedly containing personal information of military veterans, some spouses of veterans, and military personnel, was stolen from the home of an employee of Veterans Affairs. The equipment

reportedly contained such information as names, social security numbers, and dates of birth for up to 17.5 million individuals, as well as some disability ratings. The data did not include any health records or financial information.

The equipment was later recovered on June 28, 2006, by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, whose review of the equipment indicated that the data had not been accessed. The lawsuit alleges that the Defendants violated federal law by not properly securing the information. The Defendants deny that they did anything wrong and the settlement does not mean that any law was violated. The Class includes all veterans, spouses of veterans, and military personnel who had actual damages during the Recovery Period that were directly related to the theft of computer equipment which was reported to contain personal information from the home of a VA employee on May 3, 2006.

The Class also includes all representatives, heirs, administrators, executors, beneficiaries, agents, and assigns of such individuals. Actual damages include out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a direct result of the theft, including those that were: expended to protect or monitor personal or financial information; or the result of physical symptoms of severe emotional distress. Out-of-pocket expenses may include, for example, the purchase of credit monitoring to protect against identity theft. Those affected by this settlement can send in a claim form to ask for a payment, or they can ask to be excluded from, or object to, the settlement and its terms. Notices informing Class Members about their legal rights are scheduled to appear in consumer and military publications in the United States. A toll-free number will be established along with a settlement website where notices, a claim form, and the settlement agreement may be obtained.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”

Adjutant Report

This month I have to start off the article on a sad note to advise you that Eddie Ordunez joined Post Everlasting last Friday, January 23, 2009. He had been on dialysis 3 days a week for quite some time. Eddie was a long-time Legionnaire, known to virtually everyone in the 20th District and beyond. He was Past 20th Dist. Cmdr, Past Cmdr Sun Valley Post 520, Past Cmdr of the Past Cmdrs' Club, Past Chef of Voiture 1303, and held many more offices beyond those. Services for Eddie Ordunez will be on Monday, 2 Feb 2009 Viewing and memorial service: J. T. Oswald Mortuary 1001 N. MacLay Ave. San Fernando 91340 Viewing: 0930 - 1130 Service: 1130 Graveside: Pierce Brothers Valhalla Memorial Park 10621 Victory Blvd. North Hollywood 91606 Reception: Sun Valley Post 5209026 Sunland Blvd. Sun Valley 91352. Delegates from Reseda should attend.

I hate to disagree with the new President, but I don't believe that his selection of W. Scott Gould as next Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs is correct. It might be a bone appointment or a holding pattern appointment, but Mr. Gould is not the correct choice. He has too much experience in national security affairs and military affairs to be working at the VA. He was a White House Fellow, worked in the Office of the White House Chief of Staff, and was a former member of the National Security Agency's Technical Advisory Group. As a naval reservist, Gould served at sea aboard the guided missile destroyer Richard E. Byrd and as assistant professor of naval science at Rochester University. He was recalled to active duty for both Operation Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom as a naval intelligence reservist. Mr. Gould is a prime candidate for a DHS, State Dept., CIA or DOD senior position and is a rising star. His wife, Michèle Flournoy (also on the fast track) might also be in line for senior DOD or a State job - Watch them.

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9/11/2001

**Never
Forget**

More Veterans, Military, and DOD news

Deputy VA Secretary

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki praised President Barack Obama's intent to nominate W. Scott Gould as next Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Gould is currently vice president for public sector strategy at IBM Global Business Services and a former intelligence officer in the naval reserve. He has public service experience at both the departments of Commerce and Treasury.

Shinseki said, "Scott and I share a reverence for those who have served in uniform. He is fully committed to fulfilling President Obama's vision and my goals for transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs into a 21st Century organization, and he understands the fundamentals that will drive that transformation: Veteran-centric, results-oriented and forward looking."

Shinseki further said that Gould possesses a unique and wide-ranging set of skills in information technologies, acquisition, budget, human resources and leading the modernization of large, complex organizations. "Scott's expertise in these areas, as well as his broad experience in the public sector, the private sector and the military, will prove invaluable for better serving our Veterans," Shinseki added.

Legion targets young VA volunteers

By Steve Brooks

The average age of a volunteer in the Department of Veterans Affairs health-care system is about 75. To ensure that organizations like those in The American Legion family can continue to provide their valuable services – our members donate more than 900,000 hours of their time annually – a generation of younger volunteers is needed.

Such was the purpose of National Commander David K. Rehbein's trip to Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 18. Joined by National Headquarters staff, Auxiliary

President Desireé Stoy and Department of Iowa Legionnaires, Rehbein met with officials at the city's VA medical center, and its veterans center, to talk about the importance of getting younger volunteers to sign up with VA. Rehbein and Stoy went through the sign-up process during the trip.

"We need to look at innovative ways to include younger volunteers, what assignments are available – including nights and weekends – and what would be appealing to them, and get them in the door," said Jacob Gadd, National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation assistant director.

The group heard about the many roles volunteers fill at the Des Moines VA Medical Center: working in the canteen, labs, human resources, the parking lot, and driving patients to and from appointments. Plans are under way to recruit volunteers from college campuses in an effort to bring more young people into the system.

The American Legion is also taking on that responsibility. "We need to get our volunteers to your system," Rehbein told VA officials. "We're looking for ways to spread the word to help you."

The Vet Center has hired OIF/OEF veterans to serve as counselors to perform outreach at active-duty, National Guard and reserve military facilities. One idea produced during the meeting was a recruitment flyer that counselors could distribute to alert younger veterans of opportunities to volunteer. Another option is to visit college campuses to spread the word.

The Legion will play a key role in filling the gap as today's volunteer pool begins to diminish with age. Among its plans:

- Encouraging departments to offer Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) training at least once a year. The National VA&R Division can send representatives to help with such training.

- Encouraging departments to set up volunteer booths at department events such as mid-winter conferences, spring/fall meetings, department conventions and OEF/OIF welcome-home

celebrations.

- Asking VAVS outreach and recruitment teams to adopt a university and seek out veterans who need assistance with the GI Bill. Invite those veterans to Legion posts for events and ask them to become VA volunteers.

- Urging VAVS representatives and deputy representatives to attend quarterly VAVS meetings at VA medical centers, and share pertinent volunteer assignments and donation requests with each post's VAVS contact. Each post needs to identify a VAVS contact and then call the VAVS representative, or deputy representative, to get on a phone and mailing list.

- Asking departments to recruit a minimum of 22 new volunteers in 2009.

Finally, the Legion recommends that VA streamline its volunteer application process, as well as offer online registration and classes.

Beer

BAGHDAD — Baghdad-based sports fans have one more reason to look forward to this season's Super Bowl.

Multi-National Division–Baghdad has received permission to let its units enjoy an honest-to-goodness beer on game day instead of the near-beer soldiers usually quaff in downrange DFACs. The approval comes with plenty of time for the beer to be shipped into theater.

General Order No. 1 has banned U.S. forces from drinking alcohol in Iraq since troops deployed to the Middle East. There has been at least one previous instance in which units could drink in Iraq, but it is not known exactly how many times this has been done in the past.

This Super Bowl will be a strictly controlled exception to the long-standing policy. Exact procedures have not been developed. But troops will be limited to two drinks, and the beer will be consumed in the dining facility where soldiers can watch the game.

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MND-B stressed that it is always on duty and vigilant, and that it never relaxes its posture. But some soldiers still worried about how the beer would affect readiness.

Deadly Toll from Post-Deployment Car Crashes

With motor vehicle crashes being a leading cause of deaths among combat veterans during the first years after their return home, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Defense (DOD) are working on a new program designed to identify needed research involving recently returned veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and to increase awareness of the importance of safe driving among newly-demobilized veterans.

The safe-driving initiative strives to increase awareness of motor vehicle crashes among veterans and the importance of safe driving, seatbelt and helmet usage, and other measures. To reach out to veterans and their families, VA will create a national educational program using the Department's network of medical centers, community clinics, drop-in counseling centers (Vet Centers), and veterans benefits offices.

The initiative will also include outreach to mobilize national veterans service organizations; the nation's governors and state police, safety officers, and state highway safety officials; and the private sector -including employers; automobile, motorcycle and sports vehicle dealers and manufacturers; the motor vehicle insurance industry; and driving and motorcycle racing enthusiasts' organizations. NASCAR legend and safe driving advocate, Richard Petty, will also be an active partner in the initiative.

Motor vehicle accidents remain a major concern in the military and among veterans as the greatest cause of accidental fatalities. Several studies have reported an increase in post-deployment deaths among military personnel who served in a combat zone compared to their non-deployed coun-

terparts, who are in the military but not deployed to a war, after both the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War. Preliminary evidence also indicates this is the case with veterans from the Global War on Terror.

Recruiter Suicides

U.S. Sen John Cornyn has formally requested congressional hearings to examine a recent rash of suicides among Houston-based Army recruiters, saying he believes the deaths demonstrate the enormous strain recruiters endure to sustain the country's all-volunteer force.

The Texas Republican made the request in a letter sent Thursday to Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate armed services committee, and Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., the committee's ranking member. "I strongly believe that this alarming trend, which is further evidence of the strain on our current force, necessitates the attention of Congress," Cornyn wrote.

Four recruiters from the Houston Recruiting Battalion killed themselves between January 2005 and September 2008. All four were reassigned to recruiting duty after returning from tours in Iraq or Afghanistan. Recruiting has long been considered one of the military's most stressful jobs, especially at a time when America is fighting two wars. An Army investigation, requested by Cornyn in October, found that poor leadership, job-related stress, personal matters and medical problems were all factors in the recruiters' deaths.

As a result of the findings released Wednesday, Secretary of the Army Pete Geren ordered a rare one-day stand-down for all Army recruiters on Feb. 13 in order to focus on leadership training, suicide prevention and recruiter wellness. The Army also will assess working conditions throughout its recruiting battalions and review recruiter screening and selection processes, Army-wide suicide prevention training, and access to mental health care for recruiters, many of whom are stationed in rural areas far from military bases.

Cornyn said he was particularly trou-



bled by the investigation's conclusion that the Houston battalion's leadership created an intimidating and threatening environment for recruiters, verbally abusing the soldiers and humiliating them if they failed to meet monthly quotas.

Commanders also violated Army regulations by assigning excessive recruiting goals to individual soldiers in order to meet the battalion's overall numbers, he said. The recruiting goals for each of the Army's 38 battalions vary on a monthly basis, depending on the Army's needs.

"I have received a tremendous outpouring of letters and calls pertaining to these issues from both Texas constituents and others," Cornyn wrote in his letter to Levin and McCain. "These individuals, many of them current or past recruiters, have informed me that these problems are not limited to the Houston Recruiting Battalion, or even the Army, and may in fact be widespread across our Armed Forces."

20th District meeting

When: Mon. 09-FEB
6:00PM - Exec. Cmte
7:00PM - General meeting

Where: Antelope Valley Post Post 311

Who: All Post Delegates

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Over the past year I haven't been right in any of my sports predictions. I'm a dreamer and love a Cinderella story. I know everyone is going to laugh, but I'm going with the Arizona Cardinals to win the Super Bowl. Not only that but I'm going to predict the final score, and how that comes about! Arizona scores first on a James run – Pittsburgh scores on a pass but misses the extra point. Warner gets hurt on a Pittsburgh blitz, and Matt Leinart replaces him. Pittsburgh kicks 3 field goals, Arizona 1, going into the last two minutes of the game – the score is Pittsburgh 15, Arizona 10. Lienart connects with a wide receiver to win the game. I guess once again I must disagree with the President. Oh, and you can call me a turncoat, because I'm from PA and would be yelling for the Steelers if they were playing any other team (except Minnesota).

The San Fernando Valley Marine League detachment has selected our post facility to conduct their monthly meetings (held the 3rd Thursday of each month), so if you're a jar-head – stop down and support them. Our St. Pat-

rick's day party is on March 15th, come and eat for \$7.

Membership renewals are slowing down, and I once again remind you that if your dues are not paid, your American Legion privileges are suspended. What does that mean? Your free insurance is not in force, you can't vote in Post business, you lose the comradeship of hanging out with your fellow veterans, and you will soon be dropped from the mailing list. That's the good stuff! The Commander and 1st Vice will hound you each month to renew – so save yourself some trouble, save the post some money and pay those dues ASAP. Remember, each one of us belongs to a select fraternity and brotherhood. Your service to the United States of America did not and does not stop until you die. Support the Post and help those of us who can't support themselves. The homeless vets, the disabled vets, the hospitalized vets, and the children of those still serving. Each one of you should attempt to stop by the hall at least once per month, have a drink or do some work—It will get you out of the house, and give you a purpose.

Larry Bowman

RESEDA POST 308 UPCOMING EVENTS February - 2008

Feb 3 - General Meeting - 8:00
Feb 4 - Swing Dance
Feb 9 - District Meetin@311
Feb 11 - Swing Dance
Feb 17 - Exec. Meeting
Feb 18 - Swing Dance
Feb 19 - Marine League Mtg.
Feb 21 - Wrestling at the Post
Feb 25 - Swing Dance

AMERICAN LEGION POST #308

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