



SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

**American Legion Auxiliary
Ninety-fifth National Convention**

**August 28 – September 3, 2015
Baltimore, Maryland**

**American Legion Auxiliary
National Officers
2014-2015**

National President

Janet Jefford, Department of Connecticut

National Vice President

Sharon Conatser, Department of Illinois

Division National Vice Presidents

Central: Laura Mosby, Department of Missouri

Eastern: Sandra Neylon, Department of New Hampshire

Northwestern: Lori Skallerud, Department of Minnesota

Southern: Susan Heil, Department of Oklahoma

Western: Susan Diaz, Department of Alaska

National Chaplain

Karen Boehler, Department of Colorado

National Historian

Lorraine "Rani" Gray, Department of Vermont

National Secretary

Mary "Dubbie" Buckler, Department of Indiana

National Treasurer

Marta Hedding, Department of Indiana

PRESENT

Pre-Convention National Executive Committee Meeting Saturday, August 29, 2015

National Officers

National President	Janet Jefford
National Vice President	Sharon Conatser
Central Division National Vice President	Laura Mosby
Eastern Division National Vice President	Sandra Neylon
Northwestern Division National Vice President	Lori Skallerud
Southern Division National Vice President	Susan Heil
Western Division National Vice President	Susan Diaz
National Chaplain	Karen Boehler
National Historian	Lorraine “Rani” Gray
National Secretary	Mary “Dubbie” Buckler
National Treasurer	Marta Hedding

Past National Presidents

Linda Boone
Linda Newsome
Phyllis Sickmond
Barbara Kranig
Virginia Hobbs
Elizabeth Stewart
Kristine West
Katherine Morris
Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan
Desireé Stoy
Miriam Junge (Honorary)
Rita Navarreté
Carlene Ashworth
Kris Nelson
Peggy Thomas
Nancy Brown-Park

National Executive Committeewomen

Alabama	-
Alaska	-
Arizona	Jane Shoemaker
Arkansas	Betty Minor
California	Anita Biggs
Colorado	Susan Bozella
Connecticut	Joe Ann Jackson
Delaware	Carol Feeley
District of Columbia	Jeneal Ball
Florida	Dianne Rousseau

Georgia	Nancy “Betty” Grist
Hawaii	Laura Hashimoto
Idaho	Joann Rasmussen
Illinois	Judy Zimmerman
Indiana	Carol LaGard
Iowa	Ann Crawford
Kansas	Karon Cook
Kentucky	Patricia Reynolds
Louisiana	Monique Batiste
Maine	Mary Jane McLoon
Maryland	Anselma Obremski
Massachusetts	-
Michigan	Nancy Knox
Minnesota	Shirley Frederick
Mississippi	Margaret Blanchard
Missouri	Barbara Sheets
Montana	Jennifer Herman
Nebraska	JoAnn Ward
Nevada	Glynis Seeley
New Hampshire	Lisa Rojek
New Jersey	Charlene McConville
New Mexico	Janet Romero
New York	Barbara Corker
North Carolina	Sharon Neville
North Dakota	Marlys Aubol
Ohio	Victoria Buck
Oklahoma	Linda Keister
Oregon	Angelina McKinney
Pennsylvania	Mary Ellen Switzer
Puerto Rico	Hilda Soto
Rhode Island	Donna Rivet
South Carolina	Linda Smiley
South Dakota	Janet Hurlbert
Tennessee	Charlotte Connors
Texas	Christine Trahan
Utah	Judy Daybell
Vermont	Theresa Christie
Virginia	Cindy Kokernak
Washington	Terri Angell
West Virginia	-
Wisconsin	Joyce Endres
Wyoming	Shareen Johnson

**Post-Convention National Executive Committee Meeting
Thursday, August 28, 2014**

National Officers

National President	Janet Jefford
National Vice President	Sharon Conatser
Central Division National Vice President	Laura Mosby
Eastern Division National Vice President	Sandra Neylon
Northwestern Division National Vice President	Lori Skallerud
Southern Division National Vice President	Sue Heil
Western Division National Vice President	Sue Diaz
National Chaplain	Karen Boehler
National Historian	Lorraine “Rani” Gray
National Secretary	Mary “Dubbie” Buckler
National Treasurer	Marta Hedding

Past National Presidents

Phyllis Sickmond
Barbara Kranig
Elizabeth Stewart
Katherine Morris
Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan
Miriam Junge (Honorary)
Carlene Ashworth
Peggy Thomas
Nancy Brown-Park
Janet Jefford

National Executive Committeewomen

Alabama	Barbara Mitchell
Alaska	Susan Diaz
Arizona	Jane Shoemaker
Arkansas	-
California	Harriet Clendenin
Colorado	Susan Bozella
Connecticut	-
Delaware	Arnita Coleman
District of Columbia	Jeneal Ball
Florida	-
Georgia	Gabriele Barnett
Hawaii	-
Idaho	Joann Rasmussen
Illinois	Ann Flanagan
Indiana	-
Iowa	Ann Crawford
Kansas	Tonia Ison
Kentucky	-

Louisiana.....	Rachel Fox
Maine.....	Mary Jane McLoon
Maryland.....	Iverna Christoffers
Massachusetts.....	Margaret Roy
Michigan.....	Nancy Knox
Minnesota.....	-
Mississippi.....	-
Missouri.....	Anita Smith
Montana.....	Jennifer Herman
Nebraska.....	-
Nevada.....	Glynis Seeley
New Hampshire.....	Jessie Bernard
New Jersey.....	-
New Mexico.....	-
New York.....	-
North Carolina.....	Janice MacLeod
North Dakota.....	-
Ohio.....	Susan Masten
Oklahoma.....	Carol Blosch
Oregon.....	-
Pennsylvania.....	-
Puerto Rico.....	Myrna Rivera-Rodriguez
Rhode Island.....	-
South Carolina.....	Anne Parker
South Dakota.....	-
Tennessee.....	Janice Bruce
Texas.....	-
Utah.....	-
Vermont.....	Theresa Christie
Virginia.....	Nancy Harting
Washington.....	-
West Virginia.....	Debra Fox
Wisconsin.....	-
Wyoming.....	-

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**PRE-CONVENTION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 2015**

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thirty second warning. Can you hear this in the back? We're just testing the mike.

VOICES: No.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Is there a way we could turn -- it's on, but it doesn't seem to be -- Laura, can you hear this in the back? I'm as close as I can get to it. I'm as close as I can get to this. Can you hear it? Technical difficulty. Yeah, but I'm going to be weird standing like this all morning. All right. Is this better? No? I can take my shoes off. All right. Better? Better?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Up a little more. Is that better?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. All right. This National Executive Committee meeting will now come to order.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please be sure that if the NECs are seated in their seat. Hi Barb.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Just as a reminder, please if you would please silent your cell phones or any other devices you have. Thank you. We will rise and remain standing for the opening ceremony.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: First Karen Boehler, our National Chaplain, will lead us in our invocation and moment of silence for our fallen heroes and those serving our nation today for the protection of our freedom. Following the prayer, Americanism Chairman Kathy Daudistel will lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem, followed by Constitution and Bylaws Chairman Lisa Williamson leading us in the Preamble to the Constitution. Karen, would you please lead us in prayer?

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: If you would please bow your heads and we'll offer that moment of silence first. But I'd like you to know that what I've chosen to do for this Convention, I received such an overwhelming number of beautifully written prayers for our National President's Prayer Book that I decided not to keep them just to myself and to President Janet, but I'm sharing some of them throughout the Convention. And so this morning's prayer that I will read to you was sent in by Cindy Queen from the Department of Arizona. So with that, please, would you bow your heads?

And Heavenly Father, let us start this day by giving thanks for those who are serving, and those who are served, who have served this great nation. Many have given everything. Lord, bless them as we give you our silent prayers.

(Moment of Silence.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: And dear Heavenly Father, I give you all the members of our American Legion Auxiliary. I ask that you would cover us with a rainbow of hope; hope that draws us together to work out our differences; hope that helps us to celebrate together and care for one another; hope that rides like a banner in our lives and watches over us wherever we go; hope that overcomes adversity and gathers strength to overcome; hope that guides us and gives us vision for our future alone and together; and a hope filled with love. Grant us hope that fuels faith; hope that breeds peace; and may our American Legion Auxiliary give thanks each and every day. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Please join me in saying the Pledge.

ALL: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

ALL: (Singing.) Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight o'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there. Oh say does that Star Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Please join me in the Preamble.

ALL: For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations during the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy; to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of the American Legion; to consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Oh, please remain standing. We are compelled to never forget that while we enjoy our daily pleasures there are others who have endured, and may still be enduring, the agonies of pain, deprivation, and imprisonment. Before we begin our activities today, please pause with me to remember our POWs and MIAs.

(Moment of Silence.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. You may be seated.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So this meeting of the National Executive Committee is convened. You know, it's like, just seems a little while ago it was always the first, your first meeting, your first NEC, your first this, and now it's like it's the last NEC meeting. So, but I do want to welcome you all to Baltimore and our 95th Annual National Convention. We have so much to celebrate this year and part of my theme was celebrating, and

so I hope that's just what we do: celebrate all that we've accomplished and recognize all those who have done the great work this year.

So good to see everybody again. Just out of curiosity, who is here for their first NEC meeting or first Convention? Is there anybody in the room? Wow, very good. Thank you. And welcome, I hope you have a great time. You have a lot of good mentors up here that will help you. If you have any questions I'm sure they'll be happy to help you, right? Thank you. All right.

So before we begin our business I want to remind you that anyone wishing to speak is first asked to make their way to the microphone in the center aisle as this is the only way your remarks can be heard for the court reporter's transcript of the meeting.

As many of you will remember, attendance at previous NEC meetings was at, it was each member's responsibility to, you know, write your name on that little list. But thanks to our amazing Convention team and our National Headquarters staff we were able to track your attendance electronically today. So I hope that was a little easier. Thank you for doing that, Laura and staff.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Cool. Okay. So I guess I get to first start with some introductions. I'll start with the head table. I don't think I need the script but we'll try.

Sharon Conatser, our National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Sandra Neylon, Eastern Divisional Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Lori Skallerud, Northwestern Divisional National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And not that I'm not glad to see everybody, but Lori, I am especially so happy that you are able to be with us today. Susan Heil, Southern Division.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Susan Diaz, Western Divisional National Vice President.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Karen Boehler, who has all year, has kept me, my spirits up by sending me little emails and prayers and thoughts for the day. Our Chaplain Karen.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh yes. Laura, I didn't mean to do this. Laura Mosby, Central Division National Vice President. Laura, I, all right, extra cheers for Laura.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

NATIONAL HISTORIAN: Okay, cool. And Lorraine, Rani Gray, our National Historian.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

SECRETARY: Mary “Dubbie” Buckler, our National Secretary.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

NATIONAL TREASURER: Marta Hedding, our National Treasurer.

(Applause.)

CONVENTION PARLIAMENTARIAN: And seated here is Chris Dickey. This is her ninth year, I have checked that out, as our Convention Parliamentarian.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I’d like to just take a moment to introduce my personal pages for this Convention. They are all from my department of Connecticut. We have Jeannie Berry.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Stand up. Lydia DeGumbia.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Marge Sunbury, and Beverly Dean.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And now for this wonderful, wonderful bunch, group -- look at Linda. Our Past National Presidents, please welcome all with a big round of applause.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: There’s a wealth of information and knowledge sitting over there. Thank you. All right. Consent agenda. Today, we will again be utilizing the consent agenda. These items are listed on your agenda that you received, and I hope you all reviewed them. They include unit charter cancellations since February of 2015. There are also four National Finance Committee policies up for renewal, and they are the American Legion Auxiliary solicitation and acceptance of donation policy; the ALA Headquarters business credit card policy; the ALA National Headquarters purchasing policy; and our reserve funds policy.

You received information on each of these. Have you had a chance to read them and review them? Thank you. Thank you. Information about how the consent agenda works was circulated to each of you in advance along with the items that were listed on the agenda. Remember, if you want to, want a separate vote or wish to discuss any of the items on the consent agenda now is your time to ask that they be removed from that agenda. Does anyone wish to remove any item from the consent agenda?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, the Chair will entertain a motion for the adoption of the consent agenda.

MS. KOKERNAK: (Indiscernible). I’m sorry. Madam President,

Cindy Kokernak, Department of Virginia. I move adoption of the consent agenda as presented.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Cindy. Is there a second?

VOICE: Second.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. You have heard the motion for the adoption of the consent agenda. All those in favor of adopting the consent agenda, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All those opposed say no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The ayes have it and the consent agenda is adopted. Thank you. Okay. So now it says National President's report and personal remarks. I could start some of those at the beginning. But what a difference from our February NEC meeting, right?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: How many of you were not able to get to Washington for our NEC? You know, I really applaud you for trying. I know so many of you were stuck in airports so long and had such a hard time getting there. So thank God it's summer in Baltimore, right? So no complaining about the heat for the rest, okay? Because we're not shoveling it and we're not, you know, stuck in airports. So that's really good.

First of all, I want to thank all of you for your service this year, you know, and for taking the time to read what was given to you, to talk about it. I hope you all had a chance to make good reports to your departments and keep them informed. Because I think you all know, communicating with your department on what's going on at the national level is really, really important, helping them to understand. Because I think the more we understand and the more we get to talk about things, the better we will work towards that second goal of our strategic plan, a good culture, a culture of goodwill. So hopefully that will work.

You know, since February it's been an awesome few months. I think one of the highlights of my time as President since then was our visit to the, to Europe and two things stand out on that visit. One was chartering a new unit in Flanders, and in Brussels, and that was really cool. The department, the unit president that I installed and gave the charter to was only 18 years old. And I think all her officers were like under 25, so that was a pretty cool thing to be able to do that, especially with a new unit in Brussels. And hopefully, they have to work because they are military, and you know how they get moved around, so they are committed to making sure that they have succession in place to follow and keep that unit alive.

And I think the second thing that I remember the most was being in Normandy on D-Day. That American cemetery, you know, people have told me how beautiful it is, and what you'll feel when you go there. But there was nothing like, you know, walking on that beach in the morning and then turning and seeing that cemetery and the, looking at those crosses, just row by row of crosses.

And I've told this story before. Our guide didn't just show us the

cemetery. She would stop at a plot, you know, at a cross, and tell us about the person that was buried there. And his story. And you know, and it made me think that we're, that cemetery just doesn't honor the person, the soldier that's buried there, but their entire family and their communities that suffered that loss. And she left us, the last thing she said to us, I don't think I'll ever forget it. She just said, I want to thank you. She said, it was because of the people buried here, and others, that my children get to play on that beach today. And I think that one sentence, for me, said it all. And so think about that, and what you do, and how important it is on what you do. And thank you for your service. And thank everybody here for what you are doing for our veterans, our military. How you are enlightening our youth and helping them and how you are helping to keep your communities strong. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. If you recall last year, our governing documents were amended to establish an Executive Committee to the NEC. So as Chairman this year of that Executive Committee I would like to bring you the report of the Executive Committee.

This committee includes myself, as the American Legion Auxiliary National President; our National Vice President; National Secretary; National Treasurer; and the National Finance Committee. And Nicole? I did see Nicole sitting in the back there.

The Executive Committee is charged with reviewing, researching, and making recommendation to the NEC on matters requiring NEC action. In this capacity, today this committee will be recommending two resolutions that will be presented to you shortly.

The second charge of the Executive Committee is to address and act on time sensitive matters subject to the ratification of the NEC. So if we took any action on those matters we would have to come back for your ratification. I am very happy to report that we had no such emergencies or time sensitive matters. So there will be no actions of the Executive Committee to be ratified. And another good news is we did it all without spending any money, because any meetings or discussions we had were on the phone. So that's a good thing, right, Nicole?

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Absolutely. I don't know if Tim is here, or else I'd be saying --

MR. BRESNAHAN: (Indiscernible).

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, you're happy too, right, Tim?

MR. BRESNAHAN: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yes, sir. Okay. So we will proceed to the two resolutions. But before I do I just want to let you know, I know you received the resolutions. There's a long rationale there. But please know that a lot of work, a lot of time, and a lot of financial resources have been spent on matters that we didn't really expect. And one of those matters has to do with that resolution on the Girls State Guide and the additions to that.

You know, it is extremely important that we protect our trademark of

our seal, our name, and the name of our program, Girls State. The other thing, it's also very important that the materials that we've used, those materials we've used for over, like, what, 75 years, that we protect them and not allow anyone else to try to copyright that material. And that's what has happened recently.

One of the subsidiary corporations, actually Columbine Girls State Subsidiary Corporation, you know, is trying to copyright that material. So that's what this, prompted this addition to the operation guide. You know, and I think it's on all of us as members of this organization to protect our seal, to protect our name, the names of our programs, and to protect our programs. So that is one of the rationales on why the Executive Committee is recommending that resolution.

Okay. So now we'll proceed to handling the two resolutions. Are there any questions, first of all, on anything that the Executive Committee has done? Yes?

All right. Before we get to the resolutions, we need to handle the minutes. So the Chair is happy to report that the Minutes Approval Committee met and approved the minutes of the NEC meeting from February, 2015. This committee is made up of Anita Biggs from California; Karon Cook from Kansas; and Judy Zimmerman from Illinois. And I have to tell you, just to, not to make your head swell, but Chris Dickey told me that you have done a really, really good job. She said everybody is asking her questions, reviewing the minutes. And I think she was surprised at how involved everybody was. So thank you, thank you for a good job.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So we will now proceed to the handling of those resolutions. The first resolution deals with the additions to the Girls State Program and Operation Guide. This resolution will not be read since you received it, unless there is a request to do so. Is there any request to read that resolution?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good. Therefore the Chair will now entertain a motion to adopt the resolution. Is there a motion to adopt the resolution?

MS. TRAHAN: Madam President, Christine Trahan from Texas. I move that we adopt the resolution for Girls State.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Second? Thank you. The motion is on the adoption of the resolution as presented. Is there any discussion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: No discussion. Therefore, all those in favor of the resolution please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All those opposed, say no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The ayes have it and the resolution is adopted. Thank you.

All right. The second resolution is on supporting the American Legion to resolve IRS issues negatively affecting units and posts. Did you all understand that resolution? Are there any questions before I ask for a motion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: If not then the Chair will entertain a motion to accept the resolution.

MS. SEELEY: Madam Chair, Glynis Seeley, Department of Nevada. I'd like to move that we adopt the resolution as presented.

VOICE: Second.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. The motion is on the adoption of the resolution as presented. Is there any discussion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, all those in favor of adopting the resolution please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, say no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The resolution passes. Thank you. All right. The Chair now calls on Nicole Clapp, Chairman of the National Finance Committee, for her report.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Madam President, everyone, your National Finance Committee, our Vice Chairman is Jenny Hobbs. Our committee members are Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, Desi Stoy, and JoAnn Cronin. I thank you for your service this year.

I am pleased to share with you a brief summary this morning of our financial activities through our fiscal year thus far this year of July 31st. The fiscal performance of the national organization has been positive. Just to give you two numbers to remember today: \$8 million in revenue, \$6 million in expense.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: But as I always say, remember what's in our last quarter, our biggest expenses of the year. So remember National Convention. But so we'll see what things end up at the end of the year. But we appreciate your support. And really that's truly due also to the sufficient revenue stream with the dues increase adopted in 2011 and in effect for the 2013 membership year. The positive performance of our investments. So we were able to enhance the Department Leadership National Conference by continuing to underwrite the cost for three department representatives to attend. We were able to maintain visits by the National Division Vice Presidents. And resource phase one of the ALA Centennial Strategic Plan. By resourcing phase one of the strategic plan we were able to provide professional guidance, such as the first ever department secretary training at ALA National Headquarters underwritten by National Headquarters, and issue over \$8,000 of ALA Centennial Plan department achievement awards so far

this year. Are any of those award recipients in the room today from your departments? Congratulations.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Once again, our successful fundraising campaigns from our direct mail vendor from Innovairre continue with three fiscal campaigns each year for the Auxiliary and one for the Foundation. Donations this year totaled a net of over \$687,000. It continues to grow each and every year. The direct mail campaigns when we looked at the 2014 distribution, 218,000 gifts were received. Of those, 117,000 came from ALA members and 101,000 from outside the organization. So if you received your beautiful patriotic calendar in the mail we appreciate your generosity and your support. But thinking of that continued trend, as many, almost as many donors from the outside of our organization demonstrate a tremendous source of external support for the ALA.

In this fiscal year of 2015 the number of people applying for the Auxiliary USAA credit card does continue to grow. Since our inception we now have 6,201 credit cards have been issued. And ladies, we know how we like to spend. \$19.7 million have been charged on those credit cards by 6,201 individuals. So I think there's a good reason why we all got that little card in our packet to go down and apply for that trip to Hawaii that they have at their booth.

Besides the growth in the number of cards, realizing that we have a royalty revenue sharing program back with the departments and this year that should be expected to be around \$12,500. So it is a win-win for all of us.

As your Finance Committee we also believe in the value of knowledge and gain through the members attending mission trainings. And this year we had over 850 members attend ALA mission trainings, and 12 departments had their own specific trainings which was a new initiative this year.

So on behalf of the Finance Committee, thank you for your dedication, your commitment, and generous, generous support of the ALA's efforts to fulfill our mission. Are there any questions regarding the financial report this morning from the NEC?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Hearing none, in conclusion I wish to thank the NEC for your financial due diligence this year and your support of our committee. Please be known that our continued goal is to make decisions in the best interests of our organization and its mission. And we appreciate the efforts to maintain our organization's financial viability. So Madam President, this concludes the financial report for 2015.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Nicole.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Is there any other new business to come before this meeting?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Then that means, Dubbie, you

get to come up and make some announcements. Or I think you want to add something to my remarks?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Announcements, or sing, or -- okay. First, a reminder that the Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention meeting is today at 1:00 p.m. in Room Hall A. So now I'm looking for -- oh, okay. So as they go out this door if they were going to go to Hall A, give me hand signals. Go downstairs. Go downstairs two levels, and behind us. It's right underneath us, down two levels. Okay. Okay. Thank you very much. Obviously I haven't gone from here down there yet either.

I just want to make a comment with Janet up here while she was making her remarks, or after she made her remarks. I just wanted to add just a couple of additional comments to what she brought up. So in singing, I'll start it out this way. So tell me, tell me what I'm singing about. (Singing.) Find it fast -- (Knocking.) -- in me.

VOICES: Yellow pages.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Yellow pages.

VOICE: That's an old song.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: It is an old song.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I think she's telling you you're --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I was a very little girl when I heard that. (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The reason I, the reason that I'm singing that is, so who would you associate the yellow pages with? If you were to put a person, who would you associate the yellow pages with?

VOICE: Ma Bell.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Ma Bell, thank you. Ma Bell. Okay. Ma Bell did, has had her ups and downs in life. The yellow pages was -- the point I'm trying to make, there really is a point to this.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The yellow pages was around for a long time, right?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Ma Bell never copyrighted it, never trademarked it. So before we went digital, remember how you started getting all sorts of yellow books?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And they were able to do that because Ma Bell never assumed when they began the yellow pages that anybody would ever infringe on their trademark or copyright. And now how many years since we've had the first American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program? Seventy-five. Ding-ding-ding-ding-ding for whoever said 75, 75. About the time that Ma Bell realized, oh man, we really messed up not copyrighting some of this stuff. So I just wanted to add onto why, what's behind what needs to be written and included into the ALA Girls State Program and Operations Guide.

I also want to make a comment about, it's no secret now, it's public

record, what Janet was referring to earlier. We did have to go to federal court and sue the subsidiary, the Colorado's Columbine Girls State Program was a subsidiary corporation and we did have to sue them because they were failing to comply with the requirements of being a corporate subsidiary. And I'm not going to go into all of this at length because some of you have heard me talk about this a lot. But the reason we keep bringing it up is a subsidiary corporation is indeed wholly, W-H-O-L-L-Y, wholly accountable to the department. Just as the National Executive Committee has to approve all of the National President's appointments, the department executive committee has to approve its subsidiaries. And the National Executive Committee approves the Foundation board, the department has to approve its incorporated Girls State Program officers, bylaws, changes to its bylaws, and the subsidiary has to report. Just like the Foundation will be delivering a report at this Convention, your ALA Girls State Programs if they are incorporated subsidiaries need to be reporting at your meetings.

So most of us understand that. There's this word called control. There's this word called power. There's this word that we don't like in this organization called relinquish.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we've just had some real problems. And we did have to, we did have to file a lawsuit in federal court. We did win. And it did cost this organization over \$90,000.

Now I want to say we owe a debt of gratitude to the American Legion because they own the name and the trademarks. Even though it was our program, our copyright, they, they underwrote half of the legal expenses. The total legal bill was almost \$200,000. And so we have split it fifty-fifty. They did not have to do that. And I just, I want to say thank you, even though they are not in the room, but I want to say thank you to the American Legion for doing that because that is significant.

I also want to do the rest of the story. And that is we have Susie Bozella here who is from the Department of Colorado who was President. Karen Boehler was President at the time everything began. So this was a long process. This, and this encompassed a couple of years. And during the course of that -- so when the lawsuit was, we had a final decree from the federal court judge the next step was the Department of Colorado did dissolve its subsidiary corporation. And the Department of Colorado established its own ALA Colorado Girls State Program and this was the second year for the program being run successfully by the department.

So from the department's standpoint it was a lot of grief and it still is because they are still dealing with, ergo, this resolution that was before you this morning, they are still dealing with threat of legal action from persons associated with the now dissolved subsidiary.

So there are just things that we need to do. You know the world that we live in. And I just wanted to add a few more pieces of information about what, what sometimes you can put things in a rationale and some things you just need to stand up and explain them and not put them in writing. So anyway, I just wanted to add a little bit of the rest of the story. And Janet,

thank you for allowing me to do that.

The other resolution you adopted this morning was about working with the Legion to, and I'm going to paraphrase because I know we have a court reporter in the room taking this down verbatim, working with the American Legion to address concerns we have about what we believe are misinterpretations by the IRS of federal law. Thank you, Janet.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: My glasses are, kept slowly sliding down off of the podium. I'm sorry. So I'm not going to go, I'm, I'm not going to read this to you. This is just counsel general's report to the Legion about what the problems are. This is just a summary of what the problems are. This is not a solution. I'm not going to read it to you. I just want you to know that it has been, it's a mess. It's more and more impacting units. We have some units that you remember the IRS did exactly what it said it was going to do, we're going to, we have over a million nonprofits in the United States and we're going to dissolve, we're going to get rid of a third of them. And 800 to 1,000 of them started out being American Legion Auxiliary units. Some of them were mistakes by the IRS. I'm sure this will surprise you, that it takes a little while for the IRS to acknowledge if it has made a mistake.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Because he can't put the, he can't put those motions into what he sees here.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: He's now telling me he's writing in, gesticulated largely with her hands.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: It has been, it has taken a lot of time and it has taken a lot -- and time is money, as you well know. So it has taken a lot of time and it has taken a lot of money. It boils down to this -- here are the problems that we know and then I'm going to wrap up my remarks with an appeal and a question to you, or a request.

So about 800, I'm rounding, Marta, jump in if you, and Tim, I know I'm rounding. About 800 units truly lost their exempt status. So the first thing that we tried to do, when I say we, the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, the first thing we tried to do was bring all those back in, and they lost their exempt status because they never knew they had to file a 990. So they lost their exempt status out of, and this is a legal term, out of ignorance. We didn't know we had to do it. So as you all know, ignorance is not a defense. But it's understandable. How many of us have never been ignorant in our lives?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So anyway, so a lot of units just didn't know, because they were small units, didn't have a lot of money, didn't know they had to do this. Well, you know, time went by, they didn't do it, Congress passed a law that said you had to do it. They didn't know Congress passed a law that you had to do it. So they didn't do it. They lost their exempt status.

We tried to bring them in under one big fell swoop. You all lost your

exempt status, here's your names, all your information, IRS, here's a letter, just bring them all back in. Here's, they're sorry, here's their 990s, they are making amends, just bring them all back in. And counsel general had a letter from the IRS -- so I am condensing a lot of conversations, talks, meetings, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, with the top people at the IRS. So this is not just, you know, thinking this is the right thing to do. Had a letter from the IRS saying, yes, you can do that. So counsel general did that, sent the information in. And a woman by the name of Lois Lerner, who was head of the exempt division of the IRS, personally called counsel general and very clearly disagreed that he could do that. And he said, but I have a letter saying I can. And the response was you could not possibly have a letter. He said, well I'll certainly send it to you. And that conversation ended abruptly. And then he provided the documentation. And the next conversation was you're getting a new letter. And the new letter said we couldn't do that.

So I just want to, as simply as I can and without going into a lot of detail that I don't want recorded in the minutes, with all due respect -- (Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- I want you to know that we understand what a big problem this is and we are trying to deal with it. And this resolution is just added oomph, if you will, to try to say, look, we've got a problem and it boils down to this. The 501(c)(19) is a special classification and the 75-25 ratio doesn't apply to the American Legion Auxiliary. It doesn't apply to the Sons. It applies to the American Legion. We're a separate corporation so we don't even factor into that part of it. Clearly they are just, we believe, they are, they are very, they are misrepresenting, or misunderstanding, or misinterpreting what federal law is. And so we're, it is going to take an act of Congress to resolve it.

So anyway, I just wanted to give you a little bit more of the background about why we brought these things to you. I'll, and then I'll get to my request. Because, so let me fast forward. I'm trying to cover two years of, actually three years of kind of a nightmarish ordeal going on.

So a lot of, so those units could not come back in under our group exemption. So one by one we've been helping units to come back in. And for a while the IRS was bringing them back in as a 501(c)(3). And most people understand that a 501(c)(3) is a charitable organization. Well now the IRS is bringing them back in as a 501(c)(4), which is a lobbying organization. A lobbying organization to which donations are not tax deductible. So this is a real problem now. It was a problem bringing them back as a (c)(3), but at least it, you know, you could make that mental leap. You know, veterans service organization auxiliary to a charitable organization, because we do a lot of charitable work. But making that leap to a professional lobbying organization is hard to do.

So my request is, and you don't have to do it today, or while we're even here still, but when you get back home, if you've got incidences, I'm trying to now compile a log of the problems that your departments have been incurring with units that have been, had their tax exempt status revoked, and you're having problems with the IRS not bringing them back in as a (c)(19) or

a (c)(3). (C)(3)s we can deal with. But if they are bringing, if they are not bringing them back at all or bringing them back as a (c)(4), or they are bringing, or they are, or they are trying to impose a 75-25 regulation on you, or trying to impose that you need to have a repository of eligibility documentation, would you please just let me know? And I don't need to know, I don't need to know this much. I just need a short paragraph and I'm going to use, Anita if you don't mind, Department of California, because I know Department of California Unit 123 used to be a (c)(19), lost exempt status, IRS reinstated it as a (c)(4). I mean that, that's what I need to know. And that is, the number is not right, but that did happen to one of the units in California. So thank you for letting me use you as an example.

So anyway, that, that's a little bit more about what was going on. And Madam President, thank you for indulging me a few moments to spend some time explaining that. And otherwise, I don't have any other announcements. So that concludes my remarks. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Dubbie. I think that was helpful to everybody to understand. If you have any more questions, please, I'm sure Dubbie would be happy to talk to or, you know, approach any of us and we'll get you the answers that you need.

Out of curiosity, just how many NECs are going to continue next year as their department's NEC? Stand up, I'd just like to get an idea. Very good. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Well, this is pretty good. It's quarter to nine. I love it. I love it.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah Dubbie, you know, when Dubbie says, can I just have a second to talk? I hate it, you know, I could imagine if she asked, can I have five minutes? You know how long that might be.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: But thank you. All right. I want to thank you, before we have, we close with the benediction. I want to thank you for your dedication and your good work, wish you the best of luck in whatever you're going to do next year. And it has been, really has been a pleasure serving with each and every one of you and meeting you as I traveled across the country. And for all of the, for just how, the good things and how gracious you were when I visited your departments. I really do appreciate your friendships. Thank you.

So we will --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And when, Karen will offer the benediction. And then I do ask that with the NECs if you will just, when we're done and adjourned, if you will just stay in your seats for a minute I'd like to come down there and give you something. All right? So Karen, would you please stand? I mean, would you please offer the benediction? Please stand.

(Ringing of the bell.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Benediction, benediction literally means a good sending. And this prayer was contributed by Doris Ann Werlinger, who is a past Northwest Divisional Vice President from the Department of South Dakota. And she is offering a good sending for President Janet. So bow your heads, if you would please?

Dear God, we thank you for an exciting year for National President Janet, for the American Legion Auxiliary. Bless Janet for doing a great job of leading our national organization. It's a tough job, God, being able to keep everyone happy.

Bless her for all the daily ups and downs and take care of her for the rest of her year and throughout eternity. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please everyone have a great convention. And this meeting of the National Executive Committee is adjourned.

(Applause.)

(Ringing of the bell.)

(Whereupon, at 8:53 a.m. on Saturday, August 29, 2015, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2015

VOICE: The 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to ring in this Convention is your National President Janet Jefford.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good morning, everybody.

VOICES: Good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you so much for being here this morning. Have a seat, everyone. And welcome to the 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. So by a show of hands, has anybody been here for all 95 Conventions?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Didn't think so. How about 50? Anybody been here 50? Shout out. Forty-five?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right! Who knew? Forty-five years of memories, pretty cool.

You know, we have a history of helping veterans, military, and their families for generations. There's a good chance some of your ancestors actually did attend our first Convention 95 years ago. Serving others often runs in families. Now, on your seats this morning I hope you found an American Flag and a little bell. First, let's talk about the bell.

I chose the bell as a symbol for my year and I think it's only appropriate that each of you have one to ring at this great Convention. So here's what I'm proposing, everyone. That bell has a little string on it. Slip it over your index finger, okay? And when we applaud all the great things that we have done over the last year, actually over the last 95 years, your bell will ring. Now by itself, your bell isn't exactly very loud. But I'm betting that when they're ringing together, pretty much like when we're working together, when we're all working together we're going to hear some very beautiful music. So let's give them a try. When I say let freedom ring, clap your hands with your bell around your finger. Okay, ready? Let freedom ring!

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Cool, that was pretty good. Okay. So I wasn't really sure how that was going to turn out or what it would sound like, but that was okay.

So over the next few days when we have something to clap about, let's hear our bells of freedom ring out as well. I think it will be lots of fun.

Now let's talk about Old Glory. Each of you have an American Flag. As part of our opening entertainment, we're going to be part of the show. When instructed we'll all wave our Flags with pride. And if the spirit hits you, wave it whenever you like. But just try not to poke your neighbor in the eye, okay?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So please bring your bells and your Flag with you to each session. Something tells me that we've got a lot of ringing and Flag waving to do over the next few days.

Okay, now let's get started. Each day we're going to open our sessions with a video that I hope will inspire you to do great things. As I'm sure you already know, we are all working on our Centennial Plan, our roadmap, or GPS, to guide the Auxiliary into our next 100 years of service. And you're going to hear a lot more about that plan over the next few days. Our first video this morning is a story about a new Auxiliary member who is helping to fulfill one of our five strategic goals. Let's watch.

(Video.)

ANNOUNCER: There is something really hot going on in quiet, suburban Peoria, Arizona, and it's not just the weather. Here on the outskirts of Phoenix you'll find an Auxiliary public relations heat wave with a burning success story. Units across the country are taking notice and it all started with a brand new member with zero public relations experience.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: I began as Public Relations Chairman a year ago but I didn't have any experience in public relations. So I decided to check out the website at alaforveterans.org, and they had a template for Flag Day. And so I used that template. I decided to personalize it for Arizona so that it would have a better shot of getting published and I ended up getting published in two newspapers.

ANNOUNCER: Early on, Marge realized the importance of establishing relationships with local media.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: One of the things we realized is that newspaper people are incredibly busy. And if we can provide a story that's already done, then that's something they can publish without having to spend their own time writing it. And it increases our chances of being published incredibly.

ANNOUNCER: As the editor of two community weekly newspapers, we count on articles of community interest and American Legion Auxiliary Unit #62 is very good about helping us get their information out to our readers. We enjoy a good relationship with the Auxiliary and I count on them to provide me with information that is pertinent, that is interesting, that is informative for our readers.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: I was really nervous at first. But now we've developed three different types of stories. Letters to the editor that are quick and easy; program stories where I get to talk to program managers and learn about their programs; and stories about our Legionnaires that are about history. People ask me what is my favorite story and I think, it's the one I'm working on right now. I look forward to seeing the joy that people get from seeing themselves in the newspaper. And I can't wait to write the next one.

ANNOUNCER: Readers enjoy and are motivated by positive stories about the Auxiliary and their veterans. And with all effective public relations, communication works both ways.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: In all my stories I try to make sure that we cover what's going on locally as well as nationally. And an important part of

the story is the very end, where we always cover what, how people can get hold of us locally and how they can get hold of the ALA at a national level.

ANNOUNCER: Good PR is not only interesting to the community at large, but it directly impacts unit membership and involvement.

VOICE: With over 800 members here at this unit, I'm able to see a reflection of the public relations on our membership. We are still growing. We're retaining our membership. And we even have a lot of rejoins because of what they've seen in the newspaper and what we do.

VOICE: I read an article late last year about Veterans Day here at this unit, and it really got me motivated to come join and get involved.

VOICE: Being Department President and member of this unit, it's amazing what has been accomplished in one year.

VOICE: So one of the most amazing things that came out of this program was the surprise and enjoyment of our members seeing themselves in the newspaper and their stories being published in the newspaper and what they've done.

ANNOUNCER: And don't forget about the increasing importance of social media as a tool for public relations. Marge often says, it doesn't take a public relations pro to make a huge difference.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: I may not be a journalist or a public relations expert, but I do have a husband. And so know how to say the same thing, over and over again, 25 times, 16 different ways, in order to get my message heard.

(Laughter.)

MS. CHRISTIANSON: And to me that's what public relations is all about. It's about being out there consistently over time so that your target market hears your message, just like my husband eventually hears mine.

ANNOUNCER: To access great public relations information and tips for your ALA unit, visit the members only tab at www.alaforveterans.org.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Members, delegates, and guests, please welcome from Unit 62 in Peoria, Arizona, Marge Christianson.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Marge is a little nervous, but thank you so much. And just to let you know, her public relations are working out because they are over goal for this year. Great work, Unit 62.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Marge, thank you so much for promoting our brand and telling people who we are, what we do, and why we matter. Here's a little gift for you.

MS. CHRISTIANSON: Oh, thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Do you want to say thank you?

MS. CHRISTIANSON: Well thank you very much for this honor.
And go get them out there with your public relations, it's a lot of fun.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thanks, Marge.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Marge's story is a real inspiration to all of us. And speaking of inspiration, please welcome a group of women who have dedicated much of their lives for the betterment of the American Legion Auxiliary and those we serve, our Past National Presidents.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Wisconsin, Pearl Behrend.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Department of Oregon, Linda Boone.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Maryland, Linda Newsome.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of New York, Phyllis Sickmond.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Wisconsin, Barbara Kranig.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And from the Department of Kentucky, Virginia Hobbs.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of North Carolina, Elizabeth Stewart.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And from the Department of New Hampshire, Kristine West.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Texas, Katherine Morris.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Wisconsin, Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Ohio, Desireé Stoy.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Also from the Department of Ohio, Miriam Junge.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of New Mexico, Rita Navarreté.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And from the Department of Texas, Carlene Ashworth.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Minnesota, Kris Nelson.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of Virginia, Peggy Thomas.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And the baby of the group, from the Department of California, Nancy Brown-Park.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Let's give all our attending Past National Presidents another round of applause.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you one and all for what you've done, and for what you continue to do for the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you, ladies.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: They still look pretty good, huh?

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. This morning we have a very special treat for you. 4TROOPS is a music ensemble consisting of Retired Staff Sergeant Ron Henry, Retired Master Sergeant Caleb Green, former Army Specialist Cathy Todd, Corey Todd, excuse me, and Vicki Golding, currently serving as a Sergeant in the D.C. National Guard. This group spans the Gulf War to current conflicts with multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The group focuses in inspirational and patriotic songs, often with special relationships to their lives and service in the military. These four powerful American voices come together for one important cause: to support the American veteran, past, present, and future, and honor their sacrifices through song. Delegates, members, and guests, please welcome Sony music veteran recording artists 4TROOPS.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

(Music.)

VOICES: (Singing.) I set out on a narrow way many years ago hoping I would find true love along the broken road. But I got lost a time or two, wiped my brow, kept pushing through. I could see on every sign pointing straight to you. Every long lost dream led me to where you are. Others who broke my heart they were like northern stars pointing me on my way into your loving arms. This much I know is true, that God bless the broken road that led me straight to you. Oh, yes he did. Mm, yeah. Oh I think about the years I spent just passing through. Though I'd like to have the time I lost and give it back to you. But you just smile and take my hand, if you'd been there you'd understand. It's all part of a greater plan that is coming true. Every long lost dream led me to where you are. Others who broke me heart, they were like northern stars pointing me on my way into your loving arms. This much I know, I know is true, that God blessed the

broken road that led me straight to you. Mm-mm-mm, yeah. And now I'm just going home into my lover's arms. This much I know, I know is true, that God bless the broken road that led me straight to you. That God bless the broken road that led me straight to you, ooh, oh, yeah.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: So we are here at the 95th American Legion Auxiliary. Good morning, everybody!

(Cheering.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Let me say one thing. You guys are standing tall and looking good, and you all are being Hollywood right now.

(Laughter.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Thank you so much for having us to be a part of this wonderful and prestigious occasion. We are so glad to be here to share this great moment with you all. We want to say thank you for what you do. Thank you for your service to your country. To the spouses, thank you for supporting your spouses while they've gone off to Iraq and wherever they served in the World War. We appreciate what you do because you paid, you paid the foundation for us. So we are so grateful.

I just want to quickly introduce myself. I am Staff Sergeant Retired Ron Henry. This is former Specialist Corey Todd. Over here to the far, my left, this is Master Sergeant Retired Caleb Green. And here this beautiful young lady beside me, and she's always beside me --

(Laughter.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: -- please help me welcome, this is Reservist Sergeant Vicki Golding.

(Applause.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: And we are 4TROOPS. So we're going to do a few numbers for you. We hope you enjoy it. When you feel like waving that Flag, wave that Flag. When you feel like ringing that bell, ring that bell. Okay? Are you with us this morning?

AUDIENCE: Yes!

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: All right. Here we go.

(Music.)

VOICES: (Singing.) I have walked all alone on these streets I call home. Streets of hope, streets of fear, through the sidewalk cracks, time disappears. I was lost, on my knees, on the eve of defeat as I choked back the tears there's a silent scream no one could hear. So far away from everything that you know is true. Something inside that makes you do what you've got to do. Ring the bells, ring them loud, let them ring here and now. Just reach out and ring the bells of freedom. When your world's crashing down like you've lost every round stand your ground and ring the bells of freedom. Up the steps in the church through the fields and the dirt, in the dark I have seen that the sun still shines for the one who believed. So far away, so full of doubt, and needing proof. Just close your eyes and hear the sound that's inside of you. Ring the bells, ring them loud, let them ring here and now. Just reach out and ring the bells of freedom. When your world's crashing

down like you've lost every round stand your ground and ring the bells of freedom. Ring the bells, ring them loud, let them ring here and now. Just reach out and ring the bells of freedom. When your world's crashing down like you've lost every round just reach out and ring the bells of freedom. Mmm.

(Cheering.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Come on, let me hear you ring them bells! Whew!

(Bells ringing.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: So this next song we're going to do for you is a song written by a very common friend that we have a common bond with, his name is Matt Moran. Matt Moran wrote this song for his grandfather, who served in World War II. It is a very moving and touching song, and the song is entitled, "For Freedom." And the song is entitled on our album, "4TROOPS." Please feel free to go to iTunes and support this album. It goes to support the American Legion proceeds --

(Cheering.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: -- the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, and the USO. So if you would you can reach it on iTunes. You can get it from Amazon. But please, buy this CD for someone who you know who is serving overseas to encourage them. So we hope you enjoy it. This is "For Freedom."

(Music.)

VOICES: (Singing.) Somewhere a trumpet sounds in the night. A soldier is standing there. It's calling him out to the Stars and the Stripes. It's calling him God knows where. He kisses the ones he loves goodbye and leaves in the dead of night. For freedom he'll heed the call, leave all he knows, and for freedom he'll stand and fight. Mm-mm. And somewhere a man and wife can't believe they're waving their girl goodbye. For gone are the days of pigtails and curls and candle lit lullabies. If they had their way she'd stay young forever and never be far from home. But freedom has drawn her heart to danger's shore and for freedom they'll let her go. Go. And somewhere a thunderous crash in the night, it echoes all through the hills. Though many escape its wrath and its rage, a soldier lies wounded still. Remembering the land he loves, he cries, I've loved you with all my might. For freedom said I'm her son whatever comes, and for freedom I'll say goodbye. Oh. America (unintelligible) we love you today. And somewhere beneath the stars and the sky our Flag is still standing there. Standing there. She bled and she brought one land under God. Her colors still lead us there. She's carried the lives of those before us, she's buried the bold and brave, bold and the brave. For freedom she holds our hopes and hands up high and for freedom she'll ever wave.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Thank you so much.

SERGEANT GOLDING: (Singing.) As the storm clouds gather far across the sea, let us swear allegiance to a land that's free. Let us all be grateful for a land so fair as we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.

These are the little known words and tune used at the beginning of a song written by Irving Berlin a while back which has now become America's hymn. It was written as a prayer to America. So from us we would like to say God bless all of you, God bless our soldiers, our airmen, all our military servicemen and women, and God bless America.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

SERGEANT GOLDING: (Singing.) God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her through the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home.

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: Come on everybody.

ALL: (Singing.) God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her through the night with a light from above. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home. From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam. God bless America, my home sweet home. God bless America, God bless America, God bless America, my home sweet home.

(Cheering.)

STAFF SERGEANT HENRY: American Legion Auxiliary, thank you so much for what we do. We love you. Today somebody is free. Whew!

(Cheering.)

VOICES: Thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and gentleman, the 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention will resume shortly as we reset the stage and prepare for our business meeting.

(Recess.)

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Family and freedom. The 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our business meeting is Convention Chairman from the Department of Maryland Patricia Lach.

MS. LACH: Good morning, delegates and guests. Welcome to Maryland for the very special 95th Annual Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary. Before we begin I would like everyone to please a moment to ensure your electronic devices have been placed on silent mode. Thank you.

It is my honor this morning to present to you the 2014-2015 National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. National Historian Lorraine "Rani" Gray of Vermont.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: National Chaplain Karen Boehler of Colorado.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Central Division National Vice President Laura Mosby of Missouri.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Eastern Division National Vice President Sandra Neylon of New Hampshire.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Northwestern Division National Vice President Lori Skallerud of Minnesota.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Southern Division National Vice President Sue Heil of Oklahoma.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Western Division National Vice President Sue Diaz of Alaska.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: National Treasurer Marta Hedding of Indiana.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: National Secretary Mary “Dubbie” Buckler of Indiana.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: And National Vice President Sharon Conatser of Illinois.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Please rise as the National Colors are presented by the Department of Connecticut Color Guard. Afterward, please remain standing for the introduction of our National President. Color Guard, please post the Colors.

(Presentation of the Colors.)

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: This morning it is my special privilege to introduce a wonderful lady from the great State of Connecticut. Our National President served her entire year with faith in our mission, treated every member of the organization like family, and traveled the country serving those who fight to protect our freedom. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in ringing in our bells loud and proud to welcome our National President Janet Jefford.

(Bells ringing.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. LACH: Madam President, I present this gavel so you may officially open the 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay.

MS. LACH: It's all yours.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you so much to Patty and here's a little something for you.

MS. LACH: Thank you so much. It was my privilege.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. All right. The 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will now come to order.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Let us begin this gathering with a prayer. Karen Boehler, our National Chaplain, will lead us.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: This morning's prayer was in large part written and submitted by Rosemarie Hauck, who is from the Department of Missouri and a Past National Chaplain. Would you bow with me, please?

Our Heavenly Father, we come humbly to you this morning asking for your blessings upon our National President Janet Jefford, and also the National Commanders Helm and Moss as they open this 95th National Convention of the American Legion Family. God, grant that the things we do shall be no idle gestures, no mere salute to tradition dictated by custom, but that in all sincerity we keep with the spirit of this organization in its dedication to you and country. We thank you for all veterans, our active servicewomen and men, and the American Legion Family. God, we ask you to be with us and guide us as we make many important decisions that will affect all members of our organization as well as those we serve. Please, Lord, help us to remember that everyone's opinions are essential in making the correct decisions. Help us to remember our true purpose as American Legion Family members. Father, we pray for these national leaders, that you would keep them calm, yet strong. Help us to love one another as you have loved us. We ask for your discernment in our daily walk to make this world a better place for all. We love you. God, you are so good to us all the time. And we ask all this and more in your holy and majestic name, Amen.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please remain standing as Kathy Daudistel, Chairman of the National Americanism Committee, leads us in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by our National Anthem performed by patriotic singing sensation 4TROOPS. Kathy?

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Please join me.

ALL: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

(Music.)

VOICES: (Singing.) Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight o'er the ramparts we

watched were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there. Oh say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wow. As we prepare for the start of our business, our National Constitution and Bylaws Chairman Lisa Williamson will lead us in the reciting of our preamble. Lisa?

ALL: For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes: to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations during the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and goodwill on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy; to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of the American Legion; to consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please be seated. You know, I find myself, I'm stumbling a little because I didn't think I was going to be nervous up here. But it's pretty scary.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: But if you'll just allow me a personal moment. I want to, you know, my theme is Faith, Family, Freedom, and I want to thank the American Legion Family from Connecticut for being here this morning for the opening. Thank you so much. And for our wonderful Color Guard for coming all this way to be in the parade today and to post the colors for this Convention. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And thank you to all of you. And not just for being here today and at this Convention, but for all you have done this year and all the years that you have been a member of this great organization. You know, in talking about family, I guess as Auxiliary, we're members of this organization because of our family ties. And I think it's through our membership and what we do in service to our veterans and our children and communities that we honor those family members who have so proudly served this country. So enjoy yourself at this Convention. And every once in a while, remember those family members who gave you the opportunity to belong to this great, great organization.

So I know we have a lot to celebrate and a lot of important things to do. So we're going to get started. And I'm going to begin this morning by introducing some very special guests. Please join me in welcoming this year's National Convention appointees.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Joyce Brinley, Chairman of Pages.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Jeannie Berry, National President's Page.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Marge Sunbury, National President's

Page.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Lydia DeGumbia, National President's

Page.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And Beverly Dean, National President's

Page.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please welcome Kris West, Chairman of the Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Rita Navarreté, a member of the Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And Janet Young, another member of the Distinguished Guests Committee.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And we also have with us our Parliamentarian Chris Dickey. Thank you all.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It is now my pleasure to invite a few special guests to the stage to bring greetings. First, please welcome the President of the Department of Maryland Joyce Brown.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. BROWN: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. BROWN: Madam National President Janet, welcome to Maryland. And thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve with you in the largest women's patriotic service organization in the world. Good morning, all.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. BROWN: How are you doing this morning?

(Cheering.)

MS. BROWN: Welcome to Baltimore, the home of the Baltimore Ravens, Camden Yards, Baltimore Orioles, and Maryland crabcakes. Maryland joined the American Legion Auxiliary in 1919 and we are honored and bursting with pride to host the 95th National Convention. Let's discuss some historical facts that may ring a bell to you.

Maryland is home to Fort George Meade Army Base, Fort McHenry, and the Naval Academy. We have three VAVS hospitals: Baltimore Medical VA, Loch Raven Rehabilitation Center, and Perry Point VA. We have lots of museums, plus the Edgar Allen Poe House, the B&O Railroad, Horseshoe Casino, our beautiful downtown harbor, and plenty of restaurants to taste our Maryland crabcakes that will make you want to ring the bell because they are just that good.

(Laughter.)

MS. BROWN: We'll gather together this week to remember our mission of Service Not Self, and to listen to the sound of freedom. As we look over our accomplishments and dedication of our members and to our veterans. Again, welcome to Baltimore. Enjoy your stay with us. And if there's anything you need, give a shout and let us know. We'll be the ones wearing our Maryland scarves and we'll be more than happy to lend a hand. Come back and see us again. Madam President Janet, again, welcome to Baltimore.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Joyce. And now our very hardworking National Convention Chairman Patti Lach.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: Good morning, Madam President Janet, National Officers and Chairmen, and delegates, alternates, and guests to this, the American Legion Auxiliary 95th National Convention. On behalf of the Department of Maryland Legion Family and the local committee, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Maryland, American in Miniature. I hope you get a chance to enjoy some of Maryland's sights, food, hospitality, while visiting us. Did you know that Maryland has the Chesapeake Bay and surrounding waterways? Blue crabs? Ocean beaches, Ocean City and Assateague Island? Crabcakes? Beautiful mountains in Western Maryland, cream of crab soup? Historic Antietam Battlefield? Softshell crabs? And many places and eats in between. I hope while you are here in Baltimore you are able to experience some of the charm of the city. I think there is a little bit of something for everyone.

For you history buffs we have Fort McHenry, where the sight of our Flag still flying there inspired Francis Scott Key to write what is now our National Anthem, the Star-Spangled Banner; the USS Constellation, which is open for tours; and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum, located on the site of the oldest railroad station in America. There are great sports attractions, too. Both the Baltimore Ravens and the Baltimore Orioles have their stadiums right here in Baltimore. Hey, I hope some of you are going to the Orioles game tonight. They need a little help. But go Os!

(Laughter.)

MS. LACH: If you are looking for something to do during the afternoons, there are museums, the National Aquarium, the Maryland Science Center, that's fun, and shops in the Inner Harbor. There is much to choose from for those who enjoy the night life. We have theaters, Fells Point, slots at the new Horseshoe Casino. And for you foodies, there is a plethora of restaurants to choose from. This is all right here in Baltimore.

Be sure to look for the Charm City Circulator. It's a free shuttle to get you around town. I hope you enjoy your stay with us here in Maryland. Good food, great sites, and good friends, what more could you ask for? While here in the Convention Center, the local Convention Committee and I are ready to assist you. Whether you need directions to a meeting, to find a correct exit, or you have an emergency, we are here to help. The National Office can be found on level 100 in Exhibition Hall G. You'll need to ask for directions.

(Laughter.)

MS. LACH: The Local Committee Office is located on Level 300, Room 313, including the Convention Chairman's Office, mailroom, and corsage table.

I am pleased to introduce to you the Chairman of the Local Committee, National Convention Vice Chairman Paulette Caron.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: Flowers Committee Chairman Michelle Hill.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: And Vice Chairman Kathy Mooney.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: Mailroom Chairman Cyndie McMullen.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: And Vice Chairman Eleanor Deal.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: Local Pages Chairman Bonnie Rae Lamson.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: And Vice Chairman Brenda Miller.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: For assistance look for one of our local pages. They will be dressed like Bonnie and Brenda, black and white with a Maryland flag scarf.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: In addition I would like to present Honorary Committee Member PNP Linda Newsome.

(Applause.)

MS. LACH: And our other PNP Sandi Dutton was unable to come this early.

(Laughter.)

MS. LACH: On behalf of our Convention Committee, thank you, Madam President, for allowing us this opportunity to assist you and the

delegates during this Convention. Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Patty, and thank you to all of your committee. I just have to say a special thank you. I mentioned to someone that my mom's favorite flower was a gardenia and that it was mine too, and they got me this very, very special, beautiful gardenia. Every time I turn my head I can smell it, and I get to think of my mom. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And now the immediate Past National President Nancy Brown-Park from the Department of California, my friend, Nancy Brown-Park.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT BROWN-PARK: Just pretend like I'm still President. Stand right here.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT BROWN-PARK: Okay. National President Janet, you know I'm not keen on the ordinary. So in the spirit of teamwork and friendship, please watch the screen for a greeting from the attending Past National Presidents and know those that couldn't be here also send special greetings. So please watch the screen.

(Music.)

VOICES: We come together to ring our bells.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: We welcome our teams to Baltimore.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: In the spirit of Service Not Self.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: With (indiscernible).

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: We cheer and celebrate all the accomplishments.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: Of you and our members.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: In support of our mission.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: For veterans and their families.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: We honor your dedication.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICES: And congratulate you on a special year.

(Bells ringing.)

VOICE: (Singing.) You can ring my bell. You ring my bell.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT BROWN-PARK: So Janet, we wish you an absolutely successful Convention, and I know it will be. Thank you, Janet. Love you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. That was cute. Thank you.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, I forgot to do one thing when we introduced our Presidents. I want to give a special shout out, because I know she's watching. She was here with us yesterday, but to Anna Gear. So, hi Anna.

(Applause.)
(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. We will again be utilizing the electronic voting system so that all members can clearly and easily see the voting count for each item of business. Your delegations should have already picked up your voting keypads before today's session began. Please remember that Standing Rule #14 states that your voting keypads are not to be removed from the assembly hall. Each department representative is responsible for all keypads issued to their department. Departments will be charged, hm, a \$100 donation to the ALA Foundation for each missing keypad. So you might want to lose a few. We can use some money. So --
(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- so be sure to count them before you turn them in to the Election Committee at the end of the day. If for some reason you have a delegate missing and no alternate to take her place, votes for those keypads may be cast by the delegation. If you choose to abstain from voting, simply do not press any keys. If you press the wrong key, wait a moment and then press the correct number. The keypad will register only the last key pressed.

Okay. So let's take a minute to get familiar with the electronic voting keypads by doing some practice votes. All right. Will all the delegates please stand? Just the delegates. When your vote has been cast you will sit down, and that way we can be sure that everybody's vote has been counted. All right. We're going to do some test questions. The first, so if this is your first time at an American Legion Auxiliary National Convention, please press number one key. If you attended an American Legion Auxiliary National Convention before, please press the number two key. Make your selections now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Sit down if your vote has been registered. There you go. Okay. So it looks like everyone has cast their vote. Voting is now closed. Please show the result. All right. Nineteen percent are here for the first time. Let's welcome all our first timers to our National Convention.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That's a very good amount. Okay. We have another one. The American Legion Auxiliary's 2015 National Convention is currently being held in Baltimore, Maryland. Press number one

for yes. Press number two for no. Press number three if you have no clue where you are right now.

(Laughter.)

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. All right. I think we got it. We beat the music. Voting is now closed. Please show the results. Oh no.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Six percent, if they are sitting around you, help them out. Okay? All right. We're going to do one more. This is an easy one. And I don't know where they are. If you are a delegate from the Department of Connecticut, please press the number one on the keypad. If you are a delegate from a department other than Connecticut, please press number two. Please vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Stand up. Because every time you vote you've got to like stand up so that you can sit down again.

Okay. All right. Voting is now closed. Please show the results. All right. We have two percent from Connecticut. Yay, little Connecticut.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So it looks like we've got that down. You will be using your keypad to vote later today so please keep them with you. Remember, at the end of the day you must turn in your keypad to your department representative before you leave. Department representatives, please be sure to count all your keypads before turning them in or else we're going to get some really good money for the Foundation.

All right. Our first item of business this morning is the adoption of the reports organization the Convention. The Credentials Report will be presented by Credentials Chairman Karen Sheffield from the Department of Connecticut.

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN SHEFFIELD: Good morning, Madam National President. The Credentials Committee met on Saturday, August 29th, 2015. The following is our report. Alabama, nine. Alaska, nine. Arizona, 16. Arkansas, eight. California, 23. Colorado, 11. Connecticut, ten. Delaware, nine. District of Columbia, six. Florida, 31. Georgia, 11. Hawaii, six. Idaho, eight. Illinois, 27. Indiana, 39. Iowa, 23. Kansas, 15. Kentucky, 11. Louisiana, 11. Maine, 11. Maryland, 22. Massachusetts, ten. Michigan, 25. Minnesota, 34. Mississippi, nine. Missouri, 17. Montana, eight. Nebraska, 21. Nevada, seven. New Hampshire, 13. New Jersey, 12. New Mexico, ten. New York, 34. North Carolina, 12. North Dakota, 13. Ohio, 36. Oklahoma, ten. Oregon, 11. Pennsylvania, 48. Puerto Rico, seven. Rhode Island, seven. South Carolina, nine. South Dakota, 14. Tennessee, nine. Texas, 20. Utah, eight. Vermont, 12. Virginia, 13. Washington, 11. West Virginia, 11. Wisconsin, 25. And Wyoming, eight. With a total of 800.

Madam President, on behalf of the Credentials Committee I move that the roll of delegates hereby submitted by the official voting attendance of this Convention.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The question is on the adoption of the Credentials Committee report as presented. Is there any discussion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, the question is on the motion to adopt the report of the Credentials. All those in favor, please press the number one key on your voting pad. But stand up, please, before we begin. Everybody, stand up. Those opposed, please press two. Vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Please show the results. All right.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: There is a majority in the affirmative. Motion is carried and the Credentials report for the 2015 National Convention has been adopted. Thank you, Karen, for taking this position.

CHAIRMAN SHEFFIELD: Thank you. Take care.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're welcome. We are talking to the voting in the back, the people running it, to put the results up in number of votes instead of percentages. So they are working to change that. Thank you.

All right. The next, our Rules Chairman Marie Delaney will read the proposed rules for this Convention.

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DELANEY: Good morning, everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN DELANEY: I have the distinct opportunity to read the 95th Annual National Convention Proposed Convention Standing Rules. Please follow along on page 130 in your program book. And you'll also need a pen to make a correction further down in the Rules.

Okay. Number one, all meetings of the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention shall be called to order at the designated time, or as soon thereafter as a quorum is present.

Number two, the Chair may deviate from the printed program when necessary or expedient.

Number three, the Credentials Committee shall report at such times as directed by the Chair.

Number four, the audience shall remain seated during the business of the Convention. Doors will remain open unless noise or distractions interfere with the concluding of business. Delegates will be allowed to leave or enter the National Convention Hall except when balloting or elections are being held, or when a guest speaker is addressing the Convention body. Persons leaving the Convention Hall during balloting, elections, or speaker presentations will not be allowed to reenter the Convention Hall until the balloting or election is completed, or the guest speaker has concluded his or her presentation. Delegates may leave or enter the Convention Hall without an escort. Smoking is not permitted. All electronic communication devices shall be turned off or silenced.

Number five, security purposes. All persons in the National Convention Hall shall be identified and admission to the business sessions at the National Convention shall be restricted to those persons displaying the official Convention badge or other acceptable official credentials or who are under the age of 12 years old. The National Convention Hall is defined as the area predetermined and set aside for general business sessions for the National Convention.

Six, only authorized photographers shall be permitted on the stage during the National Convention sessions.

Seven, there shall be no public presentation of gifts during the National Convention except by prearrangement with the National President.

Number eight, the chairman of each department delegation shall be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all accredited delegates wearing official Convention badges are seated with their delegation. If a delegate is absent from a meeting an alternate delegate shall take her place with the delegation.

Number nine, only voting delegates of the Convention may make motions and address the National Convention in debate, except when the Chairman of the National Committee is also an employee of the National Headquarters in which case as a National Committee Chairman she may make a motion on behalf of the committee she chairs and address the National Convention on matters specific to motions and proposals from the committee she chairs. To address the Convention the voting delegate shall rise and one, proceed to a microphone; two, address the Chair; three, wait to be recognized by the Chair; and four, upon being recognized by the Chair shall state her name and her department.

Number ten, all main motions, resolutions, and amendments shall be presented in writing immediately to both the Chair and the Secretary on the motions forms provided, signed with the full names of both the persons making the motion and the person making the second. The completed motion form is then to be handed to the nearest presidential page for immediate delivery to both the Chair and the Secretary. Only the presidential pages can deliver the completed forms to the platform.

Number 11, debate on any question shall be limited to two minutes for each delegate. No person shall speak on the same question more than twice without the consent of the Convention. No delegate may address the Convention a second time on the question until all delegates who desire to speak on the topic have spoken. During debate, delegates, alternates, and guests are to remain seated within their own delegation or an assigned seating area unless they are approaching the microphone, completing a motion form, or entering or exiting the general session. Pages may deliver messages to the stage and to the delegations at any time.

Number 12, each delegate shall be entitled to one vote. The vote of any delegate absent and not represented by an alternate may be cast with the majority of the delegates present from her department in accordance with the current National Constitution and Bylaws and Standing Rules.

Thirteen, voting shall be by voice vote or by an electronic voting pad or device, except when the Chair deems it necessary to use some other method, or when a roll call is requested by the chairmen of three department delegations. Voting by electronic voting keypad or devices shall be deemed to be a division of the assembly.

Number 14, when the Chair deems electronic voting devices are to be used, packages containing your electronic voting pads shall be provided for each department. Electronic voting keypads shall not be removed from the National Convention Hall. Each department's delegation chairman or delegation secretary shall sign for the issuance and return the electronic voting packets as instructed. Placed inside each voting packet envelope shall be A, the number of electronic voting keypads corresponding to the number of department voting delegates, one to be assigned to each voting delegate of the department; and B, one certification sheet which shall have the number of votes to be cast as certified by the Credentials Chairman. When the Chair deems paper ballots are to be used, a ballot envelope shall be provided for each department. Placed inside each envelope shall be, C, the number of ballots to be cast by each department; D, one certification sheet, which shall have the number of votes to be cast as certified by the Credentials Chairman.

Number 15, if and when a paper ballot is used each chairman of the department delegation shall appoint two delegates to assist her in counting the number of votes cast. The chairman shall distribute a ballot to each voting delegate.

Number 16, if and when a paper ballot is used the chairman of the delegation shall enter onto the certification sheet the total number of votes cast plus the absentee votes witnessed by the assistants. The chairman of the delegation shall place the certification sheet and all ballots in the ballot envelope. The name of the department shall be removed from the ballot envelope by the chairman of the delegation. The chairman shall return the ballot envelope as instructed.

Number 17, the National President shall appoint an Election and a Tally Committee.

Number 18, nominations for candidates for the national division vice president shall be at a division caucus on Saturday, August 29th, 2015.

Number 19, nominations of candidates for the office of National President, National Vice President, National Chaplain, and National Historian shall be on Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015.

Number 20, nominations of candidates for the national offices shall be made from the floor.

Twenty-one, nominating speeches shall be limited to two minutes for each candidate, except for the candidates for the National President who will be allowed four minutes. There will be no seconding speeches.

Number 22, following nominating speeches for the national officers on Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015, each of the nominees for National President, National Vice President, National Chaplain, and National Historian, shall be introduced to the National Convention by the Auxiliary member making her nomination, and introduced to be only by name and department

affiliation. In response to the introduction the nominee shall be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Number 13, election of national officers shall be held on Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015. When there is but one candidate for any office the nominee may be elected by voice. When there is more than one candidate for a national office the election shall be by paper or electronic ballot as determined by the presiding officer. A majority of votes cast shall elect each officer. When no candidate receives a majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot will be taken between the candidates receiving the two highest number of votes with the candidate receiving the most votes on the second ballot being elected.

And before I read Rule #24, please make note of a change to this rule that differs from what is being printed in the Convention Guide. I ask that you strike the words, “the revision considered.” Please strike now the words, “the revision considered” and insert, “any amendments to the governing body.” Strike the words, “the revision considered,” and, “any amendments to the governing body documents.” Adopted, I’m sorry. I’m going to read it all over again. Please strike the words, “the revisions considered,” and insert, “any amendments to the governing documents adopted.” That’s a change for Rule #24.

So now it will read, Rule 24 will now read, the National Convention Parliamentarian with the approval of the National President, National Vice President, National Secretary, and National Treasurer is authorized to correct article and section designations, punctuation, and cross references to make such technical and conforming changes as may be necessary to reflect the intent of the voting delegates in connection with any amendments to the governing documents adopted at this Convention.

Twenty-five, these Rules may be amended during the Convention by a two-thirds vote.

Madam President by the direction of the Rules Committee I move for the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2015 as just read.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I’m just ringing the bell because that was a long reading.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Marie. Okay. The question is on the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2015 as just read. Is there any discussion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, the question is on the adoption of the National Convention Rules for 2015. Please stand and all those in favor please press the number one key on your voting pad. Those opposed, please press two. Vote now.

(Music.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Who knew 20 seconds could be so long? All right. May we see the results? All right. There being a majority in the

affirmative the motion is carried and the Rules for the 2015 National Convention have been adopted. Thank you so much, Marie.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. The National Secretary Dubbie Buckler will now give the Program Report. Dubbie?

(Music.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you, Madam President. A printed copy of the program has been provided to each Convention delegate. There have been several updates to the agenda, which can be found on pages 133 through 140 of your program book.

Now I just want to take a minute to explain, first off, do you think it's pretty?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we hope you enjoy the information that's inside the program book. This, the deadline for this is over the Fourth of July weekend. So I hope you're thinking back in your minds, what you were doing over the Independence Day weekend. Some of us are working pretty much 20-hour days to try to get this finished up so that it can go to the printer. Well, so you know when the Fourth of July was, and you know when this is. So with all the different people involved and moving parts to this agenda, it's going to change. So we want you to refer to the, instead of the printed agenda in here, please refer to the printed agenda, the updated agenda that was distributed to all the delegation secretaries during registration. The delegation secretaries are charged with communicating these updates to your delegates and alternates. So if you don't have it please see your department secretary. And Madam President, that concludes this part. That's it. I can do it quickly.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Then the Chair will entertain a motion to adopt the program with the updated agenda.

VOICE: (Indiscernible).

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Is there a second?

VOICE: Second.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. The question is on the motion to adopt the program with the changes noted. Are you ready for the question? The question is on the motion to adopt the program with the changes. All those in favor, press number one on your keypad. Those opposed, press number two. Please vote now.

Okay. Please show the results. Thank you. The affirmative has it and the Convention program is adopted.

By adoption of these reports the 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary is officially organized for conducting business.

This morning I am so happy to start off with a visit from a very, very special friend. Sons of the American Legion National Commander Mike Moss. Mike?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Mike's eligibility is through his father, a 54-year member of the American Legion Family. Mike's father served in the Air Force during the Korean War flying in B-29s. So please, again, welcome with a great round of applause a very dear friend and a loyal member of the American Legion Family, National Commander Mike Moss.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER MOSS: Thank you, Madam President. Boy, it's been a great year. This year the American Legion Family has supported and have lived Faith, Family, and Freedom. Thank you, Madam President, for doing an outstanding job this year. It's been a pleasure working with you side by side. Your dedication and passion for our children and youth, along with our veterans, has been outstanding. Both Linda and I wish you the very best in your future.

I want to share a story. Madam President and myself were in Springfield, Illinois at the Children's Hospital handing out Josh Dogs. We both walked into this room and this little girl, six, seven years old all hooked up and plugged into all these machines, wasn't smiling. She was in pain. And Madam President reached down and grabbed the Josh Dog and presented it to her and she took it and hugged and her smile lit up that room. That's the type of person we have here. Thank you very much.

Again, I would just say thank you, Madam President, for being your friend. Thank you for the outstanding job you did this year. And thank you all for what you do for the American Legion's programs, our veterans, our children and youth, and have a great Convention. God bless the American Legion Family and God bless America. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER MOSS: At this time I would also like to introduce our incoming Commander who is taking over for me, Mr. Kevin Collier from Alaska.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We had such a god time with Kevin I Alaska. Thank you, Kevin, and good luck next year.

All right, Mike. You know we spent a lot of time together and I heard that when you are out of office that you love to trout fish, go fishing?

COMMANDER MOSS: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah, somebody told me that.

COMMANDER MOSS: I haven't got the chance to do that.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And that's, yeah, so that's what you're going to do when this year is over, right?

COMMANDER MOSS: Mm-hmm.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I went to this store and, you know, I don't know anything about trout fishing. So they told me about something called flies. And who knew that flies could be so expensive? I had no idea. So here's a little something for you for fishing. And, what else? Oh, a little hat to keep the sun off your lovely face. Thank you.

COMMANDER MOSS: Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- and there's a little something for your wife, Linda. And thank her for her friendship this year. And we've made some wonderful memories I think that we'll never, ever forget, right, Mike?

COMMANDER MOSS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

COMMANDER MOSS: Have a great year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. I have a little note here. We're having a program change. So give me one minute. Oh, I forgot. Mike, you have to come back here. Mike. See, it wasn't in my scripts and I forget really easy. Mike, in honor of your service this year I would like my Resolutions Chairman to read a resolution so that it could be in our minutes.

COMMANDER MOSS: Okay.

VOICE: Madam National President, delegates, alternates, and guests, we will be graced with many distinguished guests during the American Legion Auxiliary's 95th National Convention being held this week in the great City of Baltimore. And whereas, one of those guests included Mike Moss, National Commander of the Sons of the American Legion. Founded in 1932, the Sons of the American Legion exist to honor the service and sacrifice of Legionnaires. ASL members volunteer hundreds of hours at veterans hospitals and raise significant funds for VA hospitals and VA homes. Now, therefore, be it resolved that by our applause we thank Commander Moss and the Sons of the American Legion for their unwavering commitment to their mission and our veterans, military, and their families.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Now, let's put our hands together again to welcome our 2014-2015 Honorary National Junior President Graci Huddleston.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: First of all, before I say anything I'd like to give a shoutout to my home State of Texas.

(Cheering.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: Because I didn't do that last year and I got in a lot of trouble.

(Laughter.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: And secondly I'd like to, please excuse my voice because I kind of lost it yesterday during the parade. Hello, my name is Graci Huddleston from the Department of Texas. I was proud to be able to spread patriotism across this great nation over the course of my term as the Honorary National Junior President. As National President I volunteered at events that supported the cause for veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, including a party that collected school supplies for their children. I helped raise funds for several Auxiliary organizations, including cancer research, veterans affairs and rehabilitation, and the American Legion

Emergency Fund. I also rode along with coffee tours to help boost membership. My home unit of #649 Blessing, Texas Junior Group was able to do Flag ceremonies at both Veterans Day and Memorial Day services, and at our local rodeo's patriotic night. I attended many functions on the unit, district, division, department levels where I brought greetings from national and promoted junior membership. I was awarded a certificate from the former Governor of Texas Rick Perry, who congratulated me on my election and who wished me a good term. I was also given a plaque from my second family, the Might 9th District of the Department of Texas in which they awarded me for my achievements and service to this organization and for not only being the first elected from the district but from the entire Department of Texas.

One of my favorite parts of this whole year was being able to install the 2015-2016 Junior Department Officers at this past Department Convention. The President, who is actually from my home unit, made it a once in a lifetime experience and opportunity.

Now, I have a question for you. How many units here have an organization or unorganized Junior group? Because --

(Cheering.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: Yeah, I see those hands. Now, I know we had 65 Juniors at our meeting. And by the amount of hands I saw, we could have many, many more. Growing up with two working parents and a little brother, I had to be taken everywhere by my adopted grandmother. And when I say everywhere, I mean absolutely everywhere. I went to the little things and the big things. I was kind of in the American Legion commercial. I was raising up the Flag. That was really cool. But the point of this is that if we have these many members, why aren't they there? We need, we need our people everywhere. And I mean, once you've, once you teach the girls that just one person in the Auxiliary could do a lot, then you'll get them hooked. I mean, I was begging to go to meetings. I wanted to see all my wiser friends and learn so much more about our great country and how we really got our freedom. So take your Juniors everywhere. Get them working the Patch program, Little Miss Poppy, and all the aspects of this great organization.

For those of you who do not have a Junior unit, I highly suggest you get one. I cannot begin to explain the fun you've been missing out on. Ladies, Juniors are the future of our organization. And what I saw in the past two days, our future is very, very bright.

Now I want to go a little off topic and talk about my sash. And, yeah, I know it just looks like that girl just has a lot of pins. But behind every single one of those pins are memories and stories. And all of those memories and stories are mine. From the very first Department Convention in Corpus Christie, Texas in 2008, to right here where I stand now as the Honorary National Junior President, and everything in between. But I want to focus on one little thing. Right toward the end of my sash I have a little eagle and his name is Soar. I got him at my very first Mid-Winter Conference. And he's gone everywhere, except Odessa, Texas when I kind of forgot him. But I learned a lot from that Convention, because I kind of lost my first election. But it's not all about elections. And it made me realize that to do better you

have to work more for it. And even though he is kind of like my lucky charm, you don't have lucky charms in everyday life. You have to work and put in the effort to do everything that you want to. But besides Odessa, Soar, my eagle, has been to McAllen, Belmont, Houston, Irving, Charlotte, and now he's right here by my side in Baltimore, Maryland where he belongs.

Now I'd like to be first to congratulate Maggie Jones from the Department of North Carolina on her election to the highest office that a Junior can have. And I know that she is a person, I mean I've known her for a few years now, she's someone who will give it 110 percent. And I couldn't have found a better person to leave the Juniors with.

Maggie, I have one thing to tell you. Take pride in everything you endeavor this year. And take lots of pictures, because you only get this chance once.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: Have a great year. Now for the fun part. Madam President, you probably know that Fort McHenry is the birthplace of our National Anthem. On Saturday during the Junior Meeting the American Legion Juniors sang the Star-Spangled Banner to kick off the brand new ALA National Challenge, National Anthem Challenge.

VOICE: Two. Three.

VOICES: (Singing.) Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight o'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there. Oh say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

MISS HUDDLESTON: This challenge is part of the Centennial Strategic Plan and built awareness of the ALA and the American Legion Family, and generates community interest in our shared patriotism and for the greatest country in the world.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: Madam President, on behalf of the ALA Juniors, I challenge the audience to sing the National Anthem.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh.

VOICES: (Singing.) Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming? Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight o'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming. And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our Flag was still there. Oh say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

MISS HUDDLESTON: That was awesome, and this concludes my remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So Graci, I have to tell you you have represented the Juniors so well this year, and I think we are all very, very proud of you. And we can't wait to have you join our ranks as a senior member very soon. Thank you so much for your service this year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I hope this little scholarship in the amount of \$2,000 will help you out in our college endeavors. Do you know what you want to do?

MISS HUDDLESTON: Play softball.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So maybe you could get a bigger scholarship for playing softball. All right. Thank you, honey.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. You've heard Graci, right? So when our session adjourns today feel free to gather a group of Auxiliary members, or, you know, or any ensemble of people of the American Legion Family to record a video featuring your rendition of the Star-Spangled Banner. Post the video to Facebook or Twitter, along with a challenge to an individual or another group to sing their version of the National Anthem. Be sure to use the hashtag #ALANationalAnthemChallenge. So like the Ice Bucket Challenge? We'll see what we can do with the Star-Spangled Challenge.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Next here with us today is Kamryn Sannicks, our 2015 Girls Nation President from Nebraska.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Kamryn is involved in varsity girls golf team, North Star Young Democrats, and the North Star Debate Team. When not busy in her academics, she finds time to volunteer with the Center for People in Need and the Friendship Home. Sannicks has made several achievements, including the 2015 Lancaster County Democrat Party Volunteer of the Year, 2015 National Honor Society inductee, and 2014 North Star Performing Arts Wall of Fame inductee. Sannicks is also interested in pursuing a career as a politician. Please join me in welcoming our Girls Nation President Kamryn Sannicks.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MISS SANNICKS: Hello, and good morning. It is an honor to be in front of you all. This is easily the largest crowd that I have ever addressed and it is a great one to look out upon. Once again, I am Kamryn Sannicks, the 2015 Girls Nation President.

During my time at Girls Nation I learned more about myself than ever before in my life. In that short week that I was there I grew as a person. I improved my leadership skills, asked and answered the hard questions about current hot topic issues, and had some of the most intelligent, well thought out conversations. The girls that I attended Girls Nation with I have nothing but praise for. They pushed me out of my comfort zone and I am thankful for that. While there were girls that I definitely agreed with to a T, there were others that I did not and those I am most thankful for. I asked the hard questions and they did the same right back. It was nice to be able to have those well thought out, constructive conversations even if we didn't agree.

With my work in politics back in the great State of Nebraska, I know that those are few and far between and those girls definitely were well educated on the topics and it was great to be able to disagree yet agree on how we can solve an issue.

The community of Alexandria was definitely a powerhouse that week. We had me, the President; my Vice President Hannah Watson from Kansas; both party chairwomen, the Federalist Party Chair Annabel Roth from Alabama; the Nationalist Party Chairwoman Kaylene Khosla from Colorado; and a handful of other positions that I was lucky enough to be able to appoint. Without the constant encouragement of them I definitely would not be standing in front of you here today. I have the knowledge of our political system but they kept me positive.

My community and the rest of Girls Nation will always hold a special place in my heart. Being among the 98 other girls who are truly the best in the nation was an honor. On the first day that we were there they broke down the statistics of just how many girls get to participate in this great event. Sixteen thousand girls attend a Girls State annually, and then two come from every state to participate as a senator in Girls Nation. This year we were lucky enough to have an extra delegate from the State of North Carolina, but that doesn't change how special our small group was. Each girl earned the right to be there. And I hope that when I say this they can all agree that we are truly the best of the best in the nation and with all of your hard work you make it possible for us to be the best of the best.

If you, if you told me at the beginning of my summer that I would not only be Girls State Governor, and Girls Nation President, I would say in your wildest dreams. I had always thought about it but I never thought that it would be here today, that I would be your Girls Nation President of 2015. I'm still in shock that I am the Girls Nation President.

Our counselors definitely were not lying to us when they said that we would forever friends. On a daily basis I talked to my community in our group message. There was usually discussion among the 99 of us in the Facebook group that we have, and then Twitter and Instagram are always lively of course. And waking up in the morning and being able to see what goes on around the country is something that I look forward to every day.

Aside from making friends and having those hard conversations when I didn't agree, I enjoyed our off campus trips. We got to see the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery. We visited the

national monuments. We also had a day to spend on Capitol Hill. And of course, we met the leader of the free world President Barack Obama. He luckily made it back in time from Kenya and we got to meet him and spend the afternoon there. Those are experiences that I will never forget.

After I graduate from high school this coming May, I plan to attend the University of Nebraska Lincoln, Go Corn Huskers!

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MISS SANNICKS: I am going to double major in political science and economics, as well as enrolling in the Army ROTC program. After --

(Applause.)

MISS SANNICKS: After getting my undergraduate degree I will be enlisting in the Army Reserves and either attending law school or running for office, perhaps both simultaneously.

(Laughter.)

MISS SANNICKS: There are a few people on my laundry list who I owe thanks to. First of course would be my mom. She had made me the person I am today and she's always a go to when I need life advice and support with any of the endeavors that I seek out. Second would be the 98 other girls who attended Girls Nation with me, with special shout outs going to the community of Alexandria and my fellow Senator from Nebraska Kelsey Thomas. Without her key note speech at the party rally and editing all of the speeches that I gave that week I definitely wouldn't be standing in front of you here today. My next thank you definitely has to go to my political mentor and role model Meg Michelczek [phonetic]. For, she always answers questions, no matter what time of day it is, no matter how ridiculous it could possibly seem. I know that I can always shoot her a message and she will get right back to me.

And then last, but certainly not least, all of the wonderful women of the American Legion Auxiliary. Without the hard work that you do, this would not be possible. You deserve much more than the thanks that I am giving you, but I couldn't find the words, nor was I given the time to thank all of you in much more ways than I am giving you right now. So thank you from the bottom of my heart for making this possible for so many great young women each year.

It is an honor to be in attendance here today and meet so many of you. Thank you for the invitation and letting me speak. I hope that you will have a great rest of your trip here and safe travels home. Thank you, and have a great rest of your day.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Kamryn, we are truly proud of all you have accomplished. And so I would, am really happy to present to you a \$3,000 scholarship.

MISS SANNICKS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And, let's put this here, I have a little gift for you. I don't know, are you old enough to know about these little -- oh, yeah.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So here's a little present for you. Do you want to open it?

MISS SANNICKS: Thank you. I love it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It's a charm bracelet with a Girls Nation charm on it.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And so please wear that bracelet as a reminder of your time at Girls Nation and your relationship with the American Legion Auxiliary. Best of luck, honey.

MISS SANNICKS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. You know, back a long time ago when I first started coming to conventions it was a tradition for my dad to take me always to the opening of the American Legion Convention. And one of the things I really loved about that opening was we got to hear from all of the American Legion Youth Champions. And so I thought, well, you know, the last few years I haven't been able to go there. So I thought why not this year bring them to my Convention. So I am really, really happy that we are going to have all of the American Youth Champions join us this morning. And what better way to embody the spirit of the American Legion Family but by all of us supporting those wonderful programs that help our youth of this country. So can we show a video?

(Video.)

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: The American Legion supports a multitude of youth programs that have positively impacted the lives of thousands of children. Since its founding in 1919, Children and Youth was declared one of the Legion's four pillars. And members of the American Legion Auxiliary, fulfilling your mission to support the American Legion, have contributed their time, energy, and talent for decades. Three of those programs, American Legion Baseball, Junior Shooting Sports, and the Oratorical Contest, have relied heavily on American Legion Auxiliary support.

Legion Baseball, founded in 1925, has taught hundreds of thousands of young Americans the importance of sportsmanship, good health, and active citizenship. The American Legion Junior Shooting Sports program is a gun safety education and marksmanship program that combines basic elements of safety, education, enjoyment, and competition. The Oratorical Contest presents participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our nation's laws, the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, rights, and privileges of American citizenship.

The benefits of these programs are enormous.

MISS MINOCHA: Personally the biggest advantage I have received from participating in the Oratorical Contest has been a confidence in myself

and my public speaking ability. And I know this is going to be the biggest advantage for me as I go through life.

MS. DAUDISTEL: One of the main reasons the American Legion Auxiliary was formed was to support the American Legion and its programs. What better way to do this than to start with their youth activities, such as the American Legion Baseball program, Oratorical Contest, and the Junior Shooting Sports? This is a great way that the Legion Family can come together as one and work these programs together.

ANNOUNCER: Your efforts are noticeably appreciated.

MISS MINOCHA: I would like to thank Post #27 in Ocala, Florida and the entire Legion Family for doing so much for not only me but every participant in this incredible program.

ANNOUNCER: Thank you for your continued support of American Legion Youth Programs. Together, we are truly making a difference.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please welcome your 2015 American Legion Youth Champions, Matthew Walsh, Aravind Byju, Ethan Cople, Rhiann Travis, Adam McClintock, and Geeta Minocha.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

VOICE: (Singing.) We are the champions my friends. We'll keep on fighting till the end. We are the champions, we are the champions, no time for losing, because we are the champions. Oh we are the champions my friends. And we'll keep on fighting till the end.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. The 2014 American Legion Baseball All Academic Team Captain is Matthew Walsh. He hails from East Weymouth, Massachusetts.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And is currently a sophomore at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. His professional goal is to become a civil engineer. Matthew is sponsored by Post #79 in South Weymouth, Massachusetts. Please welcome your 2014 All Academic Team Captain Matthew Walsh.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

MR. WALSH: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MR. WALSH: I would like to first start by thanking Auxiliary President Jefford, the American Legion Auxiliary, and all who are present for having us this morning. It is truly an honor to be here as your guest and to get the chance to address you.

Today I'm humbled to represent the outstanding American Legion Baseball program as the 2014 All Academic Team Captain. American Legion Baseball is an organization that serves thousands of young athletes throughout the United States with some of the most competitive baseball in the country.

Legion Baseball was truly an escape. It was the way in which I found it easiest to remove myself from the grind, toils, and struggle of everyday life. Many kids in this world have a day filled with hardship, whether it be economic, emotional, or physical. And the baseball field is an opportunity to distance themselves from all that is bad in life and lose themselves in the game.

Baseball is like therapy. Smelling the damp grass and clay on a warm muggy summer night and looking out from behind the plate and seeing eight other guys who are like brothers looking right back at you is truly soothing for the mind and calming for the nerves. I grew up around the game and have spent countless hours on the field, so baseball has a very special place in my heart. Baseball is the perfect summer pastime and on behalf of all the players I want to thank my home Post #79, all the American Legion posts, and the American Legion Family for the continued support and making Legion Baseball what it is.

What brings me before you today is a great honor with which I was bestowed. I distinctly remember the day I received the phone call and was informed that I was chosen for such an award. And I can remember how humbling it was hearing those words come through the telephone. Because of this scholarship I've been able to further my education. I am currently attending the University of Massachusetts Amherst where I am a rising sophomore majoring in civil engineering. I hope to graduate one day and go on to become a professional engineer.

Through work on various missions trips I have found that one problem I would truly like to solve as a civil engineer is clean water for everybody. I want to develop an affordable and widespread water purification system to help those who are less fortunate and in third world countries that don't have clean access to water.

This scholarship means the world to me. It is from the bottom of my heart that I send my most sincere thanks to the American Legion and all who make these awards possible. It is extremely impressive to see the investment and effort with which the Legion puts into the youth of American and the invaluable programs which they offer. Words cannot describe just how appreciative I am of this award and the good it has done in my life. It is truly an honor to hold such a title. Without it I would not be able to attend college and have such a bright future ahead of me and the chance to pursue my dreams.

In closing I would again like to thank President Jefford for her hospitality, as well as the entire Legion Family for their support, hospitality, and generosity. Without you I would not be standing where I am today. Thank you, and God bless.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our next Youth Champion was elected as President of Boys Nation by his peers. He hails from Sarasota, Florida.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And he is a member of the National Honor Society as well as the Mathematics, Spanish, History, and Science Honor

Societies. He plans to attend Harvard and would like to pursue a career in law and political science. He is sponsored by Florida Post #159. Please welcome your 2015 Boys Nation President Aravind Byju.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. BYJU: Thank you. Thank you very much. I would like to begin by thank President Janet Jefford and all members present here today of the Auxiliary for your amazing hospitality and giving this distinct honor to be speaking here. We have all been received with such warmth, it has really been a great experience.

I'd like to talk in this opportunity that I've been given about what I learned in my two weeks at Boys State and Boys Nation. And while many ideals were imparted upon me, I believe this organization, the Auxiliary, knows these ideals perhaps better than any with three words: Faith, Family, and Freedom.

I'll begin with faith. Because at Boys Nation to now have a belief, a loyalty, and a trust in our country and our systems of government. I have a trust in our veterans and our soldiers who have defended it, and I have a trust in every American citizen to do something to make this great nation so great. I now have a faith in God and a faith in light and optimism because now I know that light will banish darkness, and I know we will go into the future making it brighter. And today in these experiences at the Convention, seeing these great programs of the Legion, the Sons of the American Legion, and of the Auxiliary, and seeing you all sit there so selfless and giving up so much for everyone else, that gives me faith in the future. Next --

(Applause.)

MR. BYJU: -- next family remains a strong pillar of the American Legion Auxiliary, another ideal that I learned through these programs. I would like to begin by thanking two important women in my own life who are here today, my mother Emi Setya [phonetic] as well as my history teacher Ms. Patricia Regan [phonetic], who is here with me today.

(Applause.)

MR. BYJU: You both have taught me invaluable lessons that go beyond eating your vegetables and who the 13th President are.

(Laughter.)

MR. BYJU: You have taught me how to act as a person, how to treat other people, and for that I can never thank you enough but only hope to make you proud. But with family, it's not just blood, it's anywhere and anyone who loves you. And I believe that is exemplified like no other with the American Legion Family because across this great nation of people, men, women who have never met each other before, they can support one another in one of the most dynamic networks across the nation. And that's powerful and that is family. And for that I thank you as well.

(Applause.)

MR. BYJU: But family has always been the backbone of a strong society. It supports communities. And that's what the Auxiliary does for the American Legion. This past year over \$3.1 billion have been raised by this

organization to help our veterans and youth with programs like Flag education, Americanism education, and of course the wonderful program of Girls Nation. I was able to meet Girls Nation President --

(Laughter.)

MR. BYJU: I was able to meet my counterpart Kamryn Sannicks, a phenomenal individual who spoke here earlier, and I believe there is no better award to all your hard work than seeing like that so great and with such a bright future. So I thank that pillar as well.

(Applause.)

MR. BYJU: And finally I would like to address the idea of freedom. Because that often comes up when discussing our great nation. But I would not like to talk about the freedoms we have but the responsibilities that come with those freedoms. Because we all know that freedom is not free. And we must remember the sacrifice of all to give us that freedom. We would be remiss to not use that freedom, whether voting, or standing up for what's right through expression of speech, press, or the religion. It would be our fault not to exercise our freedoms because so much has been given up to allow us these freedoms. And I believe an individual who spoke to me as well as my other 97 delegates at Boys Nation embodies that idea of freedom like no other. And that is your 2015 Woman of the Year Nesse Godin, Holocaust Survivor.

(Applause.)

MR. BYJU: In her life changing talk at Boys Nation she had an optimism and faith in the future despite all the hardship she has gone through that was inspiring to all of us. She said that a great responsibility was put upon our shoulders as the future, as well as my other delegates standing up on the stage because we have a responsibility to that freedom. She said we have a responsibility to ensure that never again shall we experience a tragedy like the Holocaust. And that is a great responsibility because we have been given so much from you all and it is our duty to do that. But to close in the words of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "I do not shrink from this responsibility, I welcome it."

Thank you, and God bless.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Aren't they wonderful? The 2015 Eagle Scout of the Year is from Elk Horn, Nebraska.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: His Eagle Scout project, the Douglas County Korean War Memorial, fund raised over \$4,000. The monument is engraved with the names of the 79 Douglas County men who lost their lives in the Korean War. He is also an active member in 4H and competes in cross county running. After high school, he plans to attend college majoring in mechanical engineering. Sponsored by Nebraska Post #58, please welcome your Eagle Scout of the Year Ethan Copple.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. COPPLE: Good morning, and thank you. I'm honored to be recognized as the 2015 American Legion National Eagle Scout of the Year. I would like to thank Legion Post #58 in Valley, Nebraska for nominating me and also say thank you for the many American Legion Posts and Auxiliary Units who have supported my projects and the boy scouts across the nation. I would also like to thank National President Janet Jefford for inviting us, the Youth Champions, to speak here this morning.

As noted before, my Eagle Scout was the creation of the Douglas County Korean War Memorial. It recognized the 79 men who lost their lives from Douglas County in the Korean War and honored all of those who served. At first, I was struggling to get donations until one night I went to the Valley Legion to make my presentation. The Valley Auxiliary, the Valley American Legion Post, the Sons of the American Legion, and the Valley VFW were some of my first contributors, and that night these veterans and their families fundraised almost one-third of the funding needed to complete my project. I am --

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. COPPLE: I am extremely grateful for the generosity, encouragement, and support that helped get my Eagle Scout project on its way to completion.

Scouting has provided me with many opportunities. Just this last May at BSA Sea Base St. Thomas, my crew and I sailed, swam, and snorkeled in the Virgin Islands National Park. And the summer before we canoed over 80 miles and through almost 50 lakes in Northern Minnesota and the boundary waters.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MR. COPPLE: And in 2012 we backpacked over 100 miles in the wilderness of Philmont Scout Ranch in Northern New Mexico.

(Applause.)

MR. COPPLE: In addition my troops and I have traveled to South Dakota, Colorado, and all over Nebraska --

(Cheering.)

MR. COPPLE: -- camping, hiking, and enjoying the outdoors. In the future, as mentioned, I plan to go a university and double major in mechanical engineering and industrial engineering with a minor in civil engineering. I also plan to do work with Engineers Without Borders and other nonprofits to help in less fortunate areas of the world. The scholarship that I've been given will help me pay for my education so I can better serve others.

None of the scouting opportunities that we have here in the U.S., however, would be available without the unrelenting commitment and support of American Legion Posts across the country. And we all know that our wives and our daughters of our veterans plays a significant and important role in maintaining those Posts. Community support and personal sacrifices that all Auxiliary members have made on behalf of the Scouts and the nation are truly incredible. Thank you again for giving me this honor. And I'm proud to

represent the Boy Scouts of America, our American Legion Post, and the Auxiliary. God bless all of you, and thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Rhiann Travis from Poolville, Texas claimed the Precision Champion title with a 2,487.9 score out of a possible 2,509.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I was at Junior Shooting Sports and I watched her and it was amazing that none of them get nervous like towards the end, it was amazing. The shooting club sponsored by Parker County Post #163 sponsors Rhiann. Please welcome our 2015 Precision Champion Rhiann Travis.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MISS TRAVIS: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MISS TRAVIS: I would first like to start by thanking all of the American Legion Auxiliary members for their support, and a special thanks to President Janet Jefford.

Whenever someone asks me if I want to go to the Olympics, my answer is no. I want to be at the top of the podium to represent my country. I put forth much effort into achieving the first part of my answer, but the second part? That's what everyone says. I had kind of taken that part for granted. Until the American Legion National Championship Match, I had no real concept of what representing my country really looked like. Before competing in Colorado it was all about the possibility of \$5,000 that would put me one step closer to that podium. Just another match, right? I could not have been more wrong. God puts us where we need to be, and I needed to be there. But not just because I'm a pretty good shot. I needed to understand that representing my country is more than just that moment of standing at the top of a podium, holding a Flag, and hearing our National Anthem play. Witnessing the American Legion members who dedicating their time into ensuring that we had an amazing experience enjoy the match even more than the competitors made me realize why I was really there.

More than earning a scholarship I needed to learn that representing my country means serving her people everyday in any way that I can. The American Legion volunteers demonstrated that to truly represent our country one must serve through actions in order to make the world a better place for those beside us as well as those who will come behind us. Through the American Legion volunteers at the match I witnessed how their service to others reflects a living patriotism, one of loyalty and love of country, not one of just lip service. And how the reward for that service is measured beyond the tangibles of a medal or a check. The intangible joy they returned to us was much more valuable.

My thank yous, for your service, for the joy you have in being a part of this organization, of this country, and the lives of the young people such as myself to whom you offer such life changing opportunities. Someday when I

do stand on that Olympic podium holding our Stars and Stripes and listening to our National Anthem, I will represent each and every one of you. I will forever serve as a testament to the power of those who have given of themselves for this country as well as those who will stand for this country in the generations yet to come. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: In the Sporter category the Championship was captured by a young shooter representing Flowing Wells High School in Arizona.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: He is sponsored by Post #7, located in Tucson. He won the title by firing a 2,331 out of a possible 2,509. Please welcome our 2015 Sporter Shooting Champion Adam McClintock.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. MCCLINTOCK: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MR. MCCLINTOCK: I would like to also begin by thanking all the ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary and your wonderful President Janet Jefford.

Like everyone in this room, I didn't start where I am today. My journey started about four years ago on what was quite possibly the most difficult day of my entire life. I remember that day, coming home and being met by a large congregation of my family and friends who in turn informed me that my parents would not be returning from their annual trip to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, and that they had passed in a tragic motorcycle accident.

That week was very difficult as the adults decided where I would live and who I would be living with. Thankfully, though, my Uncle David and Aunt Susan stepped forward and invited me into their home and into their lives. I will forever be grateful to them for doing so. But that year I had let the death of my parents overtake me and it drastically affected my life as both a student and a citizen.

This ended my sophomore year. Upon the insistence from my uncle, I had joined the Junior ROTC Program at my high school where I found the structure and discipline that I needed to get my life back on track. Besides the basic respect to country and Flag, I also learned a deep respect for this country's veterans. Each year on Veterans Day we marched in a parade and went to a local nursing home where we delivered handwritten letters to the veterans there. I had the honor of leading that very detail my senior year and hearing and seeing their responses, to both the letters and the Flag ceremony that we did there, gave me a better understanding of what it meant to them to both serve and to see the younger generation coming up behind them ready to give their service. It was my inspiration to become a better citizen.

My academic inspiration, however, came in the form of the rifle team. It was something that I liked, that I was good at, and it worked as a personal escape from my everyday problems. When I was there nothing else mattered.

By the end of my senior year, through the help of my family, friends, teachers, coaches, and all the opportunities presented to me, I had worked my way to the top 20 percent of my class, I had won the American Legion Championships, and I was going to go to college. Today, I am a freshman engineering major at the University of Arizona and I'm hoping to transfer to West Point within the coming year.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. MCCLINTOCK: I give my thanks to the entire American Legion Family for providing these opportunities to not only I, but all of my fellow youth champions. And if I do anything in my future, I hope that I can provide some of these same opportunities to some young individuals with struggles that I meet so that they too may achieve their dreams and be successful in life. Just as all of you and everyone in my life have done for me. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our next youth champion hails from Ocala, Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: She displays poise and effectiveness in delivering her prepared oration entitled, "Our Greatest Honor." She enjoys tennis and is the founder of Kids In Special Situations, Inc., a not for profit organization. She plans to attend the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and pursue a career in law. With American Legion scholarships totaling almost \$20,000, and sponsored by Florida Post #27, please welcome your 2015 National Oratorical Contest Winner Geeta Minocha.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MISS MINOCHA: Good morning, everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MISS MINOCHA: How are you guys today?

AUDIENCE: Good.

MISS MINOCHA: Glad to hear it. I think another round of thank yous are in order for the Legion National Commander Michael Helm, the Sons National Commander -- yes.

(Applause.)

MISS MINOCHA: The Sons National Commander Michael Moss.

(Applause.)

MISS MINOCHA: And of course the Auxiliary President Janet Jefford.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MISS MINOCHA: I am so, so grateful to have the opportunity to speak to you all today. The American Legion Auxiliary is an organization I

feel privileged to be addressing. I too had the privilege of participating in the Girls State Program in Florida, and the week long experience changed the way I viewed our government and our civil servants. But this organization is special to me for a different reason. This organization empowers young women throughout the country.

This is something I've touched on before. Incidentally, the topic of the extemporaneous portion of the National Finals Oratorical Contest was the 19th Amendment. But this is a time where women around the world are barred from obtaining an education. Where thousands, yes, thousands of women die from honor killings every single year. Where countries around the world still deem them to be second class citizens. And I cannot stress enough now imperative it is that there is an organization which exists to protect the rights of women in this country.

(Applause.)

MISS MINOCHA: To the Auxiliary members present, you all have made it clear to me and every other girl who has had the privilege of participating in your many programs that it is not only okay to speak up, to participate in our democracy and to lead those around us, but encouraged.

Thanks to your work in conjunction of that of the American Legion's, I have been inspired to apply my scholarship money to my tuition at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business where I will be pursuing a career in law and public policy. I want to assist in taking this country to new heights because you have told me that I can do so.

(Applause.)

MISS MINOCHA: Thank you all very much, once again. God bless you all, and God bless the United States of America.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Would all the American Youth Champions and the American Legion Auxiliary's Girls Nation President please join me at the podium?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, you all, the American Legion Auxiliary does so much to support these programs of the American Legion. And I just thought you would love and enjoy hearing from these champions today.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So let's give them another round of applause. I am so proud of every one of them.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And if you can also join me in giving Shane Abrams, Assistant Director of the Americanism Division, a big round of applause for bringing us these Youth Champions today?

(Applause.)

MR. ABRAMS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, dear.

MR. ABRAMS: Thank you. It's so good to see you again. Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Thank you, everyone. And best of luck in the future. We're rooting for you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It's going to be hard to, like, make a speech after hearing them. But we'll see how it works out. Okay.

All right. I guess it's time to start with some of our chairman reports. For National Chairman Martha Lee Girls State was inspirational, educational, life changing, and fun. She truly considered it an honor to be connected to one of the Auxiliary's premier programs since 1937. Please welcome our National Girls State and Girls Nation Committee Chairman, Martha Lee Thatcher.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Girls State is universally considered the premier program of the American Legion Auxiliary. ALA departments in 49 states proudly begin their programs each program with a Flag raising ceremony to promote patriotism, responsible citizenship, and love of God and country. Delegates practice and they participate in building their party's platform, making those all important two- to three-minute speeches, and campaigning for office. Soon they begin to find themselves enjoying the process and develop a passion for politics.

A key component of the program involves mock Senate sessions, complete with caucusing and debates. Writing and defending a bill in debate develops strong character. Here are a few items from last year's reports that impressed me.

The Department of North Carolina is proud to have held 76 consecutive sessions of this marquee program. Take a bow, ladies.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Delegates attending the Department of Arkansas' opening session heard the puppy story and created beautiful centerpieces to display at their graduation ceremonies.

Location is important in real estate, and the Department of Florida took advantage of their proximity to the State Capital by spending three full days in that Capital sitting actually in the seats, literally in the seats of their House and Senate.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Embracing their size, the Departments of Delaware and Rhode Island held Boys and Girls States together. And that allowed them to meet in joint sessions, reducing their guest speaker expenses.

In addition to hosting a programmed fair highlighting our mission to honor veterans and their families, many of the ALA Girls State Programs invited delegates to participate in a service project emphasizing the value of

volunteerism. The Department of Minnesota's service project, activity bags for the children of veterans while they sat with their parents waiting for a doctor's appointment, these were very welcome gifts to the Minnesota and St. Cloud VA Hospitals.

The Department of New Jersey hosted --
(Applause.)
(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: -- hosted their Second Annual Lunch with a Veteran, featuring a patriotic barbecue followed by a USO show. And this obviously was very successful since they repeated it again this year. Fantastic job, ladies.

The Department of Illinois asked their delegates to provide a gift card to the local Fisher House. The previous year this same project netted \$200,000, which purchases socks, blankets, and mittens for these injured soldiers.

Each year two outstanding Girls State citizens are chosen in their various Girls State programs to represent that state at ALA Girls Nation in Washington, D.C. where the focus shifts from state government to federal government. In 2015 the Girls Nation experience began on July 25th when 98 senators arrived on campus. Sunday, tradition found us at Arlington National Cemetery laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown. In fact, the entire week was filled with a series of memorable events.

Actually, for me, observing the girls, these remarkable young women, each day in daily Senate sessions will stay forever in my memory. Because of the ALA Girls Nation Program many senators were ignited with a passion for politics and this often results in a change in their career path. Yes, these 98 Senators were competitive. But more importantly, all came from a Girls State program that emphasized leadership, patriotism, and a commitment to honor and support our veterans.

In the culture of goodwill, ALA Girls Nation and Girls State programs are changing the lives in a very positive way through Faith, Family, and Freedom. This concludes my platform remarks and I invite National President Janet to join me at the podium for a presentation.

President Janet, this gives me great pleasure to present you with the Girls Nation book for the year 2015 and help you to remember the time we spent at Girls Nation. This is your memory book, Janet. Enjoy it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It's beautiful.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All the pictures. Thank you so much, Martha Lee, for taking on this job. I had a wonderful time at Girls Nation. And I was just inspired by seeing all those wonderful young ladies there. Thank you to you and your committee.

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: Thank you.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: During her chairmanship this year, Kathy Daudistel was so impressed with the way unit members connected with their communities. For example, there was a unit that lost four members from the

World War II era this year. The families of these members requested that in lieu of flowers contributions be made to the unit. The unit used the money to post a flat on every single building lining their town's main street. Please welcome to the stage our National Americanism Committee Chairman Kathy Daudistel.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. These memorable words were spoken by President John F. Kennedy in his 1961 inaugural speech. Today, over 50 years later, Auxiliary members are still stepping up and doing what they can do for our country and our Auxiliary.

The ALA's Americanism Program promotes patriotism and responsible citizenship. Where better to start than with the youth of our nation? The winner of this year's Dorothy Pearl Plaque for most outstanding unit Americanism program focusing on children and youth goes to Ehrig McTurk Unit #127 of Gladbrook, Iowa.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Each year Unit #127 presents a plaque to an eighth grade student that portrays the best character of citizenship throughout the year. Students are nominated by teachers and then a panel of judges determine the most deserving student. During this year's presentation speech the unit Americanism Chairman Lisa Reinhard said, "If each one of you will strive to be responsible, cooperative, and trustworthy citizens, we will see improvements in our towns, our states, and our country. Each one of you will make an impact."

She tells them that good citizenship is everyone working together for betterment and to not sit back and let others do the work. Throughout the year, Lisa and her unit lead by example. At the beginning of each school year the ladies of Unit #127 present brand new Flags to the school and perform a Flag raising ceremony. They also visit several times throughout the year and provide Flag education programs to children, depending on their age level and geared to them. The children really enjoy the presentations and look forward to them every year.

An example of a unit working to promote Flag loyalty goes to C.E. Delario, Unit #50, of the Department of Texas.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: They partnered with a local newspaper and held a contest to see which child could find the most number of U.S. Flags flying between Flag Day and Independence Day in their county. The winner received a framed certificate, a Flag of their own, a \$50 Visa gift card, and a full day pass for four to the local swimming facility. This contest was in the newspaper almost every single day and it reminded the readers that the

American Legion Auxiliary promotes patriotism. This same unit hosts a Flag Day skit called, "Happy Birthday Old Glory." They show up dressed as George Washington and Betsy Ross. The children celebrate the birthday of our Flag, learn about Flag education, and they even get birthday cupcakes.

Perhaps the best and most rewarding aspect of the Americanism program is the essay contest. This year's theme was, "What does freedom mean to my family?" Department chairmen reported that this topic sparked many good questions and discussions and the essays they received were outstanding.

One young man from the Department of South Carolina wrote a particularly inspiring essay. Amari Williams, a student at Camden Middle School in South Carolina wrote, "For my family, freedom is living without fear and restrictions. Freedom allows my family to worship God, be thankful for life, seek medical attention that helped save my life, and to be kind and patient with others. I know that no matter what someone does to me, my family, or my country, I can still have freedom in my heart."

Three years ago Amari's chances of seeing another year were very slim. He was placed on an artificial heart and spent almost six months in the hospital. He received a new heart on June 19th, 2012 and today is an active, outgoing boy who started his own foundation and is the winner of the Class 2 Southern Division Essay Contest.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Let's hear what Amari has to say.

MR. WILLIAMS: About three years ago I had a heart transplant and afterwards it had me thinking. And one of the things I thought about was trying to help other people. So I started my foundation to help other people and have, to gather awareness about heart transplant and other heart diseases. Then it had me start thinking about my freedom, and that's what led me to write the essay. I'd would like to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for giving me this award and letting me write about what freedom means to me, and I will always have freedom in my heart.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAUDISTEL: Way to go, Amari. President Kennedy also said in his inaugural speech, "In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine will rest the final success or failure of this course." Looking over the accomplishments of our members this year, I am confident that we are in good hands. Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Kathy, that was a wonderful report. Thank you so much for all you have done this year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: If you notice that this year the Chairman will be giving out some of their rewards right here from the platform. So this gives you an opportunity to ring those bells and clap and celebrate those good accomplishments.

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2015 Convention Corporation President Mr. Clarence Bacon.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. BACON: Good morning, ladies. It's a pleasure to be with you this morning for a few minutes. I wanted to bring you greetings from the great Department of Maryland. And I hope you are enjoying the Convention so far. How is it?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. BACON: By my time we had a parade that lasted about two hours and ten minutes yesterday afternoon. I thought that was great. And we are having many, many compliments on how smoothly our Convention has been working. And that's largely because we have about 130 volunteers, including members of the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Sons of the American Legion as volunteers that are in charge of the committees. So if you need any help all you have to do is ask one of our committee chairs, or myself. But I think you are in a very safe part of Baltimore. So if you walk around the streets you are not going to be accosted. The problems that we had in Baltimore is about four and a half to five miles northwest of here. So it's very safe down in the Inner Harbor area. So enjoy your Convention and we are very pleased to have so many of you here in Maryland. God bless all of you, and God bless America.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Joining us now is the leader of the nation's largest veterans organization. Michael D. Helm of Kansas was elected National Commander of the 2.4 million member American Legion during the 96th National Convention. A U.S. Army veteran during the Vietnam War, he served with the 83 Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina and earned his ranger tab in 1972. He has been a member of Jack Helt American Legion Post #313 in Nebraska since 1972. The American Legion National Commander Mike Helm served as Commander of the Department of Nebraska from 1987 to 1988, and was a National Vice Commander from 2003 to 2004. Nationally he served on the National Legislative Commission and was Chairman of the National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission and the Foreign Relations Commission. Commander Helm's wife Debbie is active in the American Legion Auxiliary, having served as District 9 President and as the Department Junior Activities Chairwoman. Debbie and Mike are parents to five Legion Family members. Please, please welcome to the stage our guest and my friend your American Legion National Commander Michael Helm, along with his wife Debbie, and his aid Don Suchy and Don's wife Marge.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Bells ringing.)

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER HELM: I guess those bells ring, it's about time for the cows to come home, huh?

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: That's what it was at home on the farm. Let me see, I think Nebraska is over here, right?

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER HELM: And then they introduced me from Kansas, too, so where are they at?

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER HELM: I've got, I live over the Kansas but Nebraska certainly is might pertinent. And it's been what a great department Nebraska is, and I like Kansas, too. That way I've got a football team and a basketball team both. So it works out pretty good.

Janet and I have had a great year along with Mike Moss serving as your commanders and President of this great family organization. I think that was, that's the message I want to bring to you today, is that family part of how we operate. And over the course of my time when I got to those posts, units, squadrons, and American Legion Rider Chapters that really had that family concept within what they were trying to do for the American Legion, for the community, and for the veterans in their community, you could see absolute growth amongst all of them. And those of you that are sitting out there know that.

I would just challenge you that if you are that part of the success story of our American Legion Family, that you begin to move that to other posts, units, squadrons, and chapters within your own departments. It is so very, very important that we do this. Number one, because our number one issue of course within the American Legion Family is care of the veterans. And that healthcare, you know, we continue to work with. At the same time we have a very great concern of where our national security is headed at this point in time. And both of those issues, the American Legion Family has to step up and make sure that those people who are our leaders, or who want to be our leaders, understand our position. And so that upward lift of our membership and post, unit, squadron, chapter activities is a huge part of that. So I just encourage you to reach out locally to those, those people that might need your help. And I think if they see the light, we are going to be a lot better off.

You know this year we stepped out a little different on our fundraising. And I picked all American Legion charities, all American Legion Auxiliary charities for my donation, my specific donations. I let everybody do whatever they wanted to do. The only thing I did was I chose a number of \$4 million to raise. And they said, oh, that's too much money. Oh, you'll never get that. Well, I think today we're at five million nine hundred and -- we're about --

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

COMMANDER HELM: Officially on the website we're a little bit under \$6 million. But as a matter of fact, I rode the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund ride and I'm going to tell you that we're way, way over the \$6 million. And as this Convention goes on there might even be a chance I might be the \$7 million Commander. So --

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

COMMANDER HELM: I know -- oh wait a minute. I've got my own bell up here.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: I didn't know that. That's nice. Okay, without further ado, and I know you've got a lot of things to do today, I have some gifts, Janet, for you if you come over here.

First of all I've got a card, and I wrote it myself.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You did? So I got these, I've got to tell you, I got this beautiful bouquet of flowers in my room and it said, "From Commander Michael Helm." And I texted him and I said, oh, your flowers are beautiful, thank you. And he sent back and he said, "I picked every one of them myself."

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: Why would you laugh? That's true.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Wow.

COMMANDER HELM: Okay, now this, this --

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: -- it's for you. But this, my wife made and kept me, she's not, my wife never does anything on time. Well --

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: She asked for it. Because last night when I was trying to go to sleep I could still hear the needle poking in on one side of the cloth and coming out the other side of the cloth. So here you go, Janet.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh my gosh. This is the back.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That's beautiful.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Everywhere we traveled we always, Debbie always had to find a quilting store. So I have a couple of gifts, too.

MRS. HELM: Well wait, wait, wait, wait.

COMMANDER HELM: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, there's another one? Oh, wow.

COMMANDER HELM: Now this my wife, I think making a quilt is pretty special.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah.

COMMANDER HELM: But this my wife picked out over in --

MRS. HELM: In Oregon --

COMMANDER HELM: Over in Oregon, all the way to another foreign country. There you go.

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. The other foreign country. Oh, thank you. Thank you. Oh, that's beautiful. It's a silver necklace. Thank you so much. Oh, I've got to open it? Okay, help me.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Where did you get that? Inside is a picture of my dad.

AUDIENCE: Oh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: My dad is a Past Commander from the Department of Connecticut and he was a loyal member of the American Legion. Thank you so much.

MRS. HELM: And Janet used to talk about him all the time, and how she used to follow him around and everything. So I thought that was appropriate to put his picture in there.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That is perfect. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Mike, somebody told me that when you retire, you're not, not from this job anyway, you're not really going to retire but you're going to start maybe another business, like a lawn service business.

COMMANDER HELM: Yeah, that sounds good.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah, okay. So I got you, I, you know, you're hard to buy, so instead I got you a nice little gift certificate from Sears --

COMMANDER HELM: Ooh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- to help you start out your, buy some equipment for your business, okay?

COMMANDER HELM: All right. Thank you. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And then I thought when we were in Hawaii, it was Normandy. So I -- I mean, Normandy, at Pearl Harbor. So here's this t-shirt as a memory of our trip to Pearl Harbor.

COMMANDER HELM: Thank you. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're welcome.

COMMANDER HELM: Thank you. All right.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: She said, I got the bigger package. So everything is kind of --

MRS. HELM: Oh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- there is a t-shirt from Pearl Harbor for you.

MRS. HELM: All right. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And so she finished one quilt, so now we could do another quilt.

(Laughter.)

MRS. HELM: Oh, thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And this actually one of my pages gave me. It's a quilting and cooking book. I actually wanted to keep this for myself.

MRS. HELM: Oh, thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I have a souvenir for you from when we were in Europe, we were in Brussels and in Flanders. And so it's a plate for you.

MRS. HELM: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're welcome.

MRS. HELM: Oh, thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So hers looks like a lot better, but I love you better. No, no I don't.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: Thank you. No, you don't. And also up here are my aide Don Suchy and his wife Marge. And I just wanted to recognize both of them. Don, Don kept me straight all the time and Marge worried about it.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. I have something for him, too.

COMMANDER HELM: Okay. I just wanted to tell a quick little story. As we, as we -- you invited me.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: It's still got my name, my name is still up there, isn't it?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. All right.

COMMANDER HELM: Anyway, from time to time the wives came along on some of our trips and one time though after they had been with us for maybe two or three states, I thought they were going home and then coming, and then coming back the following week. And so when I got to the airport and got on the airplane they were on the same, I said, are you still with me?

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: That was a disappointment. But --

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: -- but it was, other than that it was all good. Just that one little time.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You see why we had such a good time all year? Okay. Marge, you first this time. So I don't know how many of you know Marge. But wherever she goes --

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- whatever she has on jewelry, her jewelry always matches perfect. I don't know how she fits it in her suitcase. So let's see, this is yours I think. And I know she loves watches so --

MRS. SUCHY: Oh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- there's a little gift for you in there.

MRS. SUCHY: Okay. Oh my gosh.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You have a watch. And Marge was with us in Flanders, so this is also one of the plates for you.

MRS. SUCHY: Thank you, Janet.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're welcome. It was hard buying them without them seeing it.

(Laughter.)

MRS. SUCHY: All right, Don, your turn. Don is my beer drinking buddy, here.

(Cheering.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So, you know, it was really hard. What do you get? So this is what I got you.

(Laughter.)

MR. SUCHY: Oh, my. Monthlyclub.com, microbrewed beer of the month club, U.S. and International variety.

(Cheering.)

(Laughter.)

MR. SUCHY: I'll drink to that.

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah. So every month you'll get like a case of beer or something.

MR. SUCHY: Oh, gee.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I don't know what it is. So, and anyway I also heard that you're going to, when you get home you're going to start doing more hunting and fishing, right?

MR. SUCHY: That's correct.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So somebody said, buy him this thing. So I did. So I want you to like kind of demonstrate. How does this thing work? Uh-oh, it doesn't work.

MR. SUCHY: It may be the wrong end.

(Laughter.)

(Quacking.)

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Maybe you could send, whatever you catch you could send some meat or something to Connecticut once in a while, or fish.

MR. SUCHY: Well, it's duck. So --

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh.

(Laughter.)

MR. SUCHY: It might be foul by the time you get there.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That's exactly -- oh.

(Laughter.)

MR. SUCHY: Listen, thank you.

COMMANDER HELM: Thank you, everybody.

MR. SUCHY: You guys made a great choice. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We had a good time.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER HELM: Are we done now?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Let me see. Wait a minute. It says here, thank you, Mike, Debbie, Don, and Marge.

COMMANDER HELM: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're done.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER HELM: As I left to come up here I asked the National Adjutant if he had any remarks that I should say on his behalf. And he just said just say good luck Doobie.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And who did you say said that?

COMMANDER HELM: I think I said the National Adjutant, Mr. Wheeler.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: You tell Don Wheel-off that I said thank you.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER HELM: Thank you all.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wait a minute.

COMMANDER HELM: Uh-oh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Commander, we'd like to read a resolution for you, please, and the Legion.

VOICE: Madam National President, delegates, alternates, and guests will be graced by many distinguished guests during the American Legion Auxiliary's 95th National Convention being held this week in the great City of Baltimore. And whereas, one of those guests included Michael Helm, Commander of the American Legion, the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continued devotion to servicemembers and veterans. Now therefore be it resolved that by our applause we thank Commander Helm and the American Legion for their unwavering commitment to their mission and our veterans, military, and their families.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER HELM: Is that it now?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yep.

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Diane Duscheck is a 54-year member of Abendroth-Connelly Unit in Markesan, Wisconsin. As a middle school teacher for 34 years, Diane was excited to see unit members embrace the new Star-Spangled Kids Program, educating children and youth on the history of the United States from the aspect of patriotism, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution. Please welcome our National Children & Youth Committee Chairman Diane Duscheck.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Madam National President, Auxiliary members have made a difference in the lives of children one unit at a time, and the children have made a difference in their neighbors' lives one good deed at a time. The children in our communities demonstrated a passion for helping for helping others in need. Let's take a look at the few of the remarkable Good Deed and Youth Hero Award winners.

For instance, Ben in New Jersey is a nine-year-old who founded Our People's Books, a series of short stories about inspiring individuals. His friend George is the illustrator of the book's covers. Ben donates the proceeds from the book's sales to Family Promise of Morris County, a organization that helps local families who are struggling and homeless. By selling his books for only five dollars, Ben has already raised \$2,000.

On to Hannah, a high school senior in Indiana, who conducted a coat drive through an organization called One Warm Coat. She gathered 529 coats along with numerous sweaters, sweatshirts, hats, scarves, and gloves. Hannah donated the coats to those who are less fortunate and get aid at local shelters. It was heartwarming to receive a thank you note from Hannah, who was appreciative for being recognized for her good deed.

And what's our part in this? Recognizing the good deeds that are going on around us. Not all good deeds meet the criteria for National Good Deed Award, so at times it's nice to have something handy to present to a child who has done a kind deed for another. The Department of South Dakota came up with their own --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: -- their own Good Deed Card that members can use when they catch a youngster doing a good deed for a neighbor, like mowing the neighbor's lawn, carrying in groceries, or helping out in the classroom. This card gives Auxiliary members a chance to catch kids being helpful.

We're also fortunate to have Youth Heroes, who risked their lives to save others, or who saved others' lives. In Kentucky, 15-year-old Jaden was at a friend's house when he heard a woman cry out Jaden ran to her rescue and found her brother in a diabetic emergency. Jaden called 911 and when the man's breathing and heartbeat stopped, Jaden started CPR, a skill his dad taught him when he was only nine years old. Though Jaden said he always wanted to be a pilot, this experience has changed his life so much now he wants to fly medical helicopters and become a paramedic.

In Maine, Ethan was honored as a hero for keeping his cool and working with the police to help track down a man hiding in the bathroom when he and his mother returned home. Ethan called 911 and kindly provided the dispatcher with the pertinent information. Police and the K9 unit located the offender. At age 11, Ethan's heroics were recognized by the Police Department and the local Auxiliary unit. And our part in this? Recognizing the young heroes who are in our neighborhoods.

The award winner for the outstanding unit promotion of children and youth activities is Unit #177 Fairfax, Virginia.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: They touch the lives of children in their communities all year long. The holidays are wonderful times to bring smiles to children's faces. The unit adopted the Main Street Child Development Center and decorated and delivered pumpkins for their Halloween get together, and sent items for their Easter baskets. At Christmastime member host a party of the children of the Challenger Baseball League, along with their parents and siblings. Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their helpful elves visit the children. It's a party with singing, dancing, face painting, and lots of refreshments.

To show their concern for the smallest members of the community, and as a reminder of how precious children are, members adopted the premature newborn babies at Bethesda Intensive Care Unit, making crocheted hats and baby blankets. As though that's not enough, members also crocheted baby blankets for use in the ICU nursery to swaddle babies who passed way. Department of Virginia, would you please stand and be recognized?

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks. There are no recommendations or resolutions.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Diane. The Star-Spangled Kids was Diane's idea and I think it was wonderful. Thank you, Diane.

CHAIRMAN DUSCHECK: Thanks.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our Legion Family's concern for our nation's youth is first and foremost the mission of the Child Welfare Foundation. Each year the Foundation board reviews hundreds of grant applications from worthy nonprofit youth oriented organizations. Representing the American Legion Auxiliary is the liaison to the Child Welfare Foundation, Past National President Linda Newsome.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: Madam National President, ring those bells of service.

(Bells ringing.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: Thank you. That certainly describes the work of the American Legion's Child Welfare Foundation. The American Legion Auxiliary is proud of its participation in and support of the American Legion's foremost philanthropic priority and educating the public about the needs of children across the nation, the Child Welfare Foundation. Established in 1954, the Child Welfare Foundation has awarded more than \$13.76 million, with an M, in grants to assist the America's children.

(Applause.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: During the 2015 calendar year, 150 grant applications were received for consideration by the Foundation's board. The

board's screening committee recommended awarding 18 grants totaling \$566,691.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: Thank you. The Auxiliary sponsored six grants and another seven jointly with the SAL. Among the recipients --

(Bells ringing.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: -- okay, I'll stay here all day, Madam President, if you will ring the bells. Among the recipients is a Cure Search for Children's Cancer of Bethesda, Maryland, which received \$31,500 for their project entitled, "Cure Search 2014 Educational Video Series." And will be used to produce and distribute videos on staying healthy while on chemotherapy.

The Auxiliary also sponsored a grant of \$25,400 to the Children's Cranial Facial Association of Dallas, Texas for their project, "Wonder Shoes Kind." This grant will provide educators with resources to teach children anti-bullying and kind behavior towards those afflicted with cranial facial issues.

Jointly with the SAL and located in Rochester, New York, \$7,580 was granted to the Children's Institute, Inc. for their project to underwrite the production and dissemination of instructional DVDs to educate Boys and Girls Club staff on the needs of military children.

Also jointly with the SAL, a grant which will enhance outreach and marketing efforts of our Military Kids of McLean, Virginia was awarded \$31,350 for their project, "Our Mission Continues: Moving Into the Next Decade of Supporting Our Kids."

Located in Tenafly, New Jersey, the Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation was awarded \$25,400 for their project, "Seven Minute Video to Answer Genetic Testing Questions as it Relates to Pediatric Cardiomyopathy." This grant will fund the production of a video to be distributed by electronic newsletter and online to reach interested families and, wow, physicians. Doctors, I should have put.

(Laughter.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: Contributions to the Foundation this year totaled \$618,807.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: Sons of the American Legion led the way again with contributions of \$360,510. Contributions of \$128,724 were received from the American Legion. Which was followed by the Auxiliary's contributions totaling \$78,589. Together with other contributions and bequests brought our total to \$618,807.51, an increase this year over last year of almost \$5,000.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

LIAISON NEWSOME: So with these funds and your continued support of the Child Welfare Foundation we were able to ring those bells and our support, and our dollars, to help children of our nation.

Madam President, while that concludes my platform remarks, with your permission I would like to present two distinguished guests who have joined us this morning.

Jason Kees, Army Veteran and Legionnaire from the Department of Illinois joined the Legion's Headquarters staff in 2002. He currently serves as the Deputy Director of the Americanism Division and the Executive Secretary of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation.

Joining Jason on the stage is a very special friend of mine. Herbert J. Petit, Jr. is a Vietnam Combat Veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1966 to 1969. He joined the American Legion at Brauner Post #307 in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1972. He has been active in the post, district, and department, and served as Department Commander for the 2012-2013 Legion Year. Herbie served as the Chairman of the Louisiana Department C&Y Commission for 30 years. In 2004 he received the National Children and Youth Chairman of the Year. Herbie currently is a member of the Board of Directors of the Child Welfare Foundation. Off script, he was the aide to the National Commander when I served as President. So guess who got an aide for that year? Please welcome Herbie Petit. Come forward, please.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Good morning, everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MR. PETIT: Thank you for that warm welcome. Madam President, National Past Presidents, distinguished guests, and fellow delegates, thank you for your strong support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Through your generous donations together we are impacting the lives of thousands of children throughout our great nation.

I know you all have a busy schedule so I'm going to get right into giving out the awards. And I personally would like to thank all of the departments, and especially the ladies that work very hard for the Child Welfare Foundation. We know that the umbrella of Children and Youth and Americanism is mighty big, so you can't do everything. But you pick the one that you can do the best for in your department and make it work. And let me say, the Child Welfare Foundation is working. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: At this time I would like to recognize the departments that went above and beyond in the year 2014-2015. Our first award is the Excellence Award. It's awarded to the department with the highest per capita contributions averaged for one year. The envelope, please? I always wanted to say this. The envelope, please?

(Laughter.)

MR. PETIT: And the winner is the Department of Wyoming.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MR. PETIT: The Excellence Award. You will find as you look back over your life that the moments that stand out are moments when you have done things for others. Achieving the highest per capita giving award in 2014-2015 the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Wyoming. The Board of Directors graciously recognizes your outstanding support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. The representative from Wyoming?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

VOICE: On behalf of the Department of Wyoming we really thank you for this award. We do work hard and we are a small department, but we do everything we can. And we love those piggies.

MR. PETIT: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Our next award, the Meritorious Achievement Award, is awarded to the top department that experienced the highest increase in per capita giving in this year's contributions. The winner, again, Department of Wyoming.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Envelope, please.

(Bells ringing.)

MR. PETIT: Meritorious Achievement Award, achieving the highest percentage in per capita giving in 2014-2015, the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Wyoming. The Board of Directors graciously recognizes your outstanding support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation's service to the critical needs of America's children is made possible through your caring and your generosity. Thank you very much, Department of Wyoming.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

VOICE: Okay. Since he wants to hear from me one more time, I want to make a shout out to one of our biggest supporters of the Child Welfare, and that is Ms. Peggy Miller.

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Our next award the U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award to the top department nationally based on combined total contributions, the American Legion, the Auxiliary, the Eight and Forty, and SALs during this contribution year 2014-2015. The winner is the Department of Florida.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. PETIT: The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award 2014-2015 presented to the Legion Family American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida in recognition for your outstanding support of the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation. Great job, Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

VOICE: To my Auxiliary sisters, the Department of Florida, we gratefully accept. Keep up the good work, our Auxiliary sisters. We believe in our Child Welfare Foundation.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. PETIT: And our last award, the Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award is awarded to the most active department in the nation based on actual contributions received, again, this year, this 2014-2015 year. The winner? Department of Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Bells ringing.)

MR. PETIT: The Garland D. Murphy, Jr. Award presented to the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation American Legion Auxiliary to the Department of Florida, program year 2015, in recognition of your distinguished, as the members of your department, the total contributions received from their volunteers in support of our annual programs designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of our children of this nation. Great job, Florida.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

VOICE: Again, Department of Florida, thank you, thank you, thank you. Continue our good work and let's have a great Convention.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. PETIT: Great job. You know, we always recognize winners. But there's always the ones that come in second, third, fourth. And just let me say congratulations to all who helped with the Child Welfare Foundation this year. Madam President, would you step up, please?

On behalf of Dennis Boland, our Chairman, and the Board of Directors for the Child Welfare Foundation I'd like to present to you this pin for your hard work, dedication, and support this year.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MR. PETIT: Thank you all.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Madam Chairman, do you have any resolutions or recommendations?

LIAISON NEWSOME: I do not, Madam President. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, okay.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Linda, for that great report. And congratulations to all the winners, Wyoming and Florida, right?

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Over 900 children learned the Poppy Story this year. The National Poppy Chairman and the author of “The Poppy Lady,” Barbara Walsh, partnered this year to share the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary and the importance of a Poppy Program with hundreds of elementary school children. Here to tell us more about connecting the visual image of the Poppy with the sacrifices made by our veterans is Monique Batiste, National Poppy Committee Chairman.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: Once upon a time, there was a pretty red flower called a Poppy. It was small with a dark center and a thin green stem. When the petals are opened, it creates a beautiful form laying gracefully, the reminder, the symbol, the Poppy. The Poppy would go on to be recognized by many organizations, the American Legion Auxiliary being one. A bell would ring one particular year by a National President named Janet Jefford. Her bell would ring to remind her members not to forget a theme she created. Three words, Faith, Family, Freedom.

Faith is believing, believing we can make a difference. By sharing the Poppy Story we continue to bring awareness of the importance of its visibility.

Family, the American Legion Family will continue to work together on Poppy Programs, Poppy Days, and making sure our veterans receive the necessities they so deserve.

And freedom, the Poppy also reminds us of our freedom and never to forget those who gave so much.

Forget Flat Stanley, we have Patty Poppy, a paper pen pal Poppy distributed to schoolchildren teaching them the Poppy Story and encouraging them to share Patty and the Poppy Story with children around the world.

Look for Patty Poppy in your mailboxes soon. Planting, painting, and Poppy nuptials. Planting Poppies was popular this year. Members from the departments of Kansas, Florida, and Louisiana planted poppies in honor of their eligible veterans.

We see groups having paint parties or corks and canvas events. Harold L. Gregory Memorial Unit #626 from the Department of Texas had a fundraiser called Painting the Poppies. Their members participated in an interactive follow the leader instructional art session where 19 Auxiliary members painted Poppy pictures. The paintings were donated to raise money for their Poppy Program. Their Painting the Poppies Art Auction was held on Memorial Day. Unit #626 needed a push to reach their \$1,000 Poppy Fund goal. They received a call from Carleen Saltz. Carleen’s father is a Korean War veteran. She didn’t understand the importance of the Poppy until later in life. She shared how important it was for her to honor the service of her father and all veterans by having a Poppy themed wedding. The Poppy story was told and every guest was given a Poppy, and Poppies were placed in each

program. All because of a memory and an appreciation of Poppy days with her dad. Carleen's donations for the Poppies she requested for her day helped Unit #626 reach their \$1,000 mark for their Poppy Fund.

Because your stories were original and you were creative and you found innovative ways to raise Poppy funds all while ringing your bells, the most Outstanding Overall Poppy Program Award is presented to Harriet Wright, Unit Poppy Chairman, of Harold L. Gregory Memorial Unit #626 in Fort Worth, Texas.

(Bells ringing.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: Will all the members of the Department of Texas please stand?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: Little Miss Poppy and Miss Poppy have served as an integral part of promoting the Poppy Program for generations. This year's Miss Poppy Hope Wischmeyer from the Department of Ohio could not be with us today.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: However, I'm pleased to present to you Little Miss Poppy Aleigha Houghton from the Department of Michigan. Let's welcome her.

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

MISS HAUGHTON: Hi.

(Laughter.)

MISS HAUGHTON: I'd like to thank the Michigan delegates and I'd like to thank my whole family and everything they have done for me.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: Thank you, Aleigha. And because Aleigha has worked so hard, Barbara Walsh -- oh.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: And because Aleigha has worked so hard the author of the Poppy Lady book Ms. Barbara Walsh sent in a personal autographed copy for Aleigha, and it has a personal message inside. So Aleigha, good job.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: So continue to pick your Poppy, paint, plant, or push your Poppy. Poppy pageants, Poppy posters, and don't forget your Poppy days. However you choose to promote the Poppy Program, always remember our veterans. Madam President, it was a delight serving as your National Poppy Chairman this year and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: Madam Chairman, are there any resolutions or recommendations?

CHAIRMAN BATISTE: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Monique. Thank you for reminding us to always remember that poppies are a memorial tribute to all those who shed their blood for freedom. That's the message we need to be taking to our communities and our future generations, that the red Poppy symbolizes the price of freedom and your donations support those who have paid a great price for that freedom. Thank you for a job well done, Monique.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. If you ask Cathi Taylor what makes a great vacation, she would say taking my family to visit every museum and historical landmark in the area, whether they like it or not. So here with her report, I guess whether you like it or not, please welcome our National Cavalcade of Memories Chairman and one of our national staff Cathi Taylor.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Madam National President, in the Grapes of Wrath John Steinbeck pictures a group of Oklahoma farm wives loading their belongings onto an old truck that will take them from the dust bowl to California. While they don't have much, not everything will fit. Leaving anything behind makes them ask, how can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past?

The importance of preserving history has been debated for centuries, even before Chris. Cicero argued that to be ignorant of the past is to be forever a child. American historian and author David McCullough reminds us that history is who we are and why we are the way we are. Out of pride in its history the Auxiliary created this committee in 1972 to collect, preserve, and share its story. So today I wish to speak to you about where we are in that process and where we are going.

The accomplishments of our departments and units are important. And believing we should lead by example this committee wants to share information and ideas so you can help us in these efforts. One of the first things we did this year was to take a look at the path laid out by our creators to determine if we should stay the course or head in a different direction. It has been 43 years since this committee was created and much has changed. Technology provides electronic files. Preservation methods have advanced. And the documents contained in our library and archives when combined with the Cavalcade provide a more complete and richer history of the organization. Should we be responsible for them, too?

In April all department Cavalcade chairmen were asked to complete a survey so we might learn how to better serve their needs as well as the unit's. In June the Indiana Historical Society assessed the collection at National Headquarters. We discussed condition, preservation, exhibiting, and

fund raising. Recently necessary preservation materials were purchased. And while we have a ways to go, it is a step in the right direction. And we've been working on a collection plan and a management plan. Once those are complete we will write a disaster plan, a good thing to have in case Mother Nature comes calling.

So that's where we are. Where are we headed? Former TV broadcaster Dan Rather once stated that we should not rely on museums and monuments alone. We need to be sure that we teach history to those who never had the opportunity to remember in the first place. In other words, history must be shared. Which necessitates identifying our audience. That's the easy part. It's everyone.

By learning our story we build upon the foundation the early leaders laid, making for a stronger and more cohesive organization. By sharing we bring awareness of the organization not only to ourselves and to our junior members, but to non-members. These two thoughts are the trust behind our future projects. Sound like the Centennial Plan?

In order to share history, though, we must know it. So the committee plans to educate you through social media and interactive blog. We will discuss topics such as past national officers, our members, our programs and projects, guest speakers, and events. I did say it will be interactive, so please ask questions and make comments.

Other projects include online unit histories, a national convention digital scrapbook, promoting junior member involvement, and the American Legion Auxiliary video oral history project. So there you have it, five new projects. Ambitious? Yes. Impossible? No. To make them work, though, we will need all of you. Because this isn't just the history of members long ago. It's also the history of you. And don't think that these projects will end when the centennial celebrations are over. Because every day you are out there working the mission, moving it forward, making a difference in someone else's life, you are creating history.

We sincerely hope you will join us in these efforts because should we fail to continue collecting, preserving, and sharing our story, we will find ourselves in the same predicament as those noble, but desperate, women of the Dust Bowl. Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Madam Chairman, do you have any resolutions or recommendations?

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, Cathi has been working, as you've heard, so hard archiving all our wonderful history and items. And when I needed to appoint a new chairman, Cavalcade Chairman, I couldn't think of anyone better than Cathi Taylor. And that was just a wonderful report. Thank you so much, Cathi.

CHAIRMAN TAYLOR: Thank you. It's my honor.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: As a retired marketing coordinator for a Philadelphia oil company, Beth McGinn already knew the value of an effective public relations campaign and its importance to a company's image and brand. What she didn't know was how impressed she would be by the level of expertise possessed by our members in both traditional and social forms of media. Her experience as our National Public Relations Committee Chairman has left no doubt in her mind that our organization will be here in the future to support the mission of Service Not Self. Beth?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Okay. Oscar Hammerstein once said a bell is not a bell until you ring it, and boy did you ladies ring those bells this year for the American Legion Auxiliary as you carried out the ALA mission celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom in your communities. Many members used traditional public relations methods such as newspapers, magazines, fliers, radio, and TV to spread the word about who we are and what we do. And as more and more units and departments began using social media we saw daily postings of Auxiliary bell ringers as they went about the business of increasing awareness of our organization by highlighting their spirit of service and program events.

As a result of these daily postings on Facebook and Twitter, we saw many creative ways to make our signature Poppy, we followed National President Janet on her travels, paid virtual visits to places that some of us will probably never get to see. We viewed this year Girls State citizens in real time as they went through the legislative process of passing bills and electing officers. We applauded Americanism Essay Contest winners, celebrated new units being chartered, and witnessed numerous Junior and VA&R activities. Not only did we read about these activities, we were able to interact with other members about them.

On any given day you can visit the library in McMechen, West Virginia where Blake Brothers Unit #46 members maintain a display window in their local library that features the USA and ALA flags and materials related to the American Legion Family. This display is kept current with ALA programs, events, and information relating to our mission of Service Not Self.

The Department of Arizona --

(Cheering.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Yay, ring your bells.

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Districts #11 and #12 really went big with their public relations efforts by purchasing space on an outdoor billboard to honor our veterans. It also included the ALA emblem, a Poppy, and encouraged new membership by contacting department officers at the website provided.

And not to be outdone by her senior unit members, junior member Morgan Stanley of Roy J. Honer Unit #505 in Yadkinville, North Carolina --

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: -- used social media, email, fliers, and newsletters to promote her project, Jeans for GIs. Her efforts gathered an amazing 500 pairs of jeans which were distributed at a stand down.

Members manned membership tables at business fairs and expos to promote membership and the ALA brand while wearing their Auxiliary logo attire. They were seen at local parades, homecomings and stand downs sporting their uniforms, while traveling in their cities and states with ALA magnets on their cars. But don't stop now. Public relation helps an organization tell its story, establishes a reputation which is a leading factor in its ability to achieve success, and necessary for the health of the brand.

In support of the Centennial Strategic Plan, we have launched a new Facebook page just for members. American Legion Auxiliary #ALARockStars is a virtual bulletin board for showcasing the many ways ALA members support the ALA's mission of serving veterans, the military, and their families. Search #ALARockStars, like the page, and share your ALA highlights.

As the Auxiliary continues to move towards its goal of one million members, we all need to maintain our bell ringing to encourage brand loyalty and recognition, recruit and renew membership, and continue to show how proud we are to be members of the world's largest women's veterans service organization.

Before I conclude I am pleased to announce the department awards for outstanding public relation programs. In the Central Division, Department of Ohio, Chairman Denise Conrad.

(Bells ringing.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Ring your bells, ladies. All right. In the Eastern Division the Department of Massachusetts, Chairman Mary Ellen Morissette.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: In the Northwestern Division, the Department of Minnesota, Chairman Diane Hayes.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: In the Southern Division, Department of North Carolina, Chairman Betsey Lee Hodges.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: And in the Western Division, Department of New Mexico, Chairman Theresa Montoya.

(Bells ringing.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Madam Chairman Janet, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: And keep ringing your bells.

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Beth. Do you have any resolutions or recommendations?

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: No, Madam President, I do not.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, this was Beth's first year as a national chairman. Did you enjoy it?

CHAIRMAN MCGINN: Yes, I did. It was fantastic.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And she did a wonderful job. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Well we've had a good morning so far, I hope. Okay. I need a little break so I'm going to bring Dubbie up here if you don't mind? And, no seriously, ask the National Secretary to read any announcements. Dubbie? Announcements.

VOICES: (Singing.) (Indiscernible).

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Walk up with a horrible way to die.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Your turn.

(Laughter.)

(Bells ringing.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I got up here right as you said a horrible death to die.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Have we talked about goal two?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. First off --

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: What is she doing? What are you doing back there?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: That's exactly what I looked like four years ago.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: First, as we celebrate launching Star-Spangled Kids, I just have to make a comment. Wasn't it sad to watch all those young girls singing the Star-Spangled Banner and just see those people just meander on about their business not paying attention? Don't you just want to give them a Star-Spangled message?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. So in the spirit of goodwill, remember we talked about things being fluid? The revised schedule that you

were given, we have an update to that. The rooms are correct. For the break out sessions this afternoon, the Centennial Plan workshop break out session is as listed, 1:30 to 3:00 in rooms 318 to 320. Obviously the next ones are not going to begin until that one ends. So the next break out sessions, the rooms are all correct, but they begin at 3:15 and they go to 4:30. So is that clear? Okay. Rooms are still correct, they just, they start at 3:15 and go to 4:30. Okay.

Installation rehearsal will take place in this room immediately following this morning's sessions. It will be for the 2014-15 national officers, current national officers, and the 2015-16 candidates for national office. So upon adjournment if those who are in those categories meet right down here in front of this, okay, so right over here, on the stage floor, or I mean on the Convention floor. Okay.

Oh. So now remember tomorrow is T-shirt Tuesday, your Centennial Plan t-shirts. And in case anybody missed National President Janet's announcement earlier, even though we will be wearing t-shirts during part of the session tomorrow morning, we will not be wearing everything else that one normally wears with t-shirts. So we still ask that you come prepared looking a step above like you're going to a ball game. And that you, if, and we know that the Woman of the Year Luncheon follows the session tomorrow. So if you are not going to the Woman of the Year Luncheon and you want to wear your t-shirt, that's great. If you are going to the Woman of the Year Luncheon and you want to bring your t-shirt, just know at some point, at time, we'll say put your t-shirts on. So take that into consideration as you, as you dress tomorrow. Because we do not have dressing rooms off to the side. So when we say there will be a wardrobe change it won't be that kind of wardrobe change with attendants.

But we do want, I want to remind everybody that what we are going to try to do tomorrow is, we haven't done this for a long time. Tomorrow we will be talking about the Centennial Plan, yay.

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: You all have your t-shirts, right?

(Cheering.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So we want you to have them on and before we break to go to the luncheon or wherever else you are going to be going, everybody who is on stage is going to come down and join you and we're going to try to get several big wide lens, and that's because the room is wide --

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- wide lens shots of everybody attention the National Convention. So it will be a big picture, be a little bit of a big photographic project. So work with us and come prepared to be wearing your blue shirts or your Centennial Plan shirts. A plan?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: All right. Madam President?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That's it?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: That's it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wow. Before we adjourn for the day, I thought it would be nice to bring out the national staff and everybody that works so hard on this Convention, do it earlier than at the end, so that you can see who has done most of the work for this Convention. So would all of the National Headquarters Convention team please come out here and join me on stage?

First I'd like you to meet our Communications and Development Team, Shari Finnell, Aaron Meyer, Stephanie Holloway, Stacy Poca, and Carley O'Connor, and Madison Maves.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our Executive Team Julie Schafer and Tamara Shumate.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our programming team, Colette Fike and Kristin Hinshaw.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From Membership and IT, Cathi Taylor.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And our dearly beloved Accounting Team Tim Bresnahan and Sara Riegel.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And of course, our hard, hard working Events Team Stephanie Abisi, Laura Casey, Lauren Woeste, and Nicole Chernish.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We all know that our National Convention would not happen without the entire National Headquarters staff. So please, as they leave the stage how about another round of applause for the entire Headquarters team.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And finally I'd like to give a special recognition to the man behind the curtain, our Production Master. He's the one that makes this whole thing look so good. We know him as J.P., and his real name is Mr. John Paulsel. JP, thank you.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I assure you he can hear us. Okay. So thank you to all the national chairmen who presented this morning and to all our special guests, including those from the American Legion and the Sons of the American Legion. So let's give one more round of applause for our guests.

(Applause.)

(Bells ringing.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And this concludes the opening session of the 2015 National Convention. We are now adjourned.

(Ring of the bell.)

(Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m. on Monday, August 31, 2015, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2015**

NARRATOR: The 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our session is your National President, Janet Jefford.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good morning, everyone.

VOICES: Good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. So today we're going to hear lots of information about our important Centennial Plan, our road map to another 100 years of service to our veterans, military and their families.

So to set the stage, please join me in watching this video up here on the screen.

(Video follows:)

THE NARRATOR: The strategic plan also known as the Centennial Plan, a/k/a the five-year plan or the American Legion Auxiliary five-year Centennial Strategic Plan, no matter what you call it, this important plan states our vision and mission and it functions as our organization's GPS, a 21st century road map to achieve our five primary strategic goals.

It's designed to ensure that the ALA is here to meet the needs of our veterans and military families for another 100 years. Your mission, be the change and help implement the American Legion Auxiliary's five-year strategic plan and have fun while you're doing it.

In 2014, the NEC adopted the vision of what the ALA should be in 2020 and the five goals to achieve that vision. At the 2014 National Convention in Charlotte, members voted overwhelmingly yes on the resolution of support to implement and fund the Centennial Plan.

VOICE: The affirmative has it and the resolution is now adopted.

NARRATOR: And the 2014, '15 NEC adopted a national budget investing \$1 million to initially fund phase one of the plan. They recognized it takes money to achieve the five goals and get the American Legion Auxiliary where we need to be by our 100th anniversary.

So with overwhelming member support, the Auxiliary's initial critical need to invest in ourselves through hard work, about 200 Auxiliary members and National Headquarters staff developed the 25 national strategies crucial to achieve the five goals. Implementing the plan involves the hard work of 135 members and National Headquarters staff, national strategy teams.

Achieving the plan requires a huge amount of effort from the team, plus all members across the country. That hard work will ensure the ALA grows and is here to serve another generation. Let's hear from a few Centennial Plan leaders as they tell about our goals.

VOICE: Goal number five, with The American Legion, build brand loyalty. The reality is many people aren't aware of what we do. As revealed by market research done during our National American Legion Auxiliary

awareness campaign, Auxiliary members need to boldly step up to generate the public's recognition about the great things we do.

You can help build brand awareness about The American Legion family by first sharing your activities with local newspapers, TV stations and radio stations; second, by downloading American Legion Auxiliary branded posters, brochures and other materials from our website; and, third, sharing the good news of what we do on social media including Facebook and Twitter. We simply must let our communities know who we are, what we do and why it matters.

VOICE: Goal number four, strengthen departments and units. When we're working as a team, we can be so much more effective. As part of our goal to strengthen departments and units, we must invest in training at all levels, support the departments in the development of their Centennial Plans and collaborate among departments and units on ideas to boost their effectiveness.

It's also important to recognize those departments and units that are shining in their efforts to improve.

VOICE: Three, develop leadership at all levels. In moving forward to a more effective organization, we must understand the barriers to members being considered for leadership roles. We must also invest our resources in not only identifying leaders but developing leadership skills among our members.

VOICE: Goal number two, create an internal culture of good will. With the reality that all membership organizations are experiencing declining membership, we must buck the trend and we must especially address the reasons why nearly 45 percent of our members drop out of the American Legion Auxiliary within three years of joining.

We must think of ways to encourage new members to stay active. Let's create a welcoming environment. It could be as simple as being open to new ideas, being kind to each other, celebrating each other's talent. Please welcome new members, their time, their treasures and their ideas.

VOICE: And goal number one, attain a million members. With all of us focusing on goals two through five, the American Legion Auxiliary really can attain the goal of one million members by 2020. With around six million women and girls eligible to join the American Legion Auxiliary, we need to get better at communicating our mission to them and encouraging current and lapsed members to renew their membership.

NARRATOR: The new generation of 1.5 million post-9/11 veterans of the War on Terror will need us for decades to come. With a can-do attitude, we will succeed and have fun along the way. By achieving these five goals, we will celebrate our 100th anniversary as a strong, vibrant organization poised to serve another generation of veterans and their families.

VOICE: To learn more about the American Legion Auxiliary's Centennial Strategic Plan, visit alaforveterans.org.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So now the 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will now come to order.

Before we begin, I would like everyone to please take a moment to ensure that your electronic devices have been placed on silent mode. Thank you.

Now will our National Chaplain Karen Boehler please come forward to lead us in our invocation.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: This morning's prayer really is out of scripture and it was sent in by Wanda Magnus from the Department of Ohio from the book of Philippians.

In nothing, be anxious. But in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God and the peace of God which passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely are of good report. If there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.

The things which you both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do and the God of peace shall be with you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Karen.

Please be seated.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So did everybody enjoy yesterday's opening and especially those youth champions?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Weren't they wonderful? Well, I hope we have just as great fun and informative meeting this morning. So to start out, we're going to begin with our good friends, USAA.

The American Legion Auxiliary's relationship with USAA not only rewards you. It also supports your department, the national organization and the great mission outreach programs on which we all work so hard.

Here to tell you more about USAA's program is the director of Military Affinity Management, Theresa Bilotta. Theresa is the daughter of a veteran who served eight years in the Marine Corps Reserves and the daughter-in-law of a retired Air Force master sergeant. Please welcome to the stage Theresa Bilotta.

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Good morning. How are you? As Janet mentioned, I am Theresa Bilotta from USAA. But more importantly, I am an Auxiliary member of the great state of Texas. Where's Texas?

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Yay. As many of you know, and Janet just mentioned, USAA and the American Legion Auxiliary began a relationship almost four years ago and we are so thankful for this great partnership.

Just last month, we had the privilege to attend and support the Girls Nation and meet the brightest young ladies including Cameron, the Girls Nation President whom you have among you this week.

Just a reminder of our relationship, because I have more fun and important things to get to, but you can support the Auxiliary through USAA with the fabulous Auxiliary poppy credit card. For every credit card you open and every time you use the card, money will go back to the Auxiliary and your department. So if you haven't already gotten one, stop by the booth this morning or you can go online.

Now on to the fun stuff. Back at the 2015 legislative meetings, the Auxiliary announced a new competition between the departments. The department with the largest increase of e-mail addresses would win 500 poppy bags which you see. I think you all have seen some of these walking around.

So -- and I'm here to announce that we have a winner. But when we received the data from Headquarters, we noticed another department that had a large number growth of new e-mail addresses even though they weren't the large percent increase. And I'd like to recognize them as well.

That department who will receive 100 poppy bags had an increase in 1,194 new e-mail addresses since the beginning of March. They did a great job. That department who will receive 100 poppy bags is Florida.

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Congratulations, Florida.

Now, for the state with the largest percent in e-mail growth. That state saw a 332 percent increase in their e-mail addresses since March. That state will receive their 500 poppy bags and that state is New Mexico.

(Applause.)

MS. BILOTTA: Congratulations, New Mexico.

Both states will receive their bags as soon as the convention is over. So congratulations.

Also in partnership with you and your vision for the Auxiliary's five-year Centennial Strategic Plan, mapping the way to one million members by the 100th anniversary, we would like to announce a new competition to support your efforts.

The three states with the largest percent increase of new members between now and the 2016 National Convention will receive \$500 and 500 poppy bags, \$300 and 300 poppy bags for second place and \$200 and 200 poppy bags for third place at the National Convention in 2016 in Cincinnati.

Good luck. God bless everything that you do and God bless America. We'll see you next year and thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I first want to thank Theresa for having Dobbie and me. We're -- we came to Baltimore here for the Army Navy game and we had such a great time.

And I want to tell you a little story about that bag. So how much people want them. I'm in Alaska, you know. Now, we got these bags free, right, one time? So during their convention, they auctioned off one of these and the first one went for like \$125. I just want you to know. So everybody loves those bags.

Thank you so much.

MS. BILOTTA: Thank you, Janet. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Give Theresa another hand and USAA.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Each year, the Veterans Affairs Republic of China graciously hosts the Legion family as we make our visit to Taiwan. Today I have the pleasure of welcoming to our stage Lieutenant General Mike Tien who is the senior advisor of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington, D.C. Please, let's give him a warm welcome.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: Good morning, everybody.

VOICES: Good morning.

GENERAL TIEN: Morning, yeah. All the members of American Legion Auxiliary, it is a great honor and pleasure to have this opportunity to give you brief remarks on behalf of our Veteran Association of the Republic of China.

Today I would like to introduce the women in Taiwan today and their contribution to our society. First, since the end of World War II, Taiwan's women has played a significant role to the nation in terms of the development of the democracy, the economic boom in the 1970s and many crucial contributions that have made that lift of Taiwan to the global stage.

For example, while Taiwan was on the economic ladder to prosperity, the great labor force of female employees truly transformed Taiwan into a society full of the hope and success. Besides, nowadays, more and more professional women succeed in all walks of life, especially the ones in politics and capability and great performance have been widely recognized in the country.

Secondly, the rights of the Taiwan women are mostly showing in five categories, education, labor force, political participation, salary income and the entrepreneurship. Here are some statistics as follows:

The female ratio of the parliamentary members reached to 33.9 percent at the end of the 2013.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: And the second, the labor force participation rate for women ages 18 and older has exceeded 50 percent in 2012 and still increased to 50.6 percent in 2014.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: And, third, female share of the senior rank officials in central government reached to 30 percent and that of the local government was one in four.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: Thank you.

And, fourth, the employed population in Taiwan was 11.1 million in 2014. Increased females account for 44.3 percent which is 4.9 million population.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: And the fifth, in 2013, 72 percent of the female population age 18 and over in Taiwan attended secondary education and above, higher than their male counterparts for the first time.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: As showing above the gender equality issue in Taiwan has been promising and more and more people have changed their mind set towards the women's role when it comes to making contributions and participating in political and economic fields.

And the third is more exciting. There are three candidates for my country 2016 presidential election and according to the latest polls, it's highly likely that Taiwan will have the first female president next year.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: No matter who will win the race and the two female candidates' participation to join the presidential election is a good sign for Taiwan democracies and general equality. So Taiwan sure express its admiration and good luck to both of them.

And, finally, last by the list, since women role are so important to society, I hope Taiwan can always maintain a great relationship with American Legion Auxiliary in order to keep learning the lessons from you all.

Thank you for your attention and have a wonderful day. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you so much for being here with us. And I have a little gift for you --

GENERAL TIEN: Oh, thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- as a token of joining us this morning.

GENERAL TIEN: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Thank you.

GENERAL TIEN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

GENERAL TIEN: God bless America.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yay. Our visit to Taiwan was probably one of the highlights of our trip to the Far East and we really do appreciate the relationship we have with them.

As National Constitution & Bylaws Chairman, Lisa has sent and received hundreds of e-mails, phone calls and even texts. It is clear that members want to get their departments and units in shape with well-written and better understood governing documents.

Several departments shared that revising these documents have helped implement a sense of good will from the department level down to their units. For Lisa, it's stories like these that leave her knowing the ALA will continue to grow as we approach our centennial.

Please welcome to the stage Lisa Williamson, Constitution & Bylaws National Chairman, to give her report.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Good morning. And thank you, National President.

The American Legion Auxiliary members look to our governing documents when there are questions. They look to them for guidance on how a committee is comprised. They look to them on how to handle a problem. They look to them to understand. They are our standard operating procedure.

Between written governing documents at all levels of the American Legion Auxiliary are the foundation for better governance. Clearly written governing documents can foster good will by setting standards for conduct, stating the responsibilities and manner for addressing member conduct issues.

In our convention program, it is reported that 13 departments revised their governing documents last year to conform to National's revision. Of those 13, over half reported that they were doing some minor housekeeping changes to those documents to clear up items that might have slipped through the cracks. Several of those stated that they are adding the code of ethics from National's standing rules.

The department operations guide also provides policies, agreements and forms regarding the code of ethics that can be crafted to the department level. This resource holds an amazing amount of information and one that I turn to on many, many occasions.

Thank you, Dubbie.

When the Department of Washington hit a wall in revising their Constitution and Bylaws, their Department Parliamentarian, Rose Ring, asked for exact verbiage for a disclosure of conflict of interest. She was directed to the department operations guide. Rose later said the recommendation to turn to our copy of the department operations guide was an amazing tool once she reminded me of it.

She continued. I have been going through the guide more closely and am amazed at how much thought and effort went into putting this together for all our departments. I hope all departments remember to use it.

Many departments are in the process of now revising their governing documents to conform to National's large revision done in 2013. Many were able to complete their revisions this summer while we have a handful that are working on them and will present them at their next department convention.

Best practices recommended that governing board members be allowed to -- the option to serve for a period longer than a single one-year term providing a more effective governing body. How your department does it is up to your membership.

Nine departments reported this spring that their governing documents allow for their National Executive Committee member to serve longer than a single one-year term. Six more departments reported the proposed amendments similar to this were to be brought before their convention bodies this summer and four approved this amendment.

In a perfect example of how the ALA's Centennial Plan is woven through our programs, members of the strategic plan and this committee released rationale in May to help members make an informed decision on the benefits of an NEC member serving longer than a single one-year term.

The Department of Delaware has gotten behind the Centennial Plan with gusto. They recently voted to amend their standing rules to incorporate

an affirmation and commitment to continue development and participation in the actions of the National five-year Centennial Plan and perfectly placed in their standing rules.

Maine's Department Constitution & Bylaws Chairman, Charlotte Hagen (phonetic), reported that she worked directly with their Department Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee to develop resolutions and changes to their Constitution, Bylaws and standing rules.

Debra Allen Munchbach (phonetic) from the Department of Arizona Constitution & Bylaws Chairman reported every year more and more officers, members and chairmen use their governing documents to answer questions, clear up confusion and lead the department.

Debra has also been involved with the strategic plan working with goal three to develop leadership at all levels where she continues to help solve leadership concerns at the grass-roots level.

There has been much talk at this convention regarding the ALA's strategic plan. And you can see that even the administrative committees like Constitution & Bylaws have integrated elements of the strategic plan.

Madam President, this concludes the platform remarks of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

So, Lisa, are there any proposed amendments?

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Yes, there are.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I would like to remind everyone if you want to make a motion or an amendment, it needs to be on a motion form per standing rule 10. Motion forms are located at the election tally table in the back of the room. The debate will be limited to two minutes for each speaker. No persons shall speak on the same question more than twice without the consent of the convention.

I also remind you that we do have a timer here to fairly enforce that rule. The rules also state that during debate, delegates, alternates and guests are to remain seated within their own delegation or assigned seating area unless they are approaching the microphone, completing a motion form or exiting, entering the general session.

Are there any questions?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Lisa, please proceed with presenting the amendment.

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: It is the responsibility of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee to bring all proposed amendments to the floor for deliberation apart from the endorsement status by the Pre-Convention Committee. Therefore, regardless of the Pre-Convention Committee's recommendation on the adoption of the amendments, I will on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee move for the adoption of all amendments.

A proposal from the National Cavalcade of Memories Committee to amend The American Legion's standing rules, part six Committees, Section

one and six to change the name of the National Cavalcade of Memories Committee to National History Committee by striking the words Cavalcade of Memories and replacing the word History and changing subsequent references throughout the organization's governing documents and to adjust the composition of the National Cavalcade of Memories Committee in Section six by adding the National Historian as an ex officio member.

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommend that this amendment be adopted.

Madam President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move for the adoption of amendment number one.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The question is on the adoption of amendment number one as just presented. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends that the amendment be adopted.

Is there any discussion?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are you ready for the question?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please take your voting keys and stand up. All those in favor of amendment one, please press the number one key on your voting keypad. Those opposed, please press the number two key. Please vote now.

Okay. Voting is closed. Please show the results. All right. The affirmative has it and the standing rules are amended.

Lisa, are there any other amendments?

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: No other amendments and this concludes my report.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Lisa. Yay. That was easy. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Lisa, I want to thank you for doing a wonderful job this year and for all the time and effort you put into helping our units and departments get their governing documents in order. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WILLIAMSON: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You're welcome.

I like that. Okay. Oh, yum. What a delicious good idea thought Mary Davis when she heard of Operation Cherry Pie, a project by Michigan Unit 97.

VOICES: Woo.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Give a shot out to yourself. That's good.

Unit members were baking pies, very special, very delicious cherry pies and other baked goods and delivering them to widowed veterans living in their community. It's these kinds of thoughtful deeds that really inspire Mary to keep working the mission.

Please welcome to the stage National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee Chairman Mary Davis.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are you back there? Here she comes.
Yay.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Madam National President Janet, thank you so much.

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation is a founding program of the Auxiliary. This program provides Auxiliary members opportunities to serve veterans and their families while demonstrating gratitude for their military service.

Members across the nation volunteer at VA medical centers and VA community-based outreach clinics, affectionately known as CBOCs, through the VA Voluntary Services Program, while others serve in their communities and behind the scenes through service to veterans.

Several units this year made a point to honor the service of women veterans. Department of Virginia Chairman Janet Renard (phonetic) reported on three special projects, one of which included a very special night of pampering for our female veterans.

Unit members hosted 300 ladies from surrounding communities at the Washington, D.C. VAMC. Prior to the event, members raised donations in the amount of \$3,380 with some contributions coming from outside donors. The donated funds were used to purchase a variety of pampering products in order to fill the goody bags.

During the event, members gave facials and lip treatments to these very special veterans. Each participant received a goody bag, a rose, a card and most important an American Legion Auxiliary membership application. Those who wished to become new members had their dues paid by the department. This was truly a very special and much appreciated ladies night out.

Michigan Unit 44 --
VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: -- have supported residents at the Jacoby Home for Veterans since 1981. One ongoing activity which sets the 16 female veterans apart from the 200 male residents is the activities sponsored by the unit.

The ladies friendship sewing group meets twice a month and provides an opportunity for the women veterans to forget their daily challenges and make a variety of fun items such as quilts, wall hangings and felt mittens.

Unit members donate fabrics and other sewing supplies. Finished quilts are offered as prizes to the lucky residents during one of the special occasion parties held at the home.

Keeping with a special focus on female veterans, Unit 51, Pasadena, Texas adopted female veterans and their children for Christmas. Arrangements were coordinated through the Houston VA Medical Center for Homeless Veterans Program.

As the name implies, these VA programs are designed to help homeless veterans become self-sufficient and live independently. The unit

coordinated with another nonprofit organization as well as students from local community colleges to make this project a success.

The college students were enrolled in the service learning class and service of this nature was a part of their curriculum. Eighty-three veterans and 80 children benefitted from this program.

In past seasons, the unit had struggled to provide all the items on the wish lists at Christmas. However, this year, by partnering with other organizations in the community, the wish lists for the veterans and their children were filled completely.

North Carolina Unit 523 in Harrisburg is a small unit with a big goal. The unit is comprised of only 28 members. They chose to provide gift bags to 200 hospitalized and institutionalized veterans.

As they began this huge project, they realized that they would need to involve the entire community in order to ensure success. They contacted local area news media to get the word out. They placed donation boxes throughout the community to collect needed items. They even invited a first grade class to make greeting cards for the veterans that were placed in each Christmas bag along with personal care items and other gifts.

With the help of their community and some very dedicated members, this small in numbers but big in heart unit was able to provide a very, very special thank you to the veterans in Harrisburg.

Now, most Wyoming units are not located in close proximity to VA facilities. Since there are not many local units per se, units across the department volunteer each month to bake hundreds of tasty cookies as a special treat to veterans in VA facilities, vet centers, outreach clinics or the college student veteran centers.

The cookies are a welcome indulgence for veterans who are dealing with challenging treatment procedures. Accompanying families also enjoy a little comfort food while waiting for their veterans.

Illinois Unit 200, Homer --

VOICES: Yay.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I knew you were back there. -- were very busy this year. Beginning in November, they held a community-wide veterans' drive. Decorated cans and boxes with lists of needed items were placed in several businesses and posters were placed in windows and on light poles. They collected over \$7,000 of in-kind donations for hospitalized and homeless veterans.

Tray favors and decorations brightened veterans' dinner trays throughout the year and brought in new Junior members. They put together backpacks for homeless and partnered with Quilts of Valor which resulted also in new members.

They realized there were many veterans in community living facilities that no longer have visitors or family to remember them. They have established a mail call program with the help of foster children and Girl Scouts to create cards for these forgotten veterans.

Because of these and many more activities, Unit 290 has been awarded the Unit Million Member Award for 2015.

VOICES: Yay.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: These are just a few examples of the many services provided as our American Legion Auxiliary members celebrate faith, freedom -- faith, family and freedom this year.

National President Janet, we can all be proud of what our members have accomplished as they continue to serve our veterans and their families.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Mary.

Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: No, there are none.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. I just -- I have to tell you Mary is a trooper. I think you could see by your agenda in the convention book we kind of scripted this a little differently this morning. And I'll bet you Mary didn't know she was on, right?

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I did, but I had forgotten something.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, you had to run back.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I ran back.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Well, I could tell she's all out of breath up here and stuff. And you did a fabulous job.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you, Janet.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: I'll keep to the back door there.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know what? Why don't you stay with me for a minute --

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay. Okay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- because this is going to be lots of fun.

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Okay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So now for something really exciting. If you'll recall back in September, there was a challenge extended to all departments to donate the most funds per capita to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation veteran projects fund. The winner is going to get a nice surprise.

It is my pleasure to announce the first and second place winners of the fund raising challenge. The first place winner of this challenge will receive their choice of artwork from two Gold Medal Award winning pieces showcased at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

We are so very thankful to artist, Air Force veterans Sherman Watkins and Army veteran Janice Hughes for donating their artwork.

Okay. So now I need a drum roll. Okay. Or bells, whatever. The first place winner is the Department of Hawaii --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- with \$5.79 per member. That's really good. And the second place winner is, okay, the Department of Virginia.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, you're seeing it up there already. Okay. Will a representative from both the Department of Hawaii and Department of Virginia please come on stage?

Both of these ladies were so great to me when I visited their departments. You want to say a couple words? Go first, Hawaii, and then you get to pick which one you want.

VOICE: Okay. Good morning, everyone. It's great being here. This is such a surprise.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: That's good work, so you get to go over there and take a look at them and you can pick one out.

VOICE: Okay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: She's a little surprised.

How are you doing?

VOICE: I'm doing great. Such a surprise. I'd just like to thank President Janet and all the hard work of the Department of Virginia and our VA&R Chairman Janet Renard.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good work.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. I guess you get what's left, but either one would be beautiful. Which one did you take? Oh, the angel. Very good. And so you have the artwork. Excellent. Thank you and thank --

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- and thank everyone for your generosity and your donations to the Veterans Project Fund. I really, really appreciate it. And the money is going to go to some really great projects. Thank you.

Okay. You know, as I traveled around this year and visited VA hospitals, I had the opportunity to see what our VAVS reps and all our hospital volunteers are doing out there. And I have to tell you I was like thoroughly amazed, actually blown away at the hours and the hours that our volunteers spend at the hospitals helping our veterans.

You know, I've told this story before, but I had many hospital directors saying they just don't know what they would do without the American Legion Auxiliary volunteers and one woman just crying that she -- like she loses her VAVS director. She doesn't know how she's going to survive.

So I wanted to do something special at this convention to recognize the wonderful, wonderful members out there, all of you who spend your time and your energy and give financial support to our VA hospitals and those fine men and women who are in them. So thank you to all of you.

And so now I'd like to do a little dedication or thank you to the VAVS volunteers. I believe our VAVS volunteers should be celebrated and recognized every chance we get. Many of you may not know that since World War I, the women of the American Legion Auxiliary have provided true mission outreach through the care and rehabilitation of patients at VA medical centers across the country.

During World War II, the need was so great that volunteers worked to become more organized in order to maximize their impact. In 1946,

representatives from several veteran service organizations including the American Legion Auxiliary met with VA representatives in Washington, D.C. to form the first VA Voluntary Service Advisory Committee, what we know as VAVS.

Each year, the American Legion Auxiliary contributes more than 6.5 million hours in service to veterans. The warmth and human connection these volunteers provide has elevated the VA's care to a higher level.

This year, I am proud to share with you that one of our own members was selected as the VA's female Volunteer of the Year from among all VA facilities in the country. She was able to be in Albuquerque this April to receive that award.

Please join me in welcoming first Pat Kranzow, our National VA representative, along with our VA Volunteer Service Member of the Year, Patti Williamson.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Patti is from Illinois, by the way. Patti, where are you? We're looking for you. Illinois, do we know where Patti is? Oh, there she is. Yay.

(Applause.)

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Thank you, Madam National President and good morning, everyone.

The American Legion Auxiliary Volunteer of the Year is the person chosen as our nominee for the NAC, the National Advisory Committee female Volunteer of the Year. The process is initiated by chiefs of voluntary service who document why they think their candidate is worthy of the honor. This person must be a regularly scheduled volunteer at a VA facility.

Patti Williamson is the ALA rep at Danville Illiana VAMC in Illinois. Last year at National Convention, we heard about her securing an ALA Foundation grant to expand the Dell Musical Therapy Program there.

I understand that the chief of Voluntary Service has to hang on to her hat when she sees the determined Patti approaching. She never knows what's coming out of the ensuing whirlwind. Here are a few of Patti's brainstorm.

Catered breakfast and lunch for 25 participants in the warriors to soul mate for couples retreat, created and coordinated the annual pie fest which provides pies, musical entertainment and an opportunity to serve and socialize with veterans.

She partnered with recreation therapy and the ground to table movement by providing vegetable and fruit plants and gardening supplies and assisted in initial planting and building of raised beds in the gardening area.

Did you actually do the digging?

MS. WILLIAMSON: No.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: No. Sponsored female and male softball teams to participate in community activities, bought uniforms and equipment along with providing the end of the season pizza dinner. Sounds like they really like to eat.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Oh, yeah.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Initiated a veteran softball team which became an anger management tool, sponsored a beat the blues music party in January to address veterans in holiday let down mode, applied for and received a grant to expand and enhance the Art Therapy Program, partnered with staff in a make-over by paying for haircuts and an outfit as an inside and outside make-over as part of mental health recovery.

With all this to her credit, here is Patti, our VAVS Volunteer of the Year.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

I have been asked to tell how volunteering has changed my life. Well, now I spend a minimum of two hours a week on the road getting to and from Danville, Illinois providing there's good weather, green lights and no road construction.

I have learned a new language that we affectionately refer to as the alphabet soup because everything in the VA is an acronym. I have become the resident expert on time and space management because at the VA, the first thing you learn is there is neither enough time to get it all done nor enough space to store everything you want.

If I have also done nothing -- I've also done nothing as rewarding or fulfilling as volunteering at Illiana. I have never been prouder to belong to an organization as I am the American Legion Auxiliary. I am now a life-long member.

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Ladies, I am living our mission. I have made life-long friends with my deputy, Kim Graham, my associate rep from Indiana, Sandy McCool (phonetic), wherever you are --

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: -- as well as the staff and the volunteers. Thanks to the generous support of our National Organization, the Department of Illinois and Indiana, but most importantly to our unit members. I get to see the eyes light up and the smiles break out on our veterans' faces when they see us coming.

We get to see the tears of joy and relief when we are able to help when others can't, the joy on their faces as they enjoy a party sponsored by the Auxiliary or one of our units. We have laughed together, been sad together, cheered our veterans on and been heartbroken when their demons won.

I have met people and heard stories I will never forget. I was talking with one veteran and he told me that every morning when he wakes up, he has to decide if he can live with the pain for another day or not. The reason this was so shocking to me is because he is my age. Here I am making plans for vacation and retirement and he can't even plan for the next day.

Working with our veterans has helped me focus on the blessings in my life such as family, friends, food, home and, yes, even that job. People ask me why do I spend so much time volunteering and I ask them why aren't you a volunteer. We need more volunteers in the VA. If you try it --

(Applause.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: If you try it and don't like it, what they assigned you to do, don't just not come back. Tell them. Trust me, there are plenty of jobs to be done in the VA and they'll find one that will fit you. They even have jobs that you can do from your home if transportation is one of your issues.

And if you're waiting for volunteering to fit into your schedule, you'll be like Cinderella's big, old, ugly stepsister trying to fit her old, fat foot in that glass slipper. It is never going to work.

(Laughter.)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Instead you start volunteering and gradually it fits into your life. Volunteering hasn't changed just my life. It has changed me hopefully for the better. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

Pat, don't -- Pat, this Pat, come back. Come back. Okay. Now come over here.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Okay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Before you leave the stage, I understand that you have recently reached a milestone in your volunteer hours with the American Legion Auxiliary. So I'd like to present you with one of our new service to veteran pins which has a 10,000 hour bar on it.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, if you do the math -- you do the math, that's like working one hour per day every day for 27 years. Comes out pretty good.

We will also be making a \$100 donation in your name to the VA center of your choice.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Can I split it? I work at two.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, she works at two, so we're going to have to split it. Well, you know, I can maybe talk to Finance. Maybe we can work something out. Okay.

VOICE: You can double it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, we can. Okay. So we're going to double it. She'll get a hundred dollars for each.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: All right.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Ask, ask, ask and you shall receive. It doesn't ever hurt, right?

You know, Pat is not only a tireless volunteer at our VA centers, but I have to let you know that -- how many years have you been Vice Chairman now on VA&R?

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Four.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Four, fourth year. And it's her responsibility to take all those hours that you send in. She tracks them. She compiles them. She reads all those reports that are sent into the VA. And it is

a lot, a lot of work. And I don't think we've ever said a really big, big thank you to Pat for all that she's done.

So, Pat, we're doing it now.

VICE CHAIRMAN KRANZOW: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, Pat and Patti are just two shining examples of our dedicated VAVS volunteers around the country, volunteers like Carol Quigley of Massachusetts who volunteers at the Bedford VAMC where she makes Christmas extra special for hospital veterans by coordinating and delivering Christmas gifts.

And Pat Flanders of Wisconsin who volunteers at the VA Great Lakes Health Care System in Tomah. She is the coordinator of a volunteer tax program that helps prepare tax returns for veterans, staff, volunteers and the community.

And Elaine Yates of Arizona who has volunteered over 25,000 hours sewing bath robes and sweaters for veterans in the Tucson, Arizona VA.

Then there's Marian Chirachella of Virginia who saw a need and filled it with the Angels of Mercy Program. Through this program, Marian has supplied much needed goods and support to wounded veterans at Walter Reed and beyond.

And Viola Grizbowski of Ohio who was instrumental in securing the donation of a six seat shuttle cart to assist veterans from the hospital parking lot to the Toledo community-based outpatient clinics.

And Mary Lou Lopez of New Mexico who collects donations such as fruit, phone cards, canteen, books, calendars, reading materials and hygiene items from ALA units to distribute to hospitalized veterans and those in community living centers.

And then there's Wanda Moore of North Carolina who works with the American Legion Auxiliary to ensure no veteran spends their final hours alone and helped to start the unique program for veterans in hospice care called No Veteran Dies Alone.

As you can see, there are so many ways, different ways of volunteering for our veterans that makes such a difference. And these are just some of the shining examples of so many ALA members who volunteer in VA centers across the country.

So if we could bring up the lights a little and I would like everyone in the audience or on the stage who has ever volunteered or are currently serving as a VAVS volunteer, please stand.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wow. Didn't you see? All right. Let's -- please, let's all ring our bells to show our appreciation.

(Ring of the bells.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, thank you for what you do.

Okay. And talking about volunteering and spreading that around, engaging the next generation to become members of the American Legion Auxiliary is a mission very close to Nancy Hansen's heart. Our Junior Activities Committee National Chairman Nancy will now give her report.

Nancy.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Madam President Janet, the Junior members have taken your theme, celebrating faith, family and freedom to heart and have shown that a few girls with a lot of spirit can accomplish just about anything.

The Juniors from across this great nation have stepped up to the plate and have joined the Senior members carrying out the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. They have spent over 90,000 hours volunteering in their communities at their local VAs, nursing homes, homeless shelters, schools and post homes.

The Juniors have worked very hard on the Patch Program and it shows. This year, 1,203 patches were earned. This is an increase of 635 over last year.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Our youngest grade, level three -- level K through third grade the most with 529 patches.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: We should give a big round of applause to both the Juniors and the Senior members who have encouraged and engaged these wonderful young ladies.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Senior members have also stepped up to the plate and included Juniors in many of their unit, district and department activities. The Junior members have shadowed their Senior counterparts and are learning how to fulfill the duties of the offices in the proper way and gaining knowledge and respect for our traditions and programs firsthand.

In the Department of Pennsylvania, Junior members of Unit 261 helped to collect \$1,850 in school supplies for the Give Ten to Education Project.

The Department of Alabama held a leadership camp where the Juniors worked on and completed the majority of their 557 patches that they earned this year.

In the Department of Ohio, Junior member Emiline Phillips presented eight shoe box size containers to the local battered women shelter filled with personal grooming items and books, small toys and art supplies all to give a little comfort to the women and their children who have had to flee for their safety. And this is just one of the things that this young lady has done in her community this year.

I wish I could tell you about all of the programs that these amazing young ladies have worked on this year, but there's just not enough time. I encourage all units and departments to get these members involved, give them a purpose, keep them engaged. They are our future.

This past weekend, we held our 32nd National Juniors meeting which was a complete success. Our 2014, 2015 honorary Junior President Graci did a great job presiding over the meeting as well as representing the Junior members these past 12 months.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: As part of the Junior meeting, the girls had the opportunity on Saturday to visit and tour Fort McHenry and learn about the birth of our National Anthem. Upon returning, the Juniors had their division caucuses and their elections for the 2015, 2016 year.

Yesterday you had the opportunity to meet the 2015, 2016 honorary Junior National President Maggie Jones from the Department of North Carolina.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Also elected was their honorary National Chaplain Delaney Oliver from the Department of New York, honorary National Historian Felicia Cruz from the Department of Connecticut, honorary Eastern Division President -- Vice President Grace Seybert from the Department of New York, honorary Western Division Vice President Lexis Escudero from the Department of Arizona, honorary Southern Division Vice President Carson Delong from the Department of North Carolina, honorary Central Division Vice President Katie Beth Caudill from the Department of West Virginia and our honorary Northwestern Division Vice President Jules Efta from the Department of Minnesota.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: The Juniors member this year have proved that they have what it takes to indeed become the future leaders of our organization and our veterans, active-duty military and their families will be in good hands for a very long time.

Madam President, it's been a pleasure serving as the Junior Activities Chairman this year and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Nancy.

Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good. And I want to thank you. Nancy is a new chairman this year, and you've done a wonderful job.

And I just have a question. Yesterday we were challenged, I think, to sing the National Anthem at posts. Has anybody done that? I know someone from -- a group from New Jersey did. So don't forget the challenge because we want to win, right?

CHAIRMAN HANSEN: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. And our Juniors are doing a wonderful job out there. Thank you, Nancy.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Being National Finance Chairman has afforded Nicole Clapp opportunities to contribute to the sustainability of the American Legion Auxiliary. An organization that has been a part of our lives for so many years needs dedicated, sound financial support and future planning to ensure its longevity.

Steadfast stewardship are words to describe the National Finance Committee's efforts. Please welcome our National Finance Committee Chairman Nicole Clapp to the stage.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Your National Finance Committee is comprised of five members appointed, each serving for a five-year term. The primary role of the committee is to develop the annual proposed budget and review the National financial reports.

National Finance Committee members review the draft budget and make necessary adjustments that may reflect new and changing goals. The committee recommends a budget for the National Executive Committee's consideration and adoption.

Additionally, the National Finance Committee oversees the financial policies of the organization, reviews the annual audit of the Auxiliary and the ALA Foundation and makes policy recommendations for the National Committee's consideration to ensure that the ALA National Organization is meeting nonprofit benchmarks and governmental mandates.

One member of the National Finance Committee is also designated to serve as a liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation board and one committee member is designated as a liaison to the American Legion Auxiliary National Audit Committee.

The financial performance of the National Organization for 2014, '15 fiscal year has been positive. With sufficient rev -- yeah, ring a bell.

(Ring of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: With sufficient revenue streaming from the dues increase adopted at the 2011 National Convention that became effective with the 2013 membership year and the positive performance of our investments, we were able to enhance the Department Leadership National Conference by continuing to underwrite the cost for three department representatives to attend, maintain department visits by the National Division Vice Presidents and resource phase one of the ALA's Centennial Strategic Plan.

By resourcing phase one of the Centennial Plan, we were able to provide professional guidance such as the first ever department secretary training at the ALA National Headquarters underwritten by the ALA National Headquarters and issue over \$8,000 of ALA's Centennial Plan Department Achievement Award so far this year. Congratulations.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The successful fund raising efforts by our direct mail vendor continued this fiscal year with three appeals designated for the American Legion Auxiliary and one for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. Fiscal year donations as of July 31, 2015, yes, netted \$687,000.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: The analysis of the 2014 direct mail donations indicated 218,000 gifts were received. Of those gifts, 117,000 came from ALA members, while 101,000 came from non-ALA members.

In a continued trend, almost as many gifts came from donors outside of the ALA which demonstrates a tremendous support source of revenue for our organization.

In fiscal year 2015, the number of people applying for the Auxiliary USA credit card continues to increase. Since the inception of the ALA USA credit card, 6,201 cards have been issued. And here's a bell ringer. \$19.17 million have been charged by our Auxiliary credit card.

(Ringing of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Based on the growth in the number of cards issued and our usage, the Auxiliary USA credit card program royalty revenue shared with the department in the fiscal year 2015 is expected to be \$12,500.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Please consider obtaining an Auxiliary USAA credit card and charge, but I have to say responsibly, of course.

Your National Finance Committee continues to believe in the value of knowledge gained by its members through ALA mission trainings. During this fiscal year, more than 850 members attended ALA mission trainings and 12 department specific trainings.

On behalf of the National Finance Committee, thank you for your dedication, commitment and generous financial support of the American Legion Auxiliary's tireless efforts to fulfill our mission.

Madam President, this concludes my report.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Nicole.

When she came out, I said doesn't she look lovely.

Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Yes, Madam President. There is one resolution that was presented to the Pre-Convention Finance Committee regarding the National Centennial Strategic Plan, but we would like to defer the conversation till after that report.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. I think we can do that. And, Nicole, thank you so much for your years of dedicated service to the Auxiliary and as head of our Finance Committee.

I have to tell you she just does a marvelous job and we are so lucky to have her.

Thank you, Nicole.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So I guess we're going to move on to our Long-Range Strategic Planning report. So now Past National President and implementation team member Kris Nelson is here with a very special Long-Range Strategic Planning presentation.

So please welcome my good friend and I'm so happy she's able to be here with us at this convention. Please welcome Kris to the stage.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSON: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

MS. NELSON: By 2019, the American Legion Auxiliary's million members will be making a difference for veterans and their families in every neighborhood. Power words, the vision of our Centennial Plan, the framework of our five goals, the most important thing we are doing.

The ultimate success of this plan is not at National Headquarters. The future of the American Legion Auxiliary will be strong if we, every one of us commit to be part of this plan. We, every one of us must be willing to accept change and actively begin to do whatever we as an individual unit or department can do to implement the strategies of these critical five goals adopted by the NEC.

Each of you has a copy of the plan. Please find it and I'll wait for you for a minute. And we're going to read these goals together.

Okay. Goal number five, with The American Legion raise awareness to build brand loyalty. Goal number four, strengthen departments and units. Goal number three, develop leadership at all levels. Goal number two, create a culture of goodwill. And goal number one, attain a million members.

Accepting change and acting on these five goals is essential to the future and survival of the American Legion Auxiliary. It's our mission of serving our country's veterans, military and families in every neighborhood.

The American Legion has also recognized the need for a strategic plan and they have also implemented a five-year plan. Both organizations are exploring ways to strengthen our mission and capacity to serve our nation's heroes, our country's veterans.

You have all done some amazing things since the introduction of this plan at last year's convention. You have invested in the future of the American Legion Auxiliary by resourcing phase one of the Centennial Plan not only financially but also by giving your time and energy to assure the plan's success.

Thank you. Thank you all for what you have done and what you are continuing to do. You are creating results. You are assuring the future of the American Legion Auxiliary. You are committed to our mission of serving veterans, military and their families for generations to come.

This is not my plan. This is not any National President's plan. This is not National Headquarters' plan. This is our plan. And together we can create results that will lead to the success of the organization at every level.

Each of you have a few tools that you can use to spread the word and involve members at your unit and at your community. You should all have a copy of the May issue of the magazine. The cover of this issue shows the vision of the five goals of the plan. Pages 38 and 39 have detailed information on the five goals of the plan. So take that and get it out in the neighborhood. Use it in your units. Use it as individuals to support our plan.

You also have a tee shirt and I see a lot of you have it on. So thank you for that. If you continue to wear this when you get home in your community, it's an easy way to spread our message. It may prompt

community members to ask what is this all about and it will give you the opportunity to tell them and to ask them to join you.

So what have we been doing this year? Earlier I stated that the Centennial Plan is the most important thing we are doing and everything we do must center around this plan. So as we finish the first year of our five-year plan, let's remember that we have five goals and 26 strategies that are of all equal importance and all vital to the success of the plan.

Here are just a few I'd like to highlight. There were so many to choose from that I didn't think Janet would let me take the rest of the convention.

Goal five, with The American Legion, raise awareness and build brand loyalty. This team has created multiple awareness branding and recognition opportunities for internal and external audiences including creating a resource expo at the Department Leadership National Conference as a hands-on demonstration of the many ALA branded resources available to departments and adding branded leadership awards to Public Relations' plan of action to recognize individuals or teams who act as ambassador of the ALA at ALA Rock Stars, to recognize individuals, units and departments for selling and promoting our brand.

Goal four, strengthen departments and units. This team has created monetary incentive awards for departments who have created and began implementation of their department plan. To date, over \$8,000 has been awarded to departments.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSON: Information on how to apply for these incentives is on the ALA website in the award section and attendees at the breakout session yesterday received the tools to assist departments in continuing and succeeding with their plans. Will your department be listed in the 2016 convention?

VOICES: Yes.

MS. NELSON: All right. Goal three, develop leadership at all levels. This team has been diligently working hard on documenting our leadership selection process to be included in the next revision of the department operations guide.

Goal two, create an internal culture of goodwill. The first steps this team has undertaken is creating a definition of goodwill for the organization. Goodwill is a kind, helpful and positive attitude towards others. Goodwill involves more than members working together in a collaborative effort to support the ALA mission through friendly dispositions, willingness to engage and support each other.

And goal one, attain a million members. It is important to remember that governing board of the Auxiliary, the NEC established this goal. It is also vitally important that we do not just concentrate on goal number one. If we are successful with goals two, three, four and five, we will easily attain goal number one.

Here is a neat accomplishment that has recently come from the goal number one team. They recently added a new strategy to achieve membership

that represents the diversity of the United States military. They're already up and running to make this goal a success. So stayed tuned, everyone.

For some teams, it is easier to see the impact of their work than it is others, but even the smallest changes are impacting our culture. The simple fact is we've agreed on five goals to accomplish. And for a group this size, that's an accomplishment in itself.

To give you an example of what I mean, all of the department secretaries were called to National Headquarters for a training in January. This is the first time this has happened and this training had some impact on each of our five goals. You can see how a training would strengthen departments. It was an opportunity for some learning about membership database and answering questions about the ALA emblem.

So that covers three of our five goals, but what about the other two? We have not always been good about recognizing the vital role of our department secretaries and the smooth function that they play in our departments. There is a wide disparity in their work situations. Some are volunteers working out of their home and others manage a staff of four or five.

All of these women bear a heavy responsibility for the smooth functioning of our departments and prior to the operations guide, they often had to figure this out on their own. By recognizing the need to provide information and training to department secretaries, we are building an organization leadership team. When we clarify roles and provide appropriate training, we minimize the drama and set the stage for success.

There are two important things I hope you will take away from this presentation. First, kudos to each of you for resourcing this plan both through time and finances. The majority of the financial resources this year were used for an unbiased, professional assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary's capacity to deliver our mission at all levels of the organization.

This is also known as an organization effectiveness assessment and in a minute, I will be introducing the people that will be presenting these findings. There were 8,500 members who participated in this assessment through 8,300 online surveys, seven focus groups, 135 personal interviews.

If you were one of those people, will you please stand and be recognized.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSON: Great job. Thank you all.

Leading the effort to implement the initiatives on the national team, there are 135 members as strategy captains and team members, goal champions and the implementation team.

If you are one of those 135 members, please stand and be recognized.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSON: Thank you. Thank you for the time each of you are committing to this plan through your e-mail, meeting and conference calls. You are making a difference and we all appreciate each and every one of you.

The second thing I hope you take away from this presentation is this is our plan. Each and every one of us has a stake in it. It is up to each of us

working together to grow the capacity of the American Legion Auxiliary to deliver our mission.

Ladies, if we can accomplish goals two, three, four and five, we will be successful in attaining a million members by our Centennial Plan. Can we do it?

VOICES: Yes.

MS. NELSON: In closing, I'd like to challenge you from last year. If not us, who? If not now, when? We are doing it, ladies. We are succeeding because of each and every one of you. Thank you. Thank you all for your dedication and commitment and God bless each and every one of you.

(Applause.)

MS. NELSON: President Janet, may I -- this concludes my platform remarks. May I introduce our guests?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yes, you may.

MS. NELSON: I'm pleased today to introduce you to Tom Hirschauer. Some of you will recognize Tom as he has become a fixture on our stage during the past several years. A University of Notre Dame graduate, Tom has more than 35 years of successful and profitable business and marketing experience in a wide array of business sectors.

He has worked for regional and national clients as president of the Indianapolis office of Evans Group and Publicis Worldwide, part of Publicis Groupe, the world's largest advertising agency network. Tom is now a strategic marketing consultant specializing in branding, marketing and public relations.

An entrepreneur by spirit and in fact, Tom has a strong belief in being part of the fabric of a community and giving back personally with keen business and marketing skills. It is because of his sincere belief in our mission and his can-do attitude that we continue to seek Tom's expert advice and help to grow our organization.

You may recall that Tom first spoke to us at the Indianapolis Convention in 2012 when he introduced a proposal for a three-year plan to build American Legion Auxiliary awareness. He returned the following year to report on initial findings and recommend that we broadcast our awareness message nationwide.

Last year, Tom gave us an additional status report based on the positive learning experience from the first two phases of the awareness campaign. He went on to share how the campaign could become a dynamic component of a collaborative effort with our five-year strategic plan.

Tom is here today to briefly reflect upon where we come from since the days of our early awareness campaign and to remind us how to capitalize on those findings beginning with an objective look at our organizational capacity to meet the mission of the next generation of veterans, military and their families.

Please join me in welcoming Tom to the stage.

(Applause.)

MR. HIRSCHAUER: Thank you, Kris.

Good morning, everybody.

VOICES: Good morning.

MR. HIRSCHAUER: It's great to know all of you are here to answer the challenge if not us, who, if not now, when.

And on a personal note, let me just say how particularly grateful I am to be here today to see and be working with Kris Nelson who's taken on her own personal challenges and she's winning.

(Applause.)

MR. HIRSCHAUER: Kris embodies the spirit and resolve of so many of you in the American Legion Auxiliary and you are all working together here and at home to fulfill the mission of service, not self to honor and help our veterans and their families. And our colleagues from The American Legion here in Baltimore today are meeting to find better ways to fulfill their mission based on their four pillars, all devoted to mutual helpfulness.

There isn't a single person at either National Convention who doesn't share the bond to actively support the veteran communities through helpfulness or selflessness.

So with such great personal resolve and individual passion to serve our veterans and their families, why aren't more women feeling our passion and joining? Well, today we'll find some answers and hear recommendations that can help solve some of the issues.

As Kris told you, we started several years ago looking at the hard facts. Membership was declining and at a place that would not sustain the organization. We assumed our mission, values and programs weren't the issue. We surmised that we might have an awareness problem.

So we tested our awareness and found that, yes, in fact, we were not well known even to the point that people within the military didn't know much about us. Our next step was to conduct an ad campaign to see if we could increase or bolster that awareness.

Now, there were three very important findings from that ad campaign that's really led us to where we are today. First, yes, we could increase positive awareness with advertising.

Second, and I think maybe one of the most important, is that we found that people -- when they found that people knew more about us, they liked what they heard and said they would actually be willing to consider joining us in some capacity to help with our mission.

And, third, we also found out that the organization didn't have the processes, infrastructure or policies in place to bring in a new variety of potential members. This was an organizational issue, not an issue with the resolve or passion or dedication that each and every one of you has as an individual member for the American Legion Auxiliary.

At the same time, the American Legion Auxiliary was in the midst of developing the five-year Centennial Strategic Plan. It became abundantly clear with the learnings from the awareness campaign and the strategies being developed for the five-year Centennial Plan that the organization should step back and take a look at the organization itself.

Three of the five goals resolved around the internal organization, goal four, strengthen departments and units, goal three, develop leadership at all levels, goal two, create an internal culture of goodwill.

So now the burning question became do we have the organizational capacity to meet our mission and to fulfill the strategic plan or said in another way, do we have an adequate system in place that will allow us to continue serving veterans, military and their families for the next generation?

I think we all firmly believe our membership is totally committed to our mission of service, not self. We know we have programs in place that provide critical and necessary support to veterans and their families. But is the organization up to the call?

While it seems like we've already made a lot of changes in the organization over the last 95 years, perhaps we haven't made enough changes that are critical that are either flexible enough or relevant enough to potential new members.

So maybe we should take a look at the changes our fellow members, all of you have already suggested and be open to what we find. So that brings us to today's report, an introspective and, quite frankly, very positive report on the American Legion Auxiliary. And the respondents and the authors of this report are you, some 8,000 of you. This is your answer to the question do we have the organizational capacity to fulfill our mission.

So let me now introduce to you to those who asked the questions, gathered your answers and wrote the report. The firm of Johnson Grossnickle or JGA was hired to conduct this study. For more than 20 years, Johnson Grossnickle & Associates has taken an authentic, strategic approach to providing nonprofit consulting services to large, complex nonprofit organizations across the United States. Sounds just like you.

The JGA senior team of consultants have more than a hundred years of combined experience working with nonprofit organizations and foundations. Here today representing JGA and the senior member of the JGA team is Angela White. It just so happens that Angela is an ALA member -- (Applause.)

MR. HIRSCHAUER: -- eligible through her father now deceased, Harold White, who fought in World War II and was a Legionnaire for all of his life. Angela grew up attending functions at The American Legion post in her small town in central Illinois.

Please welcome Angela White.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Good morning, everyone.

VOICES: Good morning.

MS. WHITE: I'm so pleased to be here. I did come from my home state, the Department of Illinois, but now I'm a proud member in the department -- now a proud member in the Department of Indiana.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Growing up as a young child, I mostly remember attending fish fries at our American Legion on Friday nights which was a big deal in my town. And so who would think that just a few years later, I'd have

the honor of leading our team at JGA to work for you, the American Legion Auxiliary.

And I just want to introduce my teammates who are here with me today, Tim Ardillo and Lee Ernst. You will recognize them.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Many of you who stood up were either in a focus group or an interview with Lee, Tim or myself as we had the privilege of canvassing the country to talk to, as Tom said and as Kris said, those 8,500 respondents either online or in person or via the focus groups.

So we have an important task to do today and I'm going to ask your patience because we're going to take a little bit of time to do this. I want to walk you through what we heard from those nearly 8,500 respondents.

So this report, of course, does come through the lens of nonprofit best practice as Tom described our work and our company, but in essence I'm going to share with you today what we heard from you, from that very strong representation of nearly 8,500 people.

So to get started, we know that you're at a crossroads and we understand how important your work is in the Centennial Plan. Thus the goal of today and the goal of this assessment is to give you some context on what you told us and to set the stage for your continued success in implementing the plan.

We understand that at some point in the future after convention the full report of our work will be made available to you. It's about a 40 page detailed report. And so I want to cover that today in a series of slides but not, of course, read to you word for word those 40 pages. But we do understand that will be available to you later.

So as we heard this morning these wonderful examples of how you implement your mission, we know that the Centennial Plan will position you for that next century, will help you rethink how you deliver your message and mission and how you invest in your future and will focus on turning around those declining membership trends by focusing on new ways to engage your members.

Also that by the 2019, 2020 year, you will have a million members making a difference for veterans and their families in every neighborhood. Now, we heard that goal loud and clear in our work, making a difference for veterans.

So what did we ask in the assessment? Well, for us, we had two key areas of inquiry, are you able to deliver your mission and what is your ability to achieve the goals in the Centennial Plan. We asked how do your key constituents, your members and some nonmembers and some former members, how do you view the capacity of the organization to deliver your mission, what's the interest and commitment to your mission and the plans for the future and will you be able to achieve success in implementing the Centennial Plan.

And as Tom said, this is about the organization's effectiveness to deliver the plan. So we talked to both internal and external audiences. As you've heard, we actually had feedback from 8,849 of you which is terrific,

135 in-person or telephone interviews that Lee, Tim and I conducted, seven focus groups that we facilitated comprised of 54 people and an electronic assessment tool that many of you took advantage of with over 8,300 respondents.

Now, I just want to make a note that when we started down this path, we were hoping and budgeting for about a seven percent response rate which is average, but we know, ladies, you're not average and you blew it out of the water with a 12 percent response rate. And as we understand from staff, the number of folks responding, number of you responding to this report is the largest response you've ever had in any call out for feedback. So terrific.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: So we certainly want to thank all of you who participated and our Headquarters staff, especially Stephanie, Carley and Julie who without them, this report would not be delivered today because they scheduled all of those 135 in-person and phone interviews across the country as well as those focus groups. So a heartfelt thanks to your staff who made this report possible.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: That's right. They're smiling that we're done, I think, so -- so I want you to take away one thing from today and that is this message. We heard consistently and loudly throughout the process of gathering this feedback that you are viewed as a very committed group of women who believe in the mission of the Auxiliary and who are passionate about service to veterans, to the military and to their families. That's the foundation for the feedback I'm going to share with you today.

So how does our report lay out? What are the sections? So I'm going to share with you the observations around the Centennial Plan five goals. I'm going to share with you some general observations. I'm going to give you some input from our discussions. We have included the responses from the electronic assessment.

And we promised confidentiality in these interviews. And so the report shows the tenor of the comments we heard, but without attributing those to any one person. So are you ready? Let's dive in.

Goal one, attain a million members. So what the respondents told us about goal one is that currently it focuses on quantity versus quality. The perception is the focus is on recruitment, not retention, and that it's not mission focused enough and that we're not aligning ourselves with member interests.

Now, one of the things that you've seen through and through is that we're starting to refer to the goals in reverse order, five, four, three, two, one, because if we do two through five, we'll achieve one. And I think that is very consistent with the feedback we heard in this assessment.

We heard that the top drivers of the Auxiliary experience are veteran and community service and participating in a leadership role. You see in this chart excerpt from the electronic assessment that veteran serving activities and community service volunteer opportunities are the drivers of membership and why women want to be engaged and involved.

So we heard from our respondents that we put too much focus on meeting structure, that we're not putting enough focus in our meetings on program engagement and impact. Those should be more important than meeting attendance and parliamentary procedure. So if you remember the drivers, how do the meetings match the drivers to grow membership?

We also heard the need to explore alternative pathways to service. How do we de-emphasize the unit meeting requirement and how do we embrace membership at all levels of engagement? However, I might be able to be engaged today and it might not be in my regular unit meeting attendance.

We also heard the need to simplify the membership metrics, all under goal one here, that the multiple tracking periods of membership goals are confusing. Membership renewal, fiscal year and leadership terms are different and that right now we heard it seems de-motivating if you exceed your membership goal for the year because that just puts more pressure on membership for the next year.

Now, we know that --
(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Yeah. We know that's currently being addressed in the membership plan, but we did hear that loud and clear.

Now, interestingly enough and overwhelmingly we heard those previous items might have been obstacles to membership, but membership dues are not. The membership pricing structure is not a barrier to acquiring or retaining members. And, in fact, 94 percent said your dues are either moderate, low or very low. So you're not pricing yourself out of the market. Far from it.

We also heard about youth involvement. We heard about Girls State, Girls Nation, the Junior activities and we heard concern that they are not serving as a feeder to the Auxiliary, but they should. And the biggest response to that question of why was that we need a different model of engagement for our youth.

I'm going to move through the goals and I'm going to move to goal two, creating an internal culture of good will. And as I make this move into goal two, I want to say that I know this is a sensitive issue and it's an important issue. And so I'm going to address it head on.

We heard that creating a culture of good will is at a crisis point for you as the Auxiliary. We heard that it is the biggest obstacle to implementing your Centennial Plan and we heard about a prevalent and widespread culture of unkindness.

Now, I don't say these words lightly and I'm certain that it's not what you would like to hear. However, remember what I said about this report being grounded in women who are passionate about serving veterans. These comments were consistent across our respondents, yet I also know they were made in a spirit of wanting the Auxiliary to thrive and to succeed.

You can see in this grid from the electronic survey there are several areas that respondents rated as sub-par and the culture within the Auxiliary was in that sub-par quadrant.

So what did we hear? We heard three main causes for a lack of good will. We heard about moving up the leadership ladder at all costs. We heard about this culture of the importance of moving up the leadership ladder which takes away from the focus on mission.

We heard about an unwelcoming atmosphere at unit meetings whereby we certainly want and need new members, but how are those new members welcomed? How are they invited to continue to be involved? How are their new ideas welcomed?

And, thirdly, we heard a lot about needing to maintain power and control by withholding information. You might think about this as the opposite of mentorship. So instead of my sharing how my program was run and how my program was successful with you so that you could take it over and be even more successful, there seems to be a culture of holding back so that the next person is not more successful.

So as I said, these are not things that maybe you are happy to hear this morning, but we need to hear them. And we'll talk more about culture of good will when we move into recommendations. But as I said, it was seen as the biggest obstacle to success of the entire plan.

Let's move to goal three, developing leaders at all levels. So we heard a few things about the challenges of developing leaders at all levels. One is that the annual terms lead to a lack of continuity. So that's difficult. You just get your feet under you as a leader and your term is up.

We also heard a lot about the lack of open and competitive elections at both the national and department levels. We heard the need for broader candidate screening at a minimum and we heard about a void in unit and department level leadership training which I'll speak more about in a few moments.

Now, we know your national governance is on a path to improvement in terms of continuity as you move to two-year terms and you've created the Executive Committee to the NEC for consistency in decision making. And we applaud those efforts. That's a part of what we heard clearly in the report.

We also heard about a lack of diversity at leadership levels and also throughout membership, that your membership is not reflective of our U.S. veteran population as this slide shows and the need to diversify membership as well as grow in numbers.

Let's look at the responses to goal four, strengthening the departments and units. So what we heard is the units are where it's at. We heard that the key to successful implementation of the plan is through the units. We heard that the plan will fail without unit level engagement, yet the units lack communication and training that they need for stronger engagement.

We also heard about communication challenges. There seems to be a sense of overwhelming communication from departments to units too much. The reports are too tedious and burdensome. There's a lack of an incentive to submit your reports, especially if you're missing your goals.

And we heard that it takes about three years for a national level decision to filter down and be implemented at the unit level. If that's true, we don't have time to implement the plan, right?

So when we think about training, we heard that conferences are poorly attended and poorly represented and poorly presented as well, that the training curriculum fails to incorporate these four areas that came from our respondents.

We need more training on generational differences, how to work together across the generations. We need more training on operations and operational management. We need training on national trends in service and how are we keeping with those trends and we need training on interpersonal challenges and how to work together.

So let's move to goal five, building brand loyalty with The American Legion. We heard and Tom addressed in his remarks the continued need for brand identity. Your brand is tied to the success of The American Legion. You're impacted by the demographics of the Legionnaires. And we heard that you need increased awareness of the Auxiliary within military members.

We also heard that your messaging lacks focus. Several respondents in person and many, many across the electronic survey said we really need to streamline to two to three major program areas and ensure our programs are relevant and mission driven.

So in addition to that brief overview of the respondents' perceptions of the goals, we have some general observations to share and then I'll move into the recommendations.

So under general observations, the Centennial Plan itself is fairly overwhelming with more than 150 initiatives. The implementation plan is complex. It does conflict perhaps with other strategic plans in the departments and the units and it's not aligned with many of your existing committee structures.

When we look at National Headquarters' staffing, you have 35 staff members to serve approximately 750,000 members. So we ask are you able to meet membership needs? Are you able to implement a very complex Centennial Plan? Are you able to administer 11 national programs and scholarships with a staff of that number?

We also noted that technology is not adequate. We can't access information consistently at department and unit levels and we need the effective use of a technology platform to support membership.

So let's take a look at what we recommend. Now, again, as Tom said, this is an outside external assessment and these are our recommendations based on our work as a nonprofit consulting firm, what we learned through the respondents and our view of nonprofit best practices. I'm going to present you the recommendations and that's what they are. They have not been acted upon nor will they today. These are our recommendations to you that will then move to the Implementation Committee.

So we believe that these recommendations will position you to deliver your mission and to achieve the goals of the Centennial Plan. As I

said, these recommendations are based on the synthesis of feedback from those nearly 8,500 respondents and our nonprofit best practices.

First recommendation goes right to good will. As we said, it was cited as the number one obstacle for implementing the goals in the Centennial Plan. We need to stay mission focused at meetings. Mission for you is where it's at. We need to stay mission focused at meetings.

We recommend that you establish a fair leadership selection or election process that is understood and transparent to all membership. We recommend that you create a hospitality chair at all levels through the Auxiliary to put an emphasis on that welcoming, hospitable environment. We recommend that you train members on how to collaborate together.

Under membership, programs and meeting structure, again, emphasize mission at your meetings. That's what drives membership. That's what drives attendance at your meetings. Create meeting guidelines that encourage engagement over process and procedure. Embrace all members, members who want to volunteer and lead, members who pay their dues but don't have time to volunteer and members who reflect the diversity of our veterans. Focus on membership recruitment and retention. Simplify your reporting by aligning your renewal year and your fiscal year. Focus a national

--

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: There you go. Focus a national staffing unit on membership recruitment and retention to work directly with units and departments.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Create an active, online membership presence. Create tools for online membership sign-up, renewal and communication. Engage members on social media. Appropriately support the eUnit movement.

Now, I don't say this in a trendy way. People want to engage in all different ways across the Auxiliary and this is an area where you're lacking and not able to offer those engagement tools in the online presence to those who want them.

We also recommend that you simplify. Conduct a review to streamline your programs and, again, be ruthlessly mission focused. If you've heard one thing from me today, I think it's mission focused.

We recommend that you leverage Girls State and Girls Nation. This is not only a tremendous program, one of my colleagues at JGA was her delegate to Girls State in Indiana and it was more than just a couple years ago. And she was telling us in this work how meaningful that was to her. So a terrific program, also a feeder for you for future members.

Create an alumni association for those girls so that as they become young women and adults, they have a way to stay connected. And offer a dual membership track in the Auxiliary. Strengthen the Junior Activities Program in its recruiting.

We also recommend that you examine your dues structure. Your dues as you saw, 94 percent of the respondents viewed them as moderate or low. Could you have a greater impact with more dues revenue? What dues

level will your membership bear? We recommend that you review your dues structure. That's all under membership.

Let's talk about leadership structure. We recommend that you address the selection and election process of your leaders. We recommend that you move to a two-year or more term for your leaders. And we're talking both at the department and national level.

We also recommend that you address the secretary title to make that title be more reflective as a Headquarters' executive whether in the department or national, not being implied as an administrative clerk. It's an old term and it probably does not convey the role of the secretaries today.

Grow new leaders through mentorship. It's the opposite of what I talked about in the lack of the good will. Eliminate my year, my pin, my theme and focus on the Centennial Plan as the theme.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Foster a collaborative environment of leadership transition, not an environment where I don't want your year to be as successful as mine or your program to be as successful as mine. Create that collaborative leadership transition.

Recommendation number four, under departments and unit training, conduct a professional review of your training and the delivery effectiveness of the training. Focus on district and countywide training, have consistent new leader training. And if we're not turning our leaders over so quickly, that will be more manageable.

Consider creating a national staffing training team for that consistent professional delivery of training and certainly create a webinar training system to get to those folks who want to be a part of training but can't be there in person.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Number five, public awareness and brand identify. Repair your focus on mission and your culture of good will before you enter into another public awareness campaign.

Now, in this recommendation, we're not saying hide your light under a bushel, but we are saying that you have to have the environment ready when you welcome those new members. So welcoming me and then losing me does not help.

So focus on mission and culture of good will first. Get our internal house in order. Communicate the relevancy and the impact of the Legion and the Auxiliary. How are you relevant today? All we had to do was listen to the morning presentations to feel that again, right? How are you relevant today and what is your impact?

Jointly promote within the military branches the Legion and the Auxiliary. And, again, don't forget to leverage social media and the internet. When I Google veteran services, I want to see the Auxiliary.

Recommendation six, ensure that you have the sufficient resources for the implementation of this plan today and in the future. So if not us, who and if not now, when are very important questions.

So ensure that you resource as you move through the plan and as you consider these recommendations, there have to be resources there to implement them.

Examine your national staffing and funding levels. Continue to simplify. That might be my second word of the morning after mission. Continue to simplify implementation so that we're all on the same team. You recited those goals earlier. Those are the goals across every unit, every department. Focus on those departments and units and streamline all of your reporting to filter up and align with the Centennial Plan.

As I conclude this morning, Tim, Lee and I really believe now is the time for you to be bold, to embrace change, to be relevant, to fulfill your mission and to most importantly support our veterans and our families. That's what it's about.

(Applause.)

MS. WHITE: Thank you.

That's what it's about. And that's why you had 8,500 respondents to this needs assessment and that's why you're here today very attentively listening and taking all of this in so that you can look internally at the Auxiliary and at your organizational structure and understand how to better position yourself to achieve the goals of the plan not for the sake of the plan but for the sake of those who serve.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you for your report, Kris, and thank you to our special guests, Tom Hirschauer and Angela White for their presentations.

Kris, do you have any resolutions?

MS. NELSON: Yes, Madam Chairman, I do.

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Resolutions Chairman Karen Thompson, please proceed with presenting the resolution.

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Subject, resourcing year two of the American Legion Auxiliary five-year Centennial Strategic Plan submitted by the Centennial Plan implementation team Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee.

Whereas, the ALA's capacity to deliver our mission is jeopardized by a number of factors including a 40-year trend in declining and aging membership with the biggest membership loss occurring among the 40 percent of new members who leave the organization within their first three years of joining and,

Whereas, if the American Legion Auxiliary continues to decline at the rate it has over the past 40 years, the organization will have fewer than 300,000 members in 17 years and be extinct in 30 years and,

Whereas, to address the critical state of the American Legion Auxiliary, the National Executive Committee in March of 2014 duly adopted the 2014 to 2019, '20 vision and five strategic goals for the American Legion Auxiliary. Vision by 2019, 2020, the American Legion Auxiliary's million

members will be making a difference for veterans and their families in every neighborhood.

Goal five, with The American Legion, build awareness and loyalty as a brand family, goal four, strengthen departments and units, goal three, develop leadership at all levels, goal two, create an internal culture of good will, goal one, achieve a million members and,

Whereas the 2014 National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary voted overwhelming to support the American Legion Auxiliary making an investment in itself to accomplish the five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary 2014, 2019, '20 strategic Centennial Plan and in support of same, the ALA National Executive Committee in turn appropriated reserve funds to resource phase one needs of the American Legion Auxiliary's strategic Centennial Plan and,

Whereas, the five Centennial Plan goal teams comprised of some 150 members have identified 27 critical strategies and nearly 200 initiatives that must be accomplished in order to achieve the five goals that are interdependent and must be achieved at all levels so that we can become a thriving organization and,

Whereas, the 2015 National Convention body will receive the official findings and recommendations of the professional organizational effectiveness assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary conducted by Johnson, Grossnickle & Associates over a period of eight months based on input from nearly 9,000 members, nonmembers and former members representing a 70 percent greater than expected response of 12 percent of the more than 67,000 individuals invited to provide input and,

Whereas, each year in order to increase our capacity at all levels of the organization to serve our mission, the Centennial Plan goal teams must add and/or adjust initiatives plus develop corresponding implementation plans to address the findings and recommendations of the professional organizational effectiveness assessment of the American Legion Auxiliary's capacity to serve our mission and,

Whereas, the next major step in phase two of the Centennial Plan is to retain a reputable, professional firm specializing in curriculum development and training to develop custom organizational effectiveness and awareness advocacy training modules for the ALA objectively based on the needs identified by members and the JGA organizational effectiveness assessment of the ALA and in turn to professionally train trainers that can be dispatched to help districts and departments and,

Whereas, the fiscal year '16 budget proposal for resourcing the first year of phase two of the Centennial Plan has been painstakingly and frugally developed and represents an ongoing investment in the ALA by reallocating \$494,000 from reserve funds to benefit all levels of the American Legion Auxiliary and,

Whereas, the fiscal year '16 budget proposal resources each of the five goals including incentives to departments for successfully implementing their department's strategic plan,

Now, therefore be it resolved that the 2015 National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary held August 31st to September 3rd, 2015 in Baltimore, Maryland supports the American Legion Auxiliary's sustained investment in itself to accomplish the five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary's 2014, 2019, '20 Centennial Strategic Plan,

And be it further resolved that upon adoption of this resolution by the 2015 National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary, the first meeting of the 2015, 2016 National Executive Committee consider this show of support when considering actions to appropriate funds to resource the needs identified to be accomplished in fiscal year '16 of phase two of the American Legion Auxiliary 2014, '19, '20 Centennial Strategic Plan,

And be it further resolved that the American Legion Auxiliary National Conventions in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 be apprised of the achievements of the American Legion Auxiliary five-year Centennial Plan and be presented resolutions of support to consider based upon successes and needs for implementation of the Centennial Plan over the course of the five years,

And be it finally resolved that the National Organization and departments continue the commitment to implementing initiatives to accomplish the five goals of the American Legion Auxiliary five-year Centennial Strategic Plan adopted by the National Executive Committee so that the organization may realize a reversal of its decline in membership and increase its ability to deliver the important mission of the American Legion Auxiliary by and beyond the hundred anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary in 2019-2020.

The Pre-Convention Finance Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. On behalf of the Resolutions Committee, I move the adoption of the resolution as just read.

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the adoption of the resolution as just read. The Finance Pre-Convention Committee recommends the resolution be adopted.

Is there discussion?

VOICE: Second.

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: It's been moved and seconded. Is there discussion? It's hard to see up here in case you can't tell that.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. Are you ready for the question?

VOICES: Yes.

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Adoption of this resolution requires a majority vote. Stand up. Those in favor of the resolution to support the Centennial Plan, please press the number one on your key -- on the voting keypad. Those opposed, please press number two key. Please vote now.

Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: The affirmative has it and the resolution is adopted.

Kris, please continue.

MS. NELSON: I just want to thank you all for your commitment to this plan and to the American Legion Auxiliary for our veterans, their communities and their families. Thank you all.

Madam President, this concludes my report.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. Good job. Thanks, Kris. Great job.

Now it's time for the Centennial Plan photo. Okay. Everyone, let's get our tee shirts ready and after you have your tee shirt on, move towards the center section and everyone from the stage will come down front. Remember squish together.

(Whereupon, a photo was taken.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Our next guest is Dr. Lynda Davis. She's the executive vice president of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors. She is also a dual member of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. So I extend an especially warm welcome to one of our own.

In addition to her staff position with TAPS, Lynda serves on boards and advisory committees of several other military and veterans' groups. And it is in one of those capacities that Lynda joins us today. Lynda is leading implementation of a military and veteran caregiver network, one of the Elizabeth Dole foundation's caregiver support initiatives.

The military and veteran caregiver network is a new community for caregivers of all eras, all relations and across all locations. It launched in May 2015, so it's now open enrollment season. As the world's largest patriotic service organization with many of our members being caregivers themselves, the American Legion Auxiliary has a special responsibility to serve in this arena and in a big way.

Our duty to service, not self requires nothing less. And that is why our ALA in our 2015, 2016 plan of action has committed to provide volunteers to serve primarily as peer mentors to caregivers. Lynda is going to share a few remarks about the military and veteran caregiver network now, but this is just a teaser. Lynda is offering a workshop this afternoon from 2:30 to 3:30 in Room 314 in the Convention Center. All are welcome even if you did not preregister for the workshop. Lynda and her colleagues will provide detailed information about volunteer opportunities for ALA members in the military and veteran caregiver network.

Please welcome to our stage Dr. Lynda Davis.

(Applause.)

MS. DAVIS: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

MS. DAVIS: Awesome. I love the blue. I got to get one. Thank you for having me and thank you, Madam Vice President. I look forward to supporting you and all of your members in the coming years.

As Sharon mentioned, I'm very humbled to be part of this organization and the other one, you know, those guys and girls. And I'm excited to tell you a little bit more today about the military and veteran caregiver network and how you can use your lived experience to benefit so many others that are struggling with that very special call to duty.

But first I'd like to extend a very warm welcome and appreciation from the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors and our president and founder Bonnie Carroll. For years, the Auxiliary has been a close friend and ally of TAPS which is a veteran service organization chartered specifically to support the loved ones who are grieving the death of someone who served in our military.

And those loved ones can be not only a spouse, but they can be a parent, a daughter, a son, a sibling, a grandparent, a friend. So we extend at TAPS a warm, loving embrace of peer support to all of those who are -- have had someone that they love lost whether it's wounds, illness or injury. And we do that all over the country and we do it in part with the help of partners like the Auxiliary.

One of the things that we've been honored to do over 20 years at TAPS is to support over 50,000 individuals with peer-based emotional support that is coupled with casework, that is coupled with retreats, that is coupled with opportunities to engage in adventure together with people who've experienced the similar loss to yours to know that you're not alone.

And because of the outstanding reputation of TAPS in being able to support these loved ones with a peer support program that it was in 2014 after the RAND report was released on America's hidden heroes, our caregivers, that the White House joining forces initiative and the Elizabeth Dole Foundation asked TAPS to incubate or create and launch the military and veteran caregiver network.

That is something we've been working hard to do in the last year in conjunction with many, many military and veteran service organizations including the Auxiliary and faith-based organizations and national and local agencies.

And what we will be doing, what we started doing in -- as of a couple months ago is we are launching the program and rolling out three programs and three services many of which you all will be able to take advantage of and even contribute significantly to as was mentioned.

Our three programs are going to include an online peer community, which is secure and safe, which will allow you any time of day or night from the comfort of your home to talk to someone else who is a caregiver like yourself or who has concerns about caregiving.

We will have a peer mentor program that lets you be training to engage in a matched one-to-one supportive relationship. And we're so excited to talk more about that and see how we can get you engaged there.

And thirdly, we're going to have a program that is a community-based support group and those enable people who have a caregiving role from any era to engage and come together. They may be supported by a local unit.

They may be supported by a post or a chapter. They may be supported by a church or a synagogue.

But they will involve the local community in making sure that there's a place for caregivers of military and veterans to go and talk and meet with each other one to one.

We will also have three services and those services will include online for anyone of our national resource library where if you have something that will support caregivers in your community or through the Auxiliary, that can be listed. And anyone around the country can search that if they want to support a caregiver.

We'll also have a magazine that will be regularly published and caregivers can contribute to that. And then thirdly, we'll have a master calendar so any of the organizations around the country who are providing support to military or veteran caregivers can include their activity in that calendar.

Many of these -- all of our peer programs are based on evidence-based best practices that TAPS has developed over the last 20 years. They've been proven to make a positive difference in people's lives.

As you probably know, I experienced it when I was a caregiver to my husband, my father, my son, the latter two in the military, that it takes a lot out of you to give the loving, attentive care that you want to. And oftentimes that isolates you and it cuts you off from being able to engage with other people, to maybe complete your job as you would like to, outside activities.

And that can be pretty depressing sometimes and it's even hard to reach out and ask somebody what do I do next, how do I fill out these forms, where do I get the right person, do I trust this doctor.

And so the military and veteran caregiver network will allow you to speak to other people who have gone through your experience and reduce your sense of isolation.

What we've found is that connectedness and that opportunity for you all to engage both as sometimes a listener, sometimes a trained peer mentor or group facilitator or online moderator empowers you to give back based on the experience that you have had with all your years in caregiving or in service through the Auxiliary.

And so we look for this program to be able to address the concerns of the 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers in the country, 1.1 of which are post-9/11. So the majority are pre-9/11 era and we need to make sure that we have the peers that are available to support constituency.

I'm just delighted that we have this chance to work together and it will be something that we're starting at the workshop that was mentioned. And we'll give you all the details of what you can do including just a handout so that you can go back and if you want to do nothing more than become a member and look at the website, that's absolutely wonderful. We'd be thrilled with just that.

So we look forward to see you later and to a long and productive relationship that we've had in the past. We -- I want to thank call to service corps and Bob's assistance at headquarters and also the Indiana office and

how we've been able to have our wonderful support from Amanda and Elizabeth who have been just dedicated, very strong assistants.

All of the Auxiliary has already proven that you are all about service and you earn the name every single day. It's an honor to be here and I thank you very much for all your current and future contributions. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Thank you, Lynda.

I think that caregiver support, that program just fits so well with everything that we do. So I hope you'll really wait, look for the information on that program.

I just got to go over to The American Legion Convention and address them, so that was lots of fun. And the Texas Tenors were there again. Yeah, aren't they cute?

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I told the commander, I told him I -- you know, I love all the pictures I have with him, but I got to get a picture with the Texas Tenors, so that was kind of going to go maybe on the second page of my scrapbook.

Okay. Being National Past Presidents Parley Chairman has given Nancy an opportunity to learn more about the work our past presidents do in support of women veterans, active military and also how we raise money for scholarships at all levels of our organization.

For Nancy, hearing about the work they continue to do makes her more committed to her own community Legacy Project, working with homeless veterans and their families.

Will you please welcome Nancy Brown-Park, Past National President and President of the or, let me see, Chairman of the Presidents Parley Committee, to give her report.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: The Past Presidents Parley worked hard this year to utilize the experience and knowledge of past Auxiliary leaders for training and encouragement of our future leaders.

The Past Presidents Parley Committee does not require a year-end report. So a big thank you to the 16 departments who chose to go above and beyond and submit a report.

The Department of California past presidents held workshops to mentor new and current members.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: You know that's my noisy department. Chairman Linda Fercho reported they started four new unit parleys making a total of 56 in their department all practicing the Big Sister, Little Sister Program which encourages new and seasoned members to become better trained, more involved in volunteering.

The Department of Ohio has a strong Past Presidents Parley as reported by their chairman who wrote leadership is about accepting responsibility and not always when it suits you. It's about the ability to motivate others towards their realization of achievement and self-improvement.

Their past presidents are involved in all areas from fund raising for their Scholarship Program, collecting items and monies in support of women veterans, supporting the troops with boxes sent overseas and having members work in the schools passing out brochures, flags and poppies.

All of these volunteer efforts help them to collect renewals and recruit new members. Great job, Ohio.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: The Unit Members of the Year are the unsung heroes. They are the heart and soul of our membership. This is a very special award which recognizes the contributions made by a valued unit member who has never held an office higher than Unit President. It celebrates and recognizes those members who quietly work the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary without ever seeking recognition or power.

This year, thanks to my amazing Vice Chairman, Mary Junge, a whopping 47 departments have named a Unit Member of the Year.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Today we will have the opportunity to celebrate their hard work during our Women of the Year luncheon. I know it will be a great celebration as we ring the bell to honor all of their hard work.

Four women are being recognized today with the American Legion Auxiliary's salute to Active-Duty Servicewomen Award for their service to our country and their communities.

It is my pleasure to introduce Staff Sergeant Jackie Snider. Staff Sergeant Snider joined the Air Force in 2006 after trying to get into college and realizing the expense was going to be astronomical. She was assigned to the 60th Dental Squadron.

Once she felt comfortable with her duties, she started attending college classes at night. She was selected to participate in a humanitarian assignment in South America.

A week after her return, she was off to Al Jaber Air Base Kuwait with the mission to aid in Operation New Dawn. Staff Sergeant Snider said joining the United States Air Force has been the best decision I could have made for my family and myself.

Jackie is married and her husband also serves in the U.S. Air Force. And together, they have a daughter. Please give a warm welcome to our first recipient, United States Air Force Staff Sergeant Jackie Snider.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: Thank you.

I would like to start off with thanking the American Legion Auxiliary for allowing me to be here today. I am so pleased to win the Salute to Servicewomen Award for the Air Force. Receiving this award is such an amazing honor.

I've been asked to share with you some of my personal military experiences. As you heard, I joined the Air Force in June 2006 at the age of 19. Upon entering my enlistment, I was given the job as a dental technician. I spent the next couple of years learning my job.

I've had some great opportunities in my career field. Being a part of this occupation that has many different practices has kept me very interested. I have assisted in general dentistry, prosthodontics, orthodontics and oral surgery. I have even been trained as a prophylaxis technician which is basically a dental hygienist.

I have worked in the oral surgery clinic for the longest, for about three years. While in that section, I was able to assist in wisdom teeth extractions, operating room cases and injuries and defects to the head, neck or face.

During my time there, I contributed to the overall production of about \$12 million. This is also the 60th Dental Squadron at Travis Air Force Base.

VOICES: Woo.

SERGEANT SNIDER: In August 2011, I was given the chance to participate in a humanitarian assignment to Suriname, South America which is located north of Brazil, east of Guyana.

While there, we visited ten villages to provide oral hygiene instructions and supplies such as tooth brushes and tooth paste. We also treated about 2,000 patients delivering \$550,000 in dental care to those who could not afford it.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: As you heard, when I returned from my humanitarian assignment, I was tasked to deploy. I spent six months at Al Jaber, Kuwait Air Base and I was a third country national escort.

During this deployment, I became an element leader and managed 704 site runs, escorted 58 TCNs, completed 18 wing projects and supervised eight airmen.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: If you can't tell, I'm a person who likes to stay busy. And if this was not enough, I was attending school throughout this whole time. I had earned my associate's degree in applied dental sciences from the Community College of the Air Force.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: Currently I am enjoying my role as a wife and a mother to my two-year-old daughter and my two-month-old son, Samuel.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: I'm also studying to become a national certified dental assistant. Once I complete the certification, I intend to start my prerequisite so I can apply to the Air Force Dental Hygienist Scholarship Program and become a licensed hygienist. And that way, I can utilize those skills when I retire from the Air Force.

(Applause.)

SERGEANT SNIDER: I would like to thank you again for this recognition and taking the time to hear some of my military experiences. I know I would not be the woman I am today if it was not for the Air Force. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Thank you.

So Staff Sergeant Snider, it gives the American Legion Auxiliary great pleasure to present this award to you. It reads we salute you and thank you for your honorable military service on the War on Terrorism on behalf of a grateful nation presented September 1st, 2015.

Staff Sergeant Snider, please remain on stage as we welcome the others.

And let's give her another great big round of applause.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Our second recipient is United States Coast Guard Lieutenant Amanda Denning. Lieutenant Denning has been in the Coast Guard for the past eight and a half years.

In her narrative, she wrote while in college, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast and the life-saving efforts of the Coast Guard were highlighted in the national news coverage. It was at that moment that I decided that instead of attending law school after graduation, I want to serve my country by joining the Coast Guard.

She believes that a diverse workforce in the military is key to mission success. Amanda has two brothers who both graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

Please give a big American Legion Auxiliary welcome to United States Coast Guard Lieutenant Amanda Denning.

So just really quickly, this is our first Coast Guard recipient of the award. And you know our National President lives in Connecticut where the Coast Guard Academy is. So we're very excited.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

LIEUTENANT DENNING: I can't believe this crowd. This is amazing to me. The convention is much larger than I ever expected. And so I thank you all for your time and being here.

I have to give a little history about myself and the Legion because it kind of comes full circle. When I was -- gosh, I'm going to age myself, but 12-year-old girl growing up in a small town called Hanson, Massachusetts -- anybody from Massachusetts?

VOICES: Woo.

LIEUTENANT DENNING: I had a paper route. Well, it just so happened that one of my customers was The American Legion. They lived -- I grew up on the street with the Legion right down the street from me. So every single day, I would go in there to deliver the paper to them.

Well, this wasn't just a quick stop in the Legion usually. So what would normally happen was I'd pull up a seat to the bar, drink a Coke and

have a bag of chips with all the folks that were in there. And I can tell you that the history I learned within that building was much more than I ever learned in school. I truly believe that is what inspired me to go into service myself.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: So I had a good knowledge of what The American Legion did, but I can tell you honestly before this year, I didn't really know that much about the American Legion Auxiliary until I met the wonderful ladies from Edenton, North Carolina who nominated me for this.

And I can't tell you how impressed I am with the spirit of service and dedication all you ladies show through your organization. That commitment of service is something that I try to bring to my job every day.

And I think that the best thing about getting this award is that it truly is women supporting women. And you don't see that too often. It's so great to get an award from a female organization.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: Through my career, I've had some excellent mentors both male and female and that has helped me get to where I wanted to be today. I had no idea coming into the Coast Guard that I wanted to be a pilot. I was an English major in college. I had no -- I had flown on a commercial flight once in my entire life.

So when I came home one day and said, you know, I think I'm going to apply to flight school, I had all these great people that I worked for that said you can do it. And that's funnily enough what I end up telling people. If you want to do it, you really can do it.

So off I went to flight school and from there, I've had some great experiences in the Coast Guard. I've been able to be a helicopter pilot saving lives on a daily basis. I've been to advanced helicopter rescue school where we do cliff rescue, high seas, high winds rescue.

And I'm current serving as an instructor pilot in Mobile, Alabama where all our pilots come through to learn how to fly our aircraft.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: What I'm hoping to give back to the Coast Guard is to be as good of a mentor to somebody coming through the ranks as I had. If I can do that for one person, I think I've done my job. And I really hope that I can continue to do that and serve the country for as long as they'll have me, I guess.

Thank you so much for having me today and thank you for your service.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So before I present the award, I think you have a guest, don't you?

LIEUTENANT DENNING: Oh, yeah. So, Jeremy, you want to stand up?

So Jeremy is in a support role today, Lieutenant Commander Jeremy Denning, my husband.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: Twenty-one years of service, also a helicopter pilot in the Coast Guard.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: She shared with me that they did get to fly together once, but they may not get to do that again because soon, they may have a family. So they can't fly together, but it was really nice to have -- get a chance to meet him as well.

So, Lieutenant Denning, it gives the American Legion Auxiliary great pleasure to present this award to you. And it reads we salute you and thank you for your honorable military service on the War on Terrorism on behalf of a grateful nation presented September 1st, 2015.

Please give Lieutenant Denning a great big thank you.

(Applause.)

LIEUTENANT DENNING: Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: The third recipient is United States Army Specialist Jessica Arent. Jessica was nominated because of her service both in and out of uniform. Jessica enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly before graduating from Plymouth State University.

She reported to basic training at Fort Sill on September 2nd, 2013 as a behavioral health specialist so that she could provide mental support to soldiers in need.

While in basic training, she received the second highest score of her platoon on their first physical fitness test. Jessica was --

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: It even gets better. Jessica was the highest scoring female and beat all but one male.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Jessica Arent received the distinguished Honor Grad for the work she did at the VA hospital during her training. She received orders to go to Libya for Operation United Assistance in the fight against Ebola. She was responsible for providing mental health support to our soldiers.

Jessica returned home in January 2015 and was quarantined for 21 days before being returned to regular duty. Please give a big round of applause for U.S. Army Specialist Jessica Arent.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So I will tell you that Jessica shared with me that quarantine was really boring.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Thank you, Jessica.

ARMY SPECIALIST ARENT: Wow, this is a big crowd. I'm not used to talking in front of so many people. I want to thank you all for being here, but I want to give a special thank you to everyone who's here from New Hampshire.

VOICES: Yay.

ARMY SPECIALIST ARENT: I think that my family and I might have seen some of you when we were out at dinner last night.

I'd like to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for granting me this award. It's really an honor to be accepting this from an organization who themselves gives back to so many other people and cares so much.

I'd also like to thank my Aunt Jan who sadly couldn't be here today. She's the one who nominated me. And I thank her for even thinking that I was deserving enough of this award as well as everyone else at the Bonita Springs Legion for making this possible.

And I'd like to thank my family who, of course, got front row seats. They've been behind my back throughout everything in my life and I know I've given them a lot of gray hairs for it, but I appreciate everything that they've done for me.

I joined the Army as a behavioral health technician and I've worked side by side with other soldiers for the past couple years both men and women and I've seen how hard they work for what they earn and where they are.

I feel very grateful to be standing here right now in a way representing each of them, but with a special honor in my heart for all of the women who wear this uniform.

My great grandfather was in the military. My grandfather is a Vietnam vet. All of his six brothers served. My uncle was in the military. And I'm very proud to be able to carry on that path, but I think my family will tell you that I'm even more proud to say that I'm the first woman to do so.

(Applause.)

ARMY SPECIALIST ARENT: Women have come a long way in the military especially recently as the first two females graduated Ranger School. And it's a --

(Applause.)

ARMY SPECIALIST ARENT: And it's a privilege to be able to stand here before you today wearing this uniform. I've been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to do volunteer work both nationally and internationally. And it was never a thought that I would ever get recognition for it.

You kind of just find something that you want to contribute to, something that you care about, enjoy doing, want to pursue and you just do it, but this makes everything that much more worth it though. And my hope is that it may inspire others to follow their passions. Nothing that I've done is anything that anyone else can't do if they're passionate about it. Dream big was something that I heard a lot growing up. I was born and raised in a small southern town. I didn't come from a big city or win the lottery or anything. I just found ways to spread my wings and go out into the world and help where I could and learn a lot more from others in the process.

I've heard before that when you give back, you're really getting more in the end. And I can't say enough about how true that is, especially in my experiences in Africa. The people I've met there have really given me a new perspective on life that I could never thank them enough for.

From them, I've learned that it doesn't matter how much money you have or don't have and it doesn't matter where you live or what you live in for that matter. It doesn't matter what car you drive or if all you have is the heel-

toe express as I've heard in the Army. You have the power to help other people regardless of wealth or materialistic items simply just by caring. It could be as simple as just giving them your time and listening to them tell their story. Sometimes all someone needs is to be heard.

Also from them I've learned that there's so much in every day to be thankful for and that days are only bad if you choose to focus on the bad. And it's really truly that easy.

I've been given opportunities from the military that I wouldn't have gotten anywhere else and I'm very thankful for that. Because of this, I've been able to have experiences that very few people ever have. And in turn, I've grown a lot as a person. I've been lucky enough to meet many different people and hear just as many different stories.

I'd like to end by thanking you all or by asking you all a favor. Sometime in the near future, start a conversation with someone who you may not normally have started one with, someone from a different generation as you, someone who grew up in a different country or social class or just someone who you happen to sit by in a café. You might be surprised at how much you can learn from them and how much you simply caring about them means to them.

Thank you, guys.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Don't go anywhere. Specialist Arent, it gives the American Legion Auxiliary great pleasure to present this award to you. It reads we salute you and thank you for your honorable military service on the War on Terrorism on behalf of a grateful nation presented September 1st, 2015. Thank you so much, Specialist Arent, for all your work.

ARMY SPECIALIST ARENT: Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: She's got a lot of family right here. Last but by no means least is the United States Navy --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: -- Petty Officer First Class Jessica Buffum. Jessica has been a police officer in the Navy for 12 years and currently works in the police and security services at the A level Federal Health Care Center.

She is attending school to become an early elementary special education teacher and in her spare time likes to travel, although judging by her bio, I'm not sure she has much spare time.

She is a volunteer coordinator for the No Veteran Dies Alone Program at the health care center. The chief community affairs officer from the center, Kenneth Lithe (phonetic) said Jessica is a very compassionate young woman who is one of the sweetest and kindest people I have ever met.

Please give a rousing applause to United States Navy Petty Officer First Class Jessica Buffum.

(Applause.)

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for having me here.

I -- honestly I don't know how I can follow them right now. They wrote some beautiful speeches. But definitely thank you for having us here. This is a great, great cause. And they wouldn't tell me when they -- I found out we got this award that -- how many people would be here because they knew I was nervous talking in front of everybody.

So I'll keep it short and sweet. But since I've been in the Navy for 13 years, I've learned that your family is who you make it. And thank you for, you know, making me a part of your family. It really is an honor to be here.

(Applause.)

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: I'm from a small town in Cuba, Illinois and I've been --

VOICES: Woo.

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: Woo, Illinois. I've been in for 13 years from Okinawa, Japan to California, Greece, Guam, Jacksonville, Florida. I did the final deployment on the USS Enterprise.

(Applause.)

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: And I think I was stationed back home in north Chicago for a reason. And I think one of those reasons is the No Veteran Dies Alone Program. They needed a coordinator when I got there and I just knew that that was the job for me.

And since I've been there, I've gotten to meet a lot of amazing veterans and it just is great to be with them and to hear their stories and to give back to them. And we have a pretty good program going. We're always looking for more volunteers and training. And it's really good to give back.

So since then, I've done -- I'm going to continue that. I'm going to keep wherever I go, seven more years, who knows how long, but I'm going to keep up the volunteer stuff and definitely am glad to be here. So thank you, everyone.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So, you know, what she didn't share is what she coordinates she does as a volunteer. And she does -- she's in the hospice unit and feels that no veteran should die alone. And she coordinates it all, coordinates the volunteers and works with the veterans as well. So she does an absolutely incredible job.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So, Petty Officer First Class Jessica Buffum, it gives the American Legion Auxiliary great pleasure to present this award to you. And it reads we salute you and thank you for your honorable military service on the War on Terrorism on behalf of a grateful nation presented September 1st, 2015.

Let's give her a great big round of applause again.

(Applause.)

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: I was told I'd be in big trouble if I did not give a warm welcome to my command master chief, Mr. Maurice Koffe (phonetic) and my security officer, Mr. Kenneth Brown.

(Applause.)

PETTY OFFICER BUFFUM: Thank you for your support and thank you to my family for your support. Couldn't have done it without you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So let's give a well-deserved standing ovation to honor our military servicewomen.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: So I want you to know I just shared with them -- they were a little nervous because there were so many people and I said don't get really nervous, but this is streamed live as well so there's a lot more people watching.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: I'm not done yet. So each servicewoman represents a different branch of the Armed Services, but they all serve our communities with pride and keep our communities safe. Thank you for your service and your patriotism.

And, Madam President, this concludes my report.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

I just -- I, too, have to say to all of our recipients thank you so, so much for your service and for allowing us to honor you today.

Now, I'm hearing their stories and I'm thinking they are living our motto of service, not self. They are awesome. You are true heroes to all of us. So let's just one more time thank them.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I have to -- I do have to tell you when we were standing here to see all those flags waving out there and the bell, it was amazing. It was amazing.

Nancy, are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: No.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: No. Okay. Oh, I thought -- just so you know, I kind of let her remember last year a little. All right. Now stand over here.

CHAIRMAN BROWN-PARK: Okay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We look like sisters in that picture.

Thank you, Nancy. That was awesome.

Okay. Would the National Secretary like to come here and read announcements? Announcements.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I always get up here about that horrible death to die part is being sung. I'm going to start to get a complex.

I have several announcements, so get comfortable. First off -- well, we got -- we're good on time. First off, just some comments. You heard from a couple of our consultants this morning. I just want to remark that consultants Christina Drouin (phonetic), Tom Hirschauer, Angela White, all

their teams, they have all given so much more of their time than we have paid them for.

And I just -- could we just give them a round of applause again.
(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I mean, it is their business. Yes, we pay them. Yes, but they give way more than they're obligated to give to help us.

Also, Kris Nelson asked me to mention that one of the things in the JGA report was about membership goals. And remember the survey was done fall through winter into early spring and then the Department Leadership National Conference was in May.

And between there, the Membership Committee for next year had met and determined that we needed to deal with penalizing departments or units that have a really good year and then instead of applause, applause and next year, it's, you know, we'll top that.

So the membership goals have been calculated arithmetically across all of the units. That's how it will be done next year all the way out through our 2020 Centennial Plan celebration or centennial year celebration.

So if you have a really good year and you exceed your membership by 20 percent, you're not going to be penalized the next year. You already know what next year's goal is. So your goals are on just a straight geometric progression and are not going to be based on this. So --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Also while I'm still mentioning the Centennial Plan, I'd also like to comment that the May issue, you know, had the plan, the five goals on the cover. Several American Legion national leaders have commented on that, were very impressed that we have the plan and that we put it on the cover of our magazine.

And as a result, I guess I'm kind of proud to say that we believe for the first time ever, at least for the first time in recent history that anyone knows of, I've been invited to present to the Department Adjutants National Conference and talk about our Centennial Plan and the things that we are doing. So --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- I think that kind of -- I think that's kind of cool. Now, the tee shirts for the Centennial Plan, I would like to give a shout out to Innovairre. Innovairre is our direct mail fund raising business corporation that we work with. They sponsor the Woman of the Year luncheon and also their sponsorship dollars helped provide the tee shirts for today.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And I'd like to do a shout out to USAA. Did you all find these on your chair? As part of their sponsorship this year, they provided these koozies for each of us. And for those few of you who have commented to me about not carrying something branded when I do the half marathons, I got one now.

And then I'd like to do another shout out. Aaron is down there taking pictures. Aaron, stand up, be embarrassed and turn around and wave to

everybody because Aaron is the new vice commander of his Sons of The American Legion squadron.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Now, into real announcements. Oh, one more thing. Remember that this morning, you made -- you adopted an amendment to a standing rule. I just want to remind everyone that one of the reasons we went through the revision and moving things like that into the standing rules is that that's not something that has to be reported on your 990.

So thank you again for the adoption of the revision to the Constitution and Bylaws and standing rules because even though we say them all three together, Constitution, Bylaws, standing rules, you know it -- you don't have to take a breath in there.

Changing a standing rule is not a reportable item on your 990. So just want to remind everybody of that.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you, IRS. We dearly love you. I want that in the proceedings.

Okay. Candidate -- tomorrow morning, candidates and those making nominating speeches will assemble backstage tomorrow morning. Now, backstage here is kind of a trip. You have to go out into the hallway, go all the way around the perimeter of the room, outside in the hall and come in behind the room. There's no easy come in the room and zigzag back in backstage.

So remember if you're a candidate or person making a nominating speech, go out into the hallway, come all the way around. You'll see a distinguished guest sign and you're close when you see that.

Now, lost and found -- Madam President, for the moment, can I hand you -- I can just see the gavel going right off the side there. Lost and found inside the convention center, you pick up any house phone and you dial 7055, any house phone 7055 or if you think you lost something between the hotel and here, check with your hotel front desk.

And I can tell you that the National Historian has lost her pin. Anita Biggs has lost her past depart -- you found it? Never mind.

Okay. But we've had about three others now who have come -- sent messages up that they have lost various pins. So be on the lookout as you're walking around. But remember if you have lost something, it's dial 7055 on the house phone.

The Woman of the Year luncheon will begin at 12:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Hotel in the -- this says Piedmont Ballroom. That doesn't sound right. Constellation, isn't it?

VOICE: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Show up at the Constellation and if you're in the wrong place and see no one there, you'll know that you need to find some place else. But I think it's the Constellation. It's that second floor area where there's just a lot of rooms all together at the Hyatt Regency.

There's a very special Unit Member of the Year reception preceding today's luncheon. The reception will be held in the Chesapeake Room. That

will begin at approximately 11:45. The reception is for the Unit Member of the Year and her Department President, the National Officers Past National Presidents and National Chairmen.

Now, one of the things that always gets to be a little cluttered and confusing is taking pictures. There's not going to be time during the luncheon for posed pictures. Those were -- and we're not going to have time to do that at the reception.

But we do have our staff and professional photographers there who will be making sure that we get all the pictures that we need to get. And, of course, we'll all be happy to try to take pictures as time allows. But understand that when it's time to move from point A to point B, we have to move from point A to point B.

The National Commander's head table reception is this evening at 5:15 p.m. and the banquet starts at 6:30 p.m. It will be held here in the Convention Center in Halls A and B. So that's on the street level.

Also when you leave the session today, be sure to stop by the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation's giving Tuesday photo booth as you exit the ballroom and you'll be able to see us. So we hope you stop by there. More on that tomorrow.

And then the following National Committee meetings for 2015-2016, the following National Committees for 2015-2016 will have meetings as follows:

The 2015-2016 Poppy Committee will meet following the Woman of the Year luncheon at the Hyatt Regency in the front left of the ballroom, front left of the ballroom. So that will be your first test to figure out what left of the ballroom is.

The AEF Committee will meet outside the ballroom. They'll be checking the weather.

The Education Committee will be meeting back of the room of the ballroom.

The Children & Youth Committee will be meeting at table 24.
Children & Youth at table 24.

Public Relations will be meeting at table 55.

The Community Service meeting -- Committee will be meeting at the back of the ballroom.

And the Girls Nation Committee for 2015-2016 will be meeting Wednesday following adjournment in this hall by the Illinois sign. So, Illinois, can you make some noise?

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. All right. And, Madam President, I believe those are the announcements I have. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And we are on time.
(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Dubbie.

So now this meeting then is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 8:00 a.m. Have a good night, everybody.

(Ringing of the bell.)

(Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**NATIONAL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2015**

NARRATOR: Celebrating faith, family and freedom, the 95th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin our session is your National President Janet Jefford.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Morning, everybody.

VOICES: Good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wait a second for everybody to get their seats. It's really hard to see up here, you know?

So did everybody have a nice evening?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good time? Baltimore has been pretty good to us, right?

VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Whoever was in charge of the weather, by the way, I don't know who on the committee was, but they've done a pretty good job.

All right. Welcome to day three of celebrating faith, family and freedom. The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation offers veteran projects fund grants that can be spent helping veterans in all sorts of ways. It's a program that gives you the power to find a need, come up with an idea, apply a grant, have the opportunity then to present that grant from you and witness something great.

So let's watch this morning's video.

(Video follows:)

NARRATOR: Near the vacation destination of Myrtle Beach on South Carolina's beautiful Atlantic Coast, one might not expect to find among the resorts homeless veterans in desperate need of help.

Even more surprising and heartwarming is the brainchild of Vietnam combat veteran Kris Tourtellotte, director of the Veterans Welcome Home and Resource Center. Kris also operates Hutton House where veterans can find temporary housing while they get back on their feet.

VOICE: Even though we live in an affluent area, there's so many veterans out there trying to reintegrate back into society that are struggling. And we have built this facility to meet their need to help them get back into where they belong.

NARRATOR: The facility is serving as a stepping stone for veterans who wish to work, stay sober and get back on their feet.

VOICE: We recognized one of the biggest needs was a place for veterans to stay while they're reintegrating back into society. Therefore, we built the Hutton House which holds up to eight veterans.

NARRATOR: Their story captured the interest of members from the local American Legion Auxiliary Unit.

VOICE: As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 186, (indiscernible) River, I've come to know many people who work with our

veterans in this area. I met Kris Tourtellotte who runs a terrific program here. And one day, I asked him how could the Auxiliary help.

NARRATOR: Preparing veterans to find a job is their main mission and where the facility desperately needed help.

VOICE: There came a point while we were preparing the house to house veterans that we needed two computer stations for the veterans to utilize for web search and job search.

NARRATOR: And to the rescue, the American Legion Auxiliary.

VOICE: I thought about a video that I had seen at last year's National Convention about the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grant. I found the application online and it was easier than applying for a courtesy card at the grocery store.

Most people think of a grant application as lots of paperwork, but this grant really isn't. Within one month from the time the application was submitted, we had the money. Kris was so excited when I called him and told him that we had gotten the grant and we could go shopping. It was like a kid on Christmas morning to see his face as we shopped.

VOICE: Now that we had the computers here, the veterans were able to do a 24/7 search for their jobs, continue to work on their program and even veterans that were coming in off the street that are looking for jobs were able to utilize those at their convenience.

VOICE: We were able to purchase two of these workstations with the Foundation grant.

VOICE: As a veteran who struggled himself, I greatly appreciate when organizations step up to help. We want to thank the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation for their generous donation to the Hutton House.

THE NARRATOR: To learn more about how your unit and department can apply for a Foundation grant or donate, visit alaforveterans.org and look for the ALA Foundation link. Find a need, come up with an idea to help, apply for a grant and witness something great.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: From the Department of South Carolina Unit 186, please welcome Anne Parker.

(Applause.)

MS. PARKER: First of all, I'd like to thank the Department of South Carolina for their unwavering support to all my crazy ideas, but this one really came to be. The looks on the faces of the people that we got to serve by this grant were just worth every minute of the time we spent.

Thank you all for your support of the Foundation and this is what makes it work. Thank you again.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Anne.

MS. PARKER: Appreciate it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Apply for another one.

MS. PARKER: I will.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I just told her to apply for another one this coming year.

So -- and on a personal note, I do want to thank everyone for their generosity and for all the donations that I received for the ALA Foundation towards the service projects grants. It's a wonderful program. Thank you.

All right. And with that, when I find my gavel, the 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will again come to order.

(Ring of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Welcome, everyone, and please remember to silence all your electronic devices. Thank you.

All right. At this time, I would like to ask National Chaplain Karen Boehler to come forward and give the invocation this morning.

Karen.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: In large part, the prayer that I'm about to share with you this morning was written by Judy Whitman, Department Chaplain this year in the Department of Delaware. Please bow your heads.

Oh, God, even in the midst of the season of warmth and fun, remind us that there's a time for every purpose under heaven. We pray for you to be in the hearts of young people as well as our adults to remember that freedom is not free.

Please help all of us to remember we belong to you and should never cease to thank you. And, Lord, don't let us forget the real reason for our Star Spangled Banner, the very words of which were written in this city of Baltimore.

Lord, let us, our children and our children's children pledge our allegiance first to you and then to our country. Thank you, God, for the blessings you continue to give us. We are so thankful we're Americans and we give you all the praise for the privilege to be free. Amen.

VOICES: Amen.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Karen.

All right. Please be seated. The first item of business this morning is the nomination of national officers for the 2015-2016 administrative year. Representatives making the nominations as well as the candidates are seated on the stage.

Dubbie Buckler, National Secretary, will now read the rules governing nominations and elections.

Dubbie.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

Nomination of candidates for Division National Vice President shall be at the caucuses on Saturday, August 29th, 2015.

Nomination of candidates for the office of National President, National Vice President, National Chaplain and National Historian shall be on Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015.

Nomination of national officers shall be made from the floor. Nominating speeches shall be limited to two minutes for each candidate except the National President candidate. She will be allowed four minutes. There shall be no seconding speeches.

Following nominating speeches for national officers on Wednesday, September 2nd, each of the nominees for National President, National Vice

President, National Chaplain and National Historian shall be introduced to the assembly by the Auxiliary member making her nomination, said introduction to be only by name and department affiliation.

And in response to the introduction, the nominee for office shall be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Election of national officers shall be held on Wednesday, September 2nd. When there is but one candidate for any office, the nominee may be elected by voice. When there is more than one candidate for a national office, the election shall be by paper or electronic ballot as determined by the presiding officer. A majority of votes cast shall elect each officer.

When no candidate receives a majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot will be taken between the candidates receiving the two highest numbers of votes with the candidate receiving the most votes on the second ballot being elected.

Madam National President, this completes the reading of the nomination and election rules.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

Nominations are now in order for the office of National President. The National Secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I'm so sorry. The Department of Illinois has an announced candidate for the office of National President. The Delegation Chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of the nomination.

MS. FLANAGAN: Good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good morning

MS. FLANAGAN: Ann Flanagan, Department of Illinois.

I recognize Pam Ray from the Department of Illinois for the purpose of a nomination.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Illinois for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. RAY: Before I begin, let me just say it is now time for something completely different. Madam President Janet and members of the American Legion Auxiliary and American Legion family, what an honor to be standing here today. I am nominating my sister for the highest office in the American Legion Auxiliary.

I know when dad served in World War II and Korea he had no idea that one day, we would be standing here to honor his service. I am sure when mom looked into those eyes, she wondered what great things you would do but had no idea this day was in your future.

Who would have believed that the young child that whacked her dad in the head with a metal trash can --

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: -- would be the well-mannered lady you see before you today. Then she got lucky and had a baby sister.

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: She would grow up to support you in your dreams and endeavors. Who would have thought that the bossy big sister with the cat-eye glasses from our childhood would be preparing for the adventure of her life?

When we were teenagers, Sharon's clothes were always cooler than mine. I would wait until she would leave for school so I could sneak something out of her closet to wear. Imagine her surprise when the dress I wore for senior pictures was hers.

Today I have my own style, but I know her clothes are still cooler than her baby sister's. Growing up as with all siblings, we could pick on one another, but no one else could pick on our sister.

I remember baby-sitting one evening and being frightened by someone looking in the windows. Sharon had her then boyfriend run across the street to the house to see what was happening and make me feel safe. I appreciated that, but I'm not so sure the boyfriend was real happy about it. Sharon didn't hesitate to protect me then and I know she would do the same again if I needed it.

I tell you these stories to show you how people in relationships grow and change over the years. I have seen Sharon grow from childhood to adulthood. I have seen her grow in her knowledge and capabilities as an executive secretary. I have watched her grow as a mother and a wife and now a gram. Sharon would do anything for her husband, children and grandchildren and would protect them with everything she has.

I have been blessed to see this side of her many times. I have seen her grow and become comfortable in the role of caretaker for our parents and our uncle. I remember a time when anything medical was just not in Sharon's vocabulary. Now she could probably write a paper on medications and illnesses and how to deal with every-day situations that you never expect.

I have watched Sharon grow in her knowledge and love of the American Legion Auxiliary. As a life-long member, Sharon started as a Junior member and has worked her way through the unit, district, department and national offices and committees.

Sharon will tell you that when she became a national appointee, she learned many new things. Even today Sharon will tell you that she is continuing to learn. She knows that no one knows everything and that her officers and chairmen will teach her even as she serves as National President next year.

I, too, have watched and learned over the years. I have watched Sharon as she worked for our veterans and for our family. I've seen her become a stronger woman as she has prepared for this journey. Her family has complete faith in her abilities to lead this organization.

Her department has supported her and will continue to support her as she travels this great nation and the world serving veterans, active military and their family. Sharon lives the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary every day of her life. She lives and teaches the Centennial Plan. I know Sharon will lead all of us toward that million member goal with dignity, grace and kindness.

Madam President Janet, as a delegate to this convention, on behalf of the Department of Illinois and the American Legion family and our family, I proudly nominate Sharon Conatser for the office of National President of the American Legion Auxiliary for the year 2015, 2016.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Sharon Conatser is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of National President?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, nominations for National President are closed.

Nominations are in order for the office of National Vice President. The National Secretary will call departments with announced candidates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The Department of Washington has an announced candidate. The Delegate Chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of making the nomination.

CHAIRMAN DECKETT: Madam President, Lorna Deckett from the proud Department of Washington.

I request the Chair please recognize Past National Chaplain Emma Peoples for the purpose of nomination for the office of National President. Thank you. Oh, I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Washington for the purpose of making a nomination for National Vice President.

MS. PEOPLES: Good morning. I'm Emma Peoples, Past National Chaplain from the Department of Washington.

Madam National President, officers, delegates to the 95th National Convention, it is with great pride that the Department of Washington, the evergreen state, presents to you Mary E. Davis, our endorsed candidate for the position of National Vice President.

Mary's eligibility is through both her mother, Helen Bab Boots, Women's Auxiliary Army Corps and the Women's Army Corps, and her late father, Garnet Boots, Army Air Corps.

Mary has traveled the world with her Army husband Dale. Mary and Dale have two children, Robert who served in the United States Air Force and Elisa and three grandchildren.

The American Legion and Auxiliary have been a long tradition in Mary's family. Mary began her active association with the American Legion Auxiliary as a Department Secretary. Since that time, Mary has worked for 19 years as a veteran service officer for The American Legion Department of Washington.

As a service officer, Mary was an integral part in the establishment of an award-winning office for active-duty personnel to receive pre-separation VA ratings at Fort Lewis, Washington. This endeavor earned her the Reinventing Government Golden Hammer Award from the former Vice President Al Gore and Governor Locke's Governor's Award.

She believes in the work the unit Auxiliary members can play as a part in the lives of veterans. As a training officer for the last nine years, Mary

developed a training program for all Legion family members who have an interest in the work of the service division. Many Auxiliary members are now working as volunteer service officers.

Mary has served as Department President, many Unit, Department and National Chairmanships as well as serving on the Strategic Planning Committee and the Centennial Plan Committee. She is an advisory board member of the Military and Caregiver Network and We Are Veterans for PBS.

On behalf of the Department of Washington, I am so proud to nominate Mary Davis for the office of National Vice President for the year 2015, 2016. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Mary Davis is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Vice President?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, nominations for National Vice President are closed.

Nominations are now in order for the office of National Chaplain. The National Secretary will call the department with announced candidates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The Department of Idaho has an announced candidate. The Delegation Chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of making the nomination.

CHAIRMAN GIMPEL: Madam Chairman, Toni Gimpel, Department of Idaho.

I request that you recognize our NEC for the purpose of nomination for National Chaplain.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Idaho for the purpose of making a nomination.

VOICE: Madam President, delegation and guests, it is with great pleasure the Department of Idaho proudly nominates Bird Derrick as a candidate for National Chaplain.

Bird earned a bachelor's degree in 1970 and a master's in education in 1999. She retired in 2010 after 21 years of public high school -- as a public high school educator where she also served students with disabilities.

Since Ron's ordination as pastor in 1970, Bird has partnered with him to serve the Lord through their church affiliation's Legion family and community at large.

As a woman of faith, Bird has a heart to see people encouraged and made whole through prayer and individual ministry. She models excellence and professionalism and will bring these qualities to the position of The American Legion National Chaplain.

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Bird Derrick.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Bird Derrick is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Chaplain?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, nominations for National Chaplain are closed.

Nominations are now in order for the office of National Historian. The National Secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The Department of New Jersey has an announced candidate. The Delegate Chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of making the nomination.

CHAIRMAN JANDIK: Good morning. Julianne Jandik, Delegation Chairman.

I would ask that the Chairman please recognize our delegate for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair recognizes the delegate from New Jersey for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you and good morning. Laurel Mathison, Department of New Jersey.

Madam President, delegates assembled, the state of New Jersey proudly nominates Debra Noble for the office of National Historian.

Debbie as we know her is eligible for membership through her father, George Buddy Young, his service in World War II and as a Navy veteran.

Debbie has a great history with the American Legion Auxiliary. She was a delegate to Girls State and served as an honorary Junior Department President back in her youth. She has served as Unit and County President many times.

In 2005, she was elected to the high office of Department President serving in every other elected office of the department before that including Department Historian.

Debbie was awarded a life membership from her Unit Number 19 of Bayonne for her work and dedication to the American Legion Auxiliary. Her history with the department includes serving on numerous committees such as Finance, Girls State, VA&R, Children & Youth just to name a few.

She has served as alternate and National Executive Committeewoman and has had national appointments on the National Security, Poppy's, Community Service Committees along with the Girls State Girls Nation Committee and is also currently serving as a member of the National Strategic Planning Committee.

Debbie's civic history with her community includes serving on the Rent Control Board for over 20 years. She is a charter member and next chief of the Bayonne Fire Canteen which was awarded the Showcase Award for their work after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

On a personal note, Debbie has been married for 25 years to Jim Noble, a Past National Vice Commander East of the SAL. She is the assistant controller at Continental Management and graduated summa cum laude and a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Debbie is a very loyal friend and a hardworking member of the American Legion Auxiliary and will strive to keep the history of our great

organization. Debbie is always looking for ways to help better our organization at every level.

She is currently instrumental in preserving our history and our future with spearheading efforts to start a foundation for our department.

Madam President, it is a pleasure to nominate my friend, Debra Noble for the office of National Historian so that she will record and preserve the history for our great organization so that future generations can appreciate our organization and the work that we do. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Debra Noble is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Historian?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The Department of Louisiana has an announced candidate. The Delegate Chairman should ask the Chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of making the nomination.

CHAIRMAN FOX: I'm Joanne Fox from the Department of Louisiana.

Please recognize our delegate for the department for nomination of Historian.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair recognizes the delegate from Louisiana for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. BATISTE: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

MS. BATISTE: Madam President, delegates and guests, Monique Batiste, the alternate National Executive Committeewoman for the Department of Louisiana.

It is an honor for me to place into nomination Louisiana's endorsed candidate, Mrs. Cindy K. Newton for the prestigious office of National Historian for the 2015, 2016 administrative year.

Cindy is a Navy veteran and has served her country during the Vietnam era from 1973 to 1974. Cindy comes from a family of veterans. Her husband, her father, grandfather, daughter and son have all served our country.

Cindy is a life member of Unit 47 in Ponchatoula, Louisiana and has served over 50 years in the American Legion Auxiliary. Cindy is a member of The American Legion and has been a member for 30 years. She is a member of the Eight and 40, the DAV and a volunteer of the VA clinic.

She is a very dedicated, hardworking member that has served on many committees on the unit, district, department and national levels. She has earned numerous awards in the Auxiliary and her community.

She belongs to the St. Joseph's Church, AARP President, the Triad/SALT, American Red Cross, Operation We Care, United Way, Relay for Life, Special Olympics, MDA Telethon and PTO President.

The Department of Louisiana is asking for your support for our candidate, Ms. Cindy K. Newton for the office of National Historian. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Cindy Newton is nominated.

Are there any further nominations for the office of National Historian?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hearing none, nominations for National Historian are closed.

With these nominations and nominations made during the division caucuses on Saturday, August 29th, 2015, nominations for the 2015-2016 national officers are completed.

The Convention rules provide that the nominees for the offices of National President, National Vice President, National Chaplain and National Historian shall be introduced to the assembly.

The Auxiliary member who made the nomination will introduce the candidate by name and department affiliation only. Each nominee will be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Will the representative from Illinois please introduce the candidate for National President?

MS. RAY: It is my honor to introduce Illinois' candidate for National President, my sister, Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: First of all, I think I want to thank Pam for that nomination. As you could tell, I had no idea what was coming either, so -- but it was fun. Thank you so much.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't thank my family and the Department of Illinois for their continued support. And when I say the Department of Illinois, I mean The American Legion family. They are there for me and they still will be there for me, I know, when I go home. Thank you, Illinois.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: I look forward to your vote of confidence when you vote for the '15-16 National President in a few minutes. I look forward to keeping my promise to the ALA, to our ALA as we continue to move our organization forward each year.

As you've heard Janet and I say in several break-outs this week, one year does not end and another one begin. We need to make it a smooth transition for everyone and not hurt our organization by moving forward.

I will continue with the passion that I have had for many years for our American Legion Auxiliary, our veterans, their families and our communities. I hope that I can count on your support when we vote for National President and I look forward to serving with each and every one of you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Will the representative from Washington present the candidate for National Vice President.

MS. PEOPLES: I present to you the candidate for National Vice President, Mary E. Davis.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIS: It is with great joy and excitement that I stand before the members of this Convention. I'm so thankful for my parents, my husband, our son because of their choice to serve their country has allowed me to belong to this great organization.

I wish to thank those members across the nation with whom I've had the pleasure to meet and work throughout the years. It is you who have helped me hone my skills.

I wish to thank my unit, my department and the Western Division members for their encouragement and support.

I pledge to continue to encourage members and work for the growth and betterment of our organization in its quest to support military, veterans and their families and make local communities better.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Will the representative from Idaho present the candidate for National Chaplain.

VOICE: I am pleased to present Bird Derrick for National Chaplain.

(Applause.)

MS. DERRICK: Thank you, Joanne, President Janet and other Legion sisters and brothers who are here.

Past National Chaplain Ron Derrick and I have been very married for almost 48 years. I married him for two reasons. One, I was so in love with that cute boy and, two, because he promised me that if I would marry him, I would never be bored a day in my life. And he's a man of his word.

Our kids, Timothy, Andrew and Dana Sue have given us grand kids, Talon, Tanyon, Jenna, Jayla, Trevon, Natalie, Juda, Roman and Trajen. Their names are important because many of them are the future of this Legion family. We must help our young ones learn to become people who keep their promises and honor their commitments.

When I was still working, I told people you can't scare me. I teach high school.

(Laughter.)

MS. DERRICK: But other than saying I do to commit my life to one man and giving birth, this is probably the most scary and exciting thing I've ever done. But I believe in the sovereignty of God and his personal relevance in today's world. The hope of our future as a nation and as The American Legion family rests in him.

All of the promises in him are yes and amen. It's about faithfulness. My pledge is to grow in my close walk with the Lord, the ultimate promise keeper, so I can share that faith and faithfulness with you as we serve together.

I am prepared now to receive your votes of trust and confidence as your National Chaplain. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Will the representative from New Jersey present the candidate for National Historian?

MS. MATHISON: It is my honor to introduce to you Debra Noble from the Department of New Jersey for the office of National Historian.

(Applause.)

MS. NOBLE: Thank you.

Madam President and fellow Auxiliary members, I am honored to accept the nomination as your National Historian. I want to thank my Department of New Jersey for their continued support and encouragement and thank my friend, Laurel for her mentorship and leadership over all of the years I have known her.

How many of you like to read? Have you ever picked up a book, started to read it and couldn't put it down? That's because a well-written book can transport you. It can take you to places in the past, take you to places in the future or what's going on today. It makes you part of the story, but how does that book start?

It starts with individual letters that form into words, become sentences, paragraphs, chapters and part of the whole story. Our American Legion Auxiliary history starts that same way. It begins with one member working our mission to the units, counties, districts, departments and the national level. But it is the power and the role of that first letter that the book is built upon.

And as it is written, the letters come together to form the story that encourages us, inspires us and makes us part of that story. We are each that first letter. I would be honored to serve as the author of our book to write the history of how each letter came together in the story of us, the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Will the representative from Louisiana present the candidate for National Chaplain -- National Historian. Excuse me.

MS. BATISTE: The Department of Louisiana proudly presents Ms. Cindy K. Newton for the office of National Historian.

(Applause.)

MS. NEWTON: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my family and my state for your support. I am so proud to be an American Legion Auxiliary member and to be a lady veteran too.

Those ladies that the Auxiliary recognized yesterday brought tears to my eyes. You see, when we chose to serve our country, we were not drafted. We stepped up to the plate to serve our country.

When I took my oath of office in New Orleans, I pledged just like our friends at their game let me win. If I cannot win, let me be brave in my attempt. Please think of me when you vote for the position of National Historian. I will continue my work for our veterans throughout our country.

When I was in the service, we always had nicknames. My maiden name was Kraft. Well, I was Kraft Cheese. My husband was Fig Newton.

(Laughter.)

MS. NEWTON: So when you vote, think of Fig Newton. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: This concludes the nomination for the 2015, 2016 national officers. We will proceed with the election of national officers.

You have nominated Sharon Conatser of Illinois for the office of National President. In accordance with the rules you have adopted, if there is but one candidate for an office, the nominee will be elected by voice.

All in favor of electing Sharon Conatser as National President for 2015, 2016 administrative year, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair declares Sharon Conatser of Illinois duly elected as National President for 2015-2016 administrative year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Now would be a good time to wave those flags.

Mary Davis of Washington is the only nominee for the office of National Vice President. All in favor of Mary Davis for the office of National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Mary Davis has been duly elected as National Vice President for the 2015-2016 year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. That looks so nice all those flags waving for you, Mary.

On Saturday at the division caucuses, each division nominated a candidate for Division National Vice President and the current Division National Vice Presidents have certified to the Chair the following nominees:

Lynda Lancaster of West Virginia has been nominated for the office of Central Division National Vice President.

All those in favor of Lynda Lancaster as Central Division National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Lynda Lancaster has been duly elected as Central Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Linda, are you standing? I -- can you stand?

VOICE: She's back here.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, there she is. Okay. Good. All right.

Helen Skelton of Delaware has been nominated for the office of Eastern Division National Vice President.

All those in favor of Helen Skelton for Eastern Division National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You have elected Helen Skelton as Eastern Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Judy Twete of North Dakota has been nominated for the office of Northwestern Division National Vice President.

All those in favor Judy Twete for Northwestern Division National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You have elected Judy Twete as the Northwestern Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Flora Jean Craig of North Carolina has been nominated for the office of Southern Division National Vice President.

All those in favor of Flora Jean Craig as the Southern Division National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Flora Jean Craig has been elected the Southern Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Linda Workman of California has been nominated for the office of Western Division National Vice President.

All those in favor of Linda Workman as the Western Division National Vice President, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Linda Workman has been elected the Western Division National Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Bird Derrick of Idaho has been nominated for the office of National Chaplain.

All those in favor of Bird Derrick as the National Chaplain, please say aye.

VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Opposed, no.

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Bird Derrick has been elected the National Chaplain.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: For the election of National Historian, we will be voting with our electronic keypads. The nominees are Debra Noble from the Department of New Jersey and Cindy Newton from Louisiana.

Everybody please stand, the delegates. If you would like to vote for Debra Noble, please press one. If you would like to vote for Cindy Newton, please press number two. Please vote now.

The Tally Committee is looking at the results. Should I tell them? Well, just wait a minute because the Tally Committee that I appointed will still have to be, you know, checking the results and looking at the numbers, so it will be just a minute and we will announce the winners -- the winner.

Oh, Sharon has already -- well, they're having fun up here. We need the music again. I call on our election judge, Amy Hankins from the Department of Arizona --

VOICE: Yay.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- to read the Election and Tally Committee report.

Amy.

MS. HANKINS: For the election of National Historian 2015, 2016, the number of votes cast were 767. Debra Noble, 430, Cindy Newton 337.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair declares Debra Noble our new National Historian.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I'd like all of you, please, to recognize and give a big hand to our Election Committee. These ladies had to get up early every morning to get you all your voting tabs and take care of everything. So please give them a round of applause.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Come up a little further and wave. We have Amy Hankins from Arizona. They're not in order here. Virginia Nelsen, Doreen Gallagher. We can't ever see Doreen. Doreen has got to get up front because no one could ever see Doreen. Janet Ramero, Irma Schwabe --

VOICES: Woo.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- Lisa Lifford --

VOICES: Woo.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- Sandy -- Sandy Deacon and Suzanne Napp.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, girls, for everything.

VOICE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, when I appointed them, I first thought I was, you know, being nice and then I heard they had to be up and in the hall every morning by like seven o'clock. And I was like uh-oh.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: But they did a great job.

Okay. So one last -- so now, ladies and gentlemen, I again want to present to you your 2015, 2016 American Legion Auxiliary national officers.

Will the officers please stand, new officers. Want to come out here?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yes, they may -- you are dismissed, ladies. It's like Girls State. Ladies, you are dismissed.

All right. Before we move to our first reports of the day, I'd like to just take a couple of minutes to recognize some very special departments and give out some awards.

Now, when I was reading through all the submissions for the Awards of Excellence, the President's Award for Excellence and reports, it was just a shame that we couldn't recognize more departments and share their stories and their accomplishments with you.

So this morning, I'd like to give out three awards to units and departments for the good work that they have done this year.

The first special recognition award goes to Dunedin Memorial Unit 275 in Dunedin, Florida, Unit President Meri-Lynn Felice.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Not only did this unit exceed its membership goal by I think like 22 members, maybe more by now, but they have a really special education program. And working out of college with a large number of nursing students, this was a special program, special to my heart.

They kind of went and worked with the University of South Florida, right, and supported their new program that they have in teaching nursing students how to deal with young men and women that are coming back with traumatic brain injuries and PTSD.

And they also help to support with them a program where they will recognize the knowledge and the work they did as corpsmen and medics so that they could get their nursing degrees faster.

And in all, how much money have you raised this year?

PRESIDENT FELICE: Over \$10,000.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Right. I have -- I added it up to like 13,000. And they told me that they plan to have a fund raiser every month this coming year to continue to support that nursing program.

Congratulations.

PRESIDENT FELICE: Thank you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And they're receiving a plaque that says American Legion Auxiliary National President's Award for Excellence, special recognition to Dunedin Memorial Unit 275, Dunedin, Florida, Unit President Meri-Lynn Felice.

PRESIDENT FELICE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT FELICE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The second special recognition award goes to -- I'm going to pronounce this right -- Fredonwarell Unit 17, Groveton, New Hampshire, Unit President Sally Frizzell.

VOICE: Way to go.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I was really kind of amazed by this unit's National President's Award for Excellence submission. So we asked you to report on three programs. I got a narrative and a pretty long detailed narrative on every single program that we do as the American Legion Auxiliary. And I was just blown away with the work not only to put this application together but reading what they did in this unit.

So I wanted to recognize with the -- with them -- recognize them with a special award for taking the time not only to write the report but for doing all they do in their communities and for our veterans and children. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And, again, we have a very special little award for you.

You know, reporting is important, everybody, so get those reports in.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. And the third award goes to Veterans Memorial Unit 63, Clintonville, Wisconsin, Unit President Nancy Fields.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So this unit is receiving a special recognition award again for something very simple and yet what so many units and departments fail to do. And I'm talking about reporting. They told me that they never sent in any reports before. This was their first year. And what did they apply for? The President's Award for Excellence and did a marvelous job at it.

So thank you, thank you for all your efforts. So this is for Unit President Nancy Fields.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It is really a shame that we can't find a way to share with everyone some of the reports that, you know, that we all get as National Chairmen and as National President so we could, I mean, learn from each other and see the good work that's being done there.

And talking about good work, our next report is from the ALA Foundation. For the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation board of directors, it has been a very busy year of kicking off new fund raising efforts as well as continuing to enhance and support some of their established programs.

Here to report is Foundation President and Past National President Linda Boone.

PRESIDENT BOONE: Our mission to assist veterans, military and their families has never been more critical than it is today. With your support now and into the future, we can continue to provide the comfort and care to

our U.S. servicemembers who are so highly deserving of everything we can possibly do for them.

The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation board is completing its eighth year and the board of directors has some exciting accomplishments and plans that we have experienced this year.

The purpose of having a Foundation for the American Legion Auxiliary is to raise funds that will support and enhance the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary and because you have supported this Foundation in the last two years, the Foundation has awarded over \$50,000 in grants.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: These grants have made a difference in the lives of our veterans, military and their families.

The Veteran Projects fund grants have a simple process to apply for and six units and departments took advantage. Department of Kansas, \$450 for a laptop to support a music therapy program at the Colmery-O'Neil VAMC.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Riverdale Unit 28, Department of Delaware, \$5,760 for computers and furniture at Home of the Brave serving homeless veterans.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: As you saw in that wonderful video this morning, the Department of South Carolina, \$1,841 to provide computer stations for the veterans' reintegration house.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Billy Peterson Unit Number 165, Department of Connecticut, \$2,700 in gift cards for National President Janet to distribute during her visits with the military.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Department of Kansas, \$2,050 for therapeutic fitness trail stations at the Leavenworth VAMC.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: And earlier this month, the Department of Georgia, \$5,820 for computer desks for the Augusta VAMC Blind Rehabilitation Center.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Three departments used the Foundation to obtain sub-grants requiring a 501(c)(3) grantee. They were Little Rhody Girls State, Department of Rhode Island for \$3,000.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Montana Girls State, Department of Montana, \$250.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: And \$500 to the Zachariah Davis Wheat Unit 624, Department of Missouri.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: The American Legion Auxiliary Foundation was also able to award a Veterans Creative Arts Festival grant to the Department of New York for the Syracuse VAMC for \$850.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: But surprisingly this was the only grant application for local Veteran Creative Arts Festival grants. Could your department be missing an opportunity to VAMC programs?

The Mission Endowment Fund at the Foundation is invested and the earnings from those diversified investments are used to provide a grant to the American Legion Auxiliary annually. For FY 2015 which ends in September, we are expecting to provide \$7,400.

Each year, this grant amount has grown since you, the donors have been so generous. This graph displays your generosity and how the net assets of the Foundation have grown since its birth eight years ago.

This growth has been accomplished through you, our donors. Whether through direct mail responses, parade of checks, bequests or direct donations, we appreciate your support.

To ensure our mission of service endures, I encourage all of us to think about leaving a percentage of our assets to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation in our will, insurance policy or retirement plan after taking care of our families. Visit the Foundation website to learn about this simple process.

This year, the Foundation is part of a new tradition in generosity. You have heard of Black Friday and Cyber Monday and here comes Giving Tuesday. On Tuesday, December 1st, charities, families, businesses, community centers and students around the world will come together for one common purpose, to celebrate generosity and to give.

Beginning now you can give your financial support to ensure our worldwide mission to serve veterans, military and their families endures. And as an extra bonus, our direct mail partner Innovairre will match the first \$10,000 in donations.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Now, don't forget that you can use a donation to the Foundation to pay tribute to a special event for someone or to memorialize a passing of a loved one. And now online donations are accepted and recurring donations such as monthly gifts are also available.

Did you know you could shop on Amazon Smile and your purchase will automatically result in a .5 percent donation to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation? Just log on through amazonsmile.com and choose the Foundation as your charter to support and start shopping. Nothing could be easier.

And don't forget to stop by the Foundation's Giving Tuesday photo table and join the Foundation board, Auxiliary leadership and staff in the worldwide movement by showing what inspires you to make a gift for Giving Tuesday. We have a thank you gift waiting for you.

Because of your continued support and generosity, the Foundation would like to announce awards detailed on our first plan of action. To the

NEC from the two departments contributing the largest donations per capita to the Foundation goes to Josephine Keanu from the Department of Hawaii.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: And Joyce Endres from the Department of Wisconsin.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: To the Divisional Vice President from the division contributing the most funds to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation goes to Susan Diaz, National Western Division Vice President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT BOONE: Thanks to all of you for being an integral part of our team, a team that has grown stronger over the years as we work to ensure that our mission endures.

Madam President, that concludes our platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are there any resolutions?

PRESIDENT BOONE: No.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Linda. The Foundation is doing such great work and I thank you for all the time and effort that you've put into it.

PRESIDENT BOONE: Thank you, Janet, so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Now, I'm very excited about a special gift that we will get to present today to a very deserving veteran. I'd like to ask National Secretary Dubbie Buckler to come up and tell us all about it. Here she comes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: This is really good. So I'm answering a question and then I just smacked the National President. In the spirit of goodwill, both were not intentional.

We have a wonderful sponsorship relationship with the Mattress Firm and I want to give you a little background about that. Back in 2011, Mattress Firm contacted the American Legion Auxiliary and they had been looking for an organization to work with because they wanted to give mattresses away to deserving veterans.

We all know that we have veterans, we have young servicemembers returning with very special needs and for a host of reasons, getting a good night sleep is very important to many of them. So the Mattress Firm said we'd like to do a great big splash over Veterans Day and give mattresses out. And we thought that was great. And they said in 44 markets. That was great.

And that was a lot of work to identify 44 deserving veterans, get their commitment, get their story, arrange for the distributions of the mattresses and arrange for the press coverage of that. Well, it was a wonderful success and we were all exhausted afterwards.

So in talking with them a couple of years later, we said, you know, that was really very great. It was such a big undertaking, what about changing it a little bit? How about every year at our National Convention developing a

service project for our local Convention Committee? And so Maryland, we're in Maryland, make some noise.

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And then last year, North Carolina, make some noise.

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So we launched this last year in North Carolina. It has carried forward this year in Maryland. The Host Committee along with their VA&R Committees have worked to identify a deserving veteran in the state. They've identified one here in Maryland and the Mattress Firm, the local company, the local outlet here in Maryland will be providing a mattress. And we're going to -- to that veteran and we're going to do this each year as long as Mattress Firm is willing at each National Convention.

So we just think this is a wonderful way to incorporate a service project with the Host Committee, continue serving our mission, have something that is a great donation that we're making to something that -- to someone that represents who we are, what we do and why we matter.

So, Madam President and Convention delegates, that is the background about how we have this great working relationship with the Mattress firm. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, Dubbie has played an integral role in the American Legion Auxiliary's relationship with Mattress Firm and I wanted to say thank you for that.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh, you're so kind.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Our special veteran recipient, LaMont Nowlin is a Navy veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Due to injuries incurred is now 100 percent disabled with PTSD and traumatic brain injury. He now cares for his young girls and was working on a master's degree until having to put that on hold.

LaMont reports that on his current mattress, he cannot sleep without great pain and his tossing and turning also prevents his wife from sleeping. I think we all know about that.

So we greatly, greatly appreciate LaMont's military service and sacrifices and the sacrifices of his family. Joining me on stage with our veteran LaMont is Past National President Linda Newsome. Linda and her Department of Maryland played a large role in helping us with this project.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: LaMont, please accept this gracious gift from Mattress Firm and our gratitude for your service. And we hope you'll always remember and like know now what it's like to get a good night sleep. Thank you. Congratulations.

MR. NOWLIN: Appreciate it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Would you like to say a few words?

(Applause.)

MR. NOWLIN: Good morning. First of all, I want to thank everyone for being out here, it's very early, and The American for doing the support of veterans. And my wife will be happy. She can sleep better. She didn't do this. I did this carrying paint. But if I didn't have a new bed, I might have had this one broke.

But, anyway, I was a drill and reservist in Baltimore. I've been out here seven years since I first started in the Navy Reserves. So I got here early because I'm Navy and we get here early. And --

VOICE: Yay, Navy.

MR. NOWLIN: Navy, no Navy out there?

VOICES: Yeah.

MR. NOWLIN: Okay. My head too shiny? Can you see me? All right. But I've learned to have a sense of humor, you know, and not every veteran is the same or looks like the same. And when people mention my disabilities, this is what I am today, tomorrow and forever. So remember any veteran you see, we all don't look the same. We have different disabilities and we just want to give thanks also to those who care about us. It's not always negative.

So with that said, enjoy your day, get some coffee, get a little more energy and take care. Appreciate it. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. We are now going to begin with our committee reports for this morning. As the National Education Committee Chairman, Marie Goede continued to learn more about our youth and their quest to better the world. Reading scholarship applications made Marie believe that our future is in good hands with the youth of today.

Please welcome to the stage National Education Committee Chairman Marie Goede.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Auxiliary units across the country rang in the new school year by providing school items to the students. Nine hundred and seventy-one units participated in this program.

Unit 50 in Texas has an Apple tree county-wide project. Apple stands -- yes, cheer yourself. Apple stands for assisting parents, provide learning and educational supplies and have joined hands with churches and other civic organizations across their five school districts. The Apple Project donated \$15,250 toward this program.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Veterans in the classroom continue to grow each year. This year, 647 programs were presented.

Unit 179 in Minnesota has partnered with a K-3 school and during their weekly Monday morning program, a veteran leads the Pledge of Allegiance and talks briefly about their service experience.

In the Department of Rhode Island, a 90-year-old World War II female veteran continues to participate in sharing her stories with children.

She is a real delight to the children as she shares her time as a pioneer woman in the Army.

Giving is what our members do best whether it's time or money. Four hundred and forty-one units helped with assistance to the needy students with clothing, meals, transportation, sporting activity expenses, field trips, Special Olympics and the list goes on and on and on.

In Michigan, a unit worked with the Salvation Army to help homeless children.

Loudonville Unit -- Loudon Unit 257 in Loudonville, Ohio is --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: -- is this year's recipient of most outstanding American Education Week Program.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Deb Sutterlin, Education Chairman proposed to celebrate American Education Week by getting a proclamation from the mayor and providing treats and recognition to the Loudonville, Perryville School employees which includes three schools.

Deb talked with Mayor Stu Zody regarding a proclamation being issued by him. He was eager to be included in this project with a written suggestion of items to be included in the proclamation. Suggestions were written up and given to the village office.

The plan was made to get the proclamation published in the local newspaper, have students make posters to put in stores and business windows, give apples, give a friendship bag and give a cookie with a thank you to each employee including the bus drivers.

After calling each school and the bus garage, there are about 180 employees, so 180 apples, friendship bags and cookie thank yous were made and delivered.

The mayor issued the proclamation at the November 17th council meeting. Deb got the call that it was ready on November 19th. However, the local newspaper would not publish it because it appeared after American Education Week.

But Deb was persistent. She wanted that publicized. So she made copies and distributed them. Each school, superintendent's office and the bus garage received a copy of the proclamation to post. Copies were also posted in various businesses in town. This was done because if no one saw the proclamation, what good would it do.

Also, on November 21, an e-mail was sent to the local radio station to read and publicize the proclamation. This proclamation was delivered with a bag of apples on November 21st to all of the schools. There was a note explaining why they were receiving the apples and thanking them.

On November 26, the friendship bags were delivered. The final delivery of a thank you and cookie was delivered on December 5th. Also, these thank you notes were sent to all the school board members.

Rather than give the treats and expressions of appreciation to the school employees all in one week and then there would be nothing, they opted to give them a treat every week for three weeks. That was a hit and everyone

really liked it. And they knew that this was in celebration of American Education Week.

Once again, congratulations to Loudon Unit 257 in Loudonville, Ohio. Would the Department of Ohio please stand to be recognized?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Several.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Uh-oh. I was trying to think of something good to say back to her, but it didn't come out.

Thank you so much, Marie. You've been a wonderful Education Chairman.

CHAIRMAN GOEDE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: As National Community Service Chairman, Coral May Grout observed an awaking throughout our departments as a result of the plan of action. Members in their ALA tee shirts, pins, hats or other items joined with other organizations to improve our communities. The hundreds of photographs told the stories across our land.

Please welcome Coral May Grout, Community Service National Chairman.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: When was the last time you heard bells ringing? At a wedding? At a ceremony honoring the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, somewhere else? The peeling of bells is often associated with good news.

So if you happen to have a bell handy, please ring it as I ring mine to recognize our 2015 Unit Community Service Award winners.

(Ringing of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: And they are -- I think it's already up there -
- Central Division, Swisher Unit 671, Department of Iowa.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Eastern Division, George Washington Unit
Number 1, District of Columbia.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Northwestern Division, Pound-Uhre Unit
210, Department of South Dakota.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Southern Division --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: They're already clapping. John Gella
Memorial Unit 219, the Department of Florida.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: And the Western Division, Elmore Unit Number 26, the Department of Idaho.

(Applause.)

(Ringing of the bell.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: That's for all of them. Congratulations to these award winners for their outstanding contributions.

Let's ring those bells again for all 52 departments who gave our committee 100 percent department reporting.

(Ringing of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Thank you very much.

I'd like to share a few exciting Community Service projects from our many reports. Jill Grover, Department of Pennsylvania Chairman, created a statewide Community Service project called the Sock Hop. Donated socks were distributed to homeless shelters, deploying military, nursing homes, VA hospitals and foot clinics and other community programs.

The goal was to gather 2,015 pairs of socks and it was surpassed by more than 500 percent. More than \$4,000 in donations was used to purchase socks for men and women regular and diabetic.

To obtain the biggest bang for the buck, the Department Chairman made sure that all socks were purchased through wholesalers. More than 5,000 pairs of socks were collected at a sock collection at a Department Conference.

This was truly a community effort with socks supplied by Boy Scouts, churches, local organizations in addition to American Legion Auxiliary members. The department also did a massive publicity effort to encourage donations.

Another community success story comes from Unit 16, Lewiston, Montana. Member Kristy Agner wrote a grant proposal to develop a local park. The unit was awarded \$12,000 for its proposed project. Post, Auxiliary and some local residents built Auxiliary Park with a family picnic area for all to enjoy. A community dedication ceremony was held during the annual cherry festival.

In Florida, Unit 286 started the family and friends bike drive and build. They raised more than two -- ring your bells.

(Ringing of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: They raised more than \$2,000 to purchase bikes and trikes. They also volunteered more than 100 hours to help build 280 bikes for Christmas presents to underprivileged children in the Pinecastle Orlando area.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Also in Florida, Titusville Unit 1 planned and held a family fun day with horseback riding, face painting, games, free fingerprinting by the Sheriff's Department and much more.

Lonnie Warwick from the 1970 Minnesota Vikings Super Bowl champions was even there to sign autographs. They raised \$1,721 toward a service dog for a veteran with PTSD.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Twenty members donated 3,500 hours to this project. These activities along with hundreds of other reported activities within our communities really helped to explain who we are, what we do and why it matters. Across our departments, many reports also indicated how their projects recruited new members into our organization.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks. Thank you very much for this outstanding appointment.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN GROUT: There are none.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. And, Coral, thank you for that great report. You got us all ringing our bells and woke us all up. That was great. Thank you and thank you for what you've done this year. I know it's been a lot of work.

CHAIRMAN GROUT: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

Chaplains provide spiritual and emotional guidance often in times when many of us feel lost. They are compassionate listeners who always bring dignity and love to every situation.

Please welcome our very own National Chaplain Karen Boehler.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Madam National President, your chosen theme of faith, family, freedom couldn't have given your Chaplains a more direct path of service this year. So thank you for that.

In conjunction with The American Legion and the Sons of The American Legion, we resolved this year to pursue what we called Operation Back to God. Do the words for God and country ring a bell?

(Ring of the bell.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Since our -- oh, yep, they do. Since our organization's inception, the preamble has started with God and country as our priorities. At the National Chaplains Conference held in September 2014, consensus was strong that without unabashedly turning back to God neither our country nor this organization will prosper.

By the way, Chaplain is a correct spelling for our calling. Too many times this year, we have seen it spelled Chaplin like Charlie, you know. We chaplains do have a sense of humor, I want you to know that, except when it comes to misspelling our title. So that's your lesson for the day.

Madam President, I also want to thank you personally for witnessing to your own faith in God. You've inspired many of us this year. So thank you for that.

I also wanted to give a special thanks to Stephanie Holloway at National. She's been a wonderful resource and support for our chaplains this year. She's just been extremely helpful. So I'm asking God's blessing both on you and on Stephanie, Madam President.

Department Chaplains faithfully and diligently serve as spiritual advisors, confidants and comforters to their members in countless private

interactions. They publicly witness God's goodness in presentations not only at meetings and at patriotic celebrations.

They perform memorial services at members' funerals, comfort Gold Star families, let veterans in hospitals and homes know how much we value their service in assuring our freedoms. They make home visitations, send thousands and thousands of grace cards, encourage members to pray for our active military and veterans, participate in our National Chaplains Facebook site as well as establishing Facebook sites for their own departments.

Chaplains also regularly have contributed to their departments' websites and newsletters and Facebook sites this year.

Many members ring for the Chaplain when they need some special service and that service might take the form of intercessional prayer, advice, information for memorial services and the like. It's apparent that members believe in God as our only hope for freedom in this world and the next as they've heavily promoted prayer this year as a vital way of connecting with God.

There were some particular items of note from year-end reports that I wanted to share with you this morning.

Chaplain Lois Stachelrodt, Department of Florida --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- reported that members sent well over 1,700 cards this year. As reported by many Department Chaplains, the amount of deaths this department faced was just overwhelming. In Florida alone, 453 of our Auxiliary sisters died.

Judy Morris, Chaplain of the Department of Indiana --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- organized an Auxiliary church choir during fall conference greatly enhancing their traditional worship service. She, too, reported a significant amount of deaths, 497 in that department alone.

Chaplain Patty Martinez from Kentucky --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- implemented a frog which stood for fully rely on God derby encouraging unit chaplains with a friendly competition to focus on emphasizing God within our organization.

Betty Gentile, Department Chaplain in Maryland --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- reported that \$27,000 in memorials on behalf of deceased members went to the American Legion Auxiliary and other worthy charities.

Special thanks to Chaplain Katie Polemenako, Chaplain in Massachusetts.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: She shared a beautiful memorial service with me that she'd written and then has since allowed me to share it with other chaplains for their use.

At a flea market, Unit Chaplain Jennifer Armeho from Albuquerque found a coin that honored Hiroshi Miyamura, an Army POW who earned the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War. So Jennifer not only found that coin, but she gave it to her father who was also a Korean veteran to return to its rightful owner.

I want to thank you. New Mexico's Chaplain Liz Foster shared that beautiful touching act of service with me.

(Applause.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: New York's Chaplain Barbara Wong utilized online funeral home guest books to leave condolence messages for bereaved families when she found that a postal address was unavailable.

Again in New York, the bell tolled for 415 Senior members. In the state of New York, nearly \$23,000 worth of donations was spent for spiritual activities alone.

(Applause.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Witnessing her faith by teaching Bible school, Sunday school and being an active -- active member of her church allowed Chaplain Gwenda Schroeder-Zulch, Ohio to demonstrate her love for God and country far beyond the reaches of our Auxiliary family.

Following a heart attack, South Dakota's Chaplain Teresa Huntimer healed she believes thanks to the prayers and actions of her Auxiliary sisters. She was so grateful to be well enough to meet with National President Janet Jefford during her visitation to the Department of South Dakota.

Wisconsin Department Chaplain Joanie Dickerson received a phone call --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- received a phone call from a veteran who thought she was the Department Chaplain for The American Legion. He had just separated from his wife and was in desperate need of comfort and a listening ear. She didn't refer him to the Legion Chaplain. Two hours later on the phone, Joanie reported to me that he had greatly touched her life.

I give thanks to my dear Lord for the opportunity to serve as Wisconsin's Department Chaplain this year and I rejoiced in the occasions when I can provide comfort to my Auxiliary sisters or any of my Legion family.

That previous comment rings true for so many chaplains who cherish their opportunities to celebrate faith, family and freedom this year.

I've been so honored to serve as the National Chaplain for the American Legion Auxiliary and I'm so thankful for all the blessings we've all received through God's grace. And as we've grown fond of saying this year, God is good all the time.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Karen.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I want to thank Karen for the e-mails that she sent me all year with some really inspiring words that kept reminding me about what's really important in our lives. Thank you, Karen.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: You're welcome.

(Applause.)

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Do I have any recommendations?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Do you have any resolutions or recommendations?

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: I have neither, but I do have a special presentation --

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- if you'll wait here just a moment.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Here it is now. I am so honored to present to you, National President Janet -- no -- National President Janet Jefford, the National President's prayer book from chaplains. And this book includes not just prayers from me again, but some lovely photographs and some well wishes, some prayers, some inspiration from scripture all from members --

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Great.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: -- of your National American Legion Auxiliary.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I'll have lots of time to read them next year.

CHAPLAIN BOEHLER: Yes, you will. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We can't know where we're going until we know where we've been. Please welcome our very own National Historian Lorraine "Rani" Gray whose favorite quote is history will be kind to me for I intend to write it.

Rani.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We should have gotten you a little stool.

HISTORIAN GRAY: You can see me, right?

VOICES: Yes.

HISTORIAN GRAY: Madam National President, good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good morning.

HISTORIAN GRAY: Bells rang and they sounded the alarm as the Department Historian collected, compiled and shared the many great stories of how their members celebrated faith, family and freedom throughout the year.

Forty-eight Senior department history year-end reports were received. The first seven pages of the history book were updated and sample pages were added to the National Historian's plan of action site.

The Junior Activity members answered the bell loud and clear. Nebraska's Junior honorary President Taylor Gerdes' theme was tailor made for veterans. The Juniors' project was to provide for veterans residing in the Victory Apartments.

St. Joseph's was an old hospital that was renovated by funds provided by the federal government to provide living space for 80 homeless veterans in Omaha.

The Juniors provided blankets, sheets, towels, coffee pots, kitchen equipment, dishes, bathroom mats and crocheted throws.

Wisconsin holds a Junior boot camp where they have to earn their boot camp shirts, dog tags and their MREs for their lunch. And obstacle course, a special project for veterans and fun activities were enjoyed especially the camouflage face painting.

The exciting day was filled with lots of activities, learning and fun with 39 Juniors participating ranging from ages three to 17. The Juniors talked about how being mean stinks and watched some music videos that dealt with how it feels to be bullied and how important it is not to be that person who is mean to others who may be a little different. All had a super camp.

Bells rang and the alarm was sounded as the Senior Auxiliary members worked their programs. Stacey King from the Department of Virginia recently shared what they were doing in their department.

The Auxiliary sisters in Virginia, the Gems, have been collecting coats, clothes, scarves and hats to make sure their homeless veterans were wrapped in love this winter. She launched the wrapped in love coat drive at their fall school of instruction on October 25th and collected 62 sets and even a few extra sweaters and socks to supplement their donation to the VA medical centers in Virginia.

They continued to collect donations through January. What a wonderful project. The big red bows symbolized the love they have for our veterans in need. Each coat, scarf, hat and glove was infused with caring thoughts, warm wishes and hope so that the person who received a set would know that they are loved and their well-being is important to the Auxiliary.

In August, Ruidoso Unit 79 of the Department of New Mexico honored 90-year-old Ida Kohler, a World War II veteran and a 50-year member of the Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

HISTORIAN GRAY: When Ida was 20 years old, she joined the Marines and served in World War II. She has always been proud of her service and a proud supporter of those who serve. She spent six weeks in the Marine boot camp instead of the usual ten because it was wartime. She said the men only got five weeks. It was tough, but nothing she couldn't handle. But attitude makes the difference she stated.

Mayor Tom Battin declared February Ida Kohler month in the village of Ruidoso. Ida is still active in the unit and is on the recruitment bandwagon encouraging young and old to become members.

A bell was sounded during the pre-convention meeting on Saturday when the Historian awards were presented. I am honored to announce the National Toomey Plaque goes to the Department of Mississippi --

(Applause.)

HISTORIAN GRAY: -- Historian Jacqueline Baughman for the most outstanding department Senior history. Would the Department of Mississippi please stand?

(Applause.)

HISTORIAN GRAY: I am proud to say that our members have met the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military and their families both at home and abroad. Everything we did yesterday is history, but only if we record it.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

So I ask you do you have any resolutions?

HISTORIAN GRAY: No, ma'am, I do not.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

I want to thank Rani doing a great job. And I never got to serve as Historian, you know, for anything, but I always thought it was probably one of the hardest jobs in our organization but probably one of the most rewarding to write down the history of our great American Legion Auxiliary.

So I thank you and to everybody who served as Chaplain. Thank you for what you're doing.

HISTORIAN GRAY: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: As National Leadership Chairman, Kathy Dungan believes developing knowledgeable and capable leaders is vital to the American Legion Auxiliary. After reading the Department Chairmen reports, Kathy was inspired by the passion and dedication of our leaders' willingness to share their knowledge and work together and encourage others to become leaders. With this continued dedication, the success of our organization is assured for future generations.

Please welcome Leadership Committee National Chairman Kathy Dungan.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Team work is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results, Andrew Carnegie.

In that spirit, Madam National President, members across this country rang their bells for faith, family and freedom while promoting the Leadership Program. Focusing on developing future leaders at all levels of this great organization, Department Chairmen set their sights on providing informative training sessions and access to the necessary tools.

It was a very successful year with 100 percent reporting from the departments.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Many departments also reported an increase in unit reporting. Departments and units are developing knowledgeable, trustworthy leaders. Leadership training sessions, many workshops and schools of instruction are being held on all levels.

Many departments developed their own guide books and manuals for developing leaders. Mentoring was promoted and displaying goodwill and a positive attitude was asked of members.

I would like to recognize a few department bell ringers this year for their awesome work in the Leadership Program. I will begin with announcing the winner of the most outstanding Leadership Program Award.

This award goes to the Department of Maine, Jeri Brooks Greenwell, Department Chairman.

(Applause.)

(Ringing of the bell.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: I had to do that.

The Department of Maine rang their bells all year long for leadership. Some of their activities and events include holding a membership -- member development workshop in each of their districts. They held a workshop for department officers. Leadership articles were included in their monthly newsletter, the Pine Tree News. Weekly e-mail blasts entitled the ALA Chatter provided an opportunity to share information. They created a Junior development training course for presentation at their annual Junior Convention.

Chairman Jeri said, quote, "By each of us sharing resources such as wisdom, information, experience and insight, we will facilitate the development of all members and ensure the continued legacy of our organization today and long into the future."

Congratulations to the Department of Maine, the winner of the most outstanding Leadership Program Award.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Another bell ringer this year is the Department of Ohio.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Pamela Bates is Department Chairman. Chairman Pamela developed a department online leadership course. They held a fall school of instruction including discussions on good will. Articles were shared in their department newsletter, the Buckeye Messenger.

Chairman Pamela encouraged members to take the leadership course by using a raffle drawing for participants as an incentive. Great work, Department of Ohio.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: The Department of Texas rang their bells for faith, family and freedom. Diane King is the Department Chairman. They posted a unit management guide online for members as an incentive. To entice new members to attend training session, gifts were given to members with five years of membership or less. Twenty-five gifts were given.

They held a program fair and they reported a total of 609 members attending the trainings offered in Texas. Congratulations to Texas for the can-do attitude.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: I received many awesome reports from departments who promoted the Leadership Program. Our Leadership Chairmen did an excellent job assisting their units and departments in developing competent leaders. Congratulations to all for a job well done.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: No, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Thank you, Kathy, for a really great job this year.

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: We all know leadership or developing good leaders at all levels.

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: That's right.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Does that sound familiar?

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Uh-huh.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I think so. Congratulations.

CHAIRMAN DUNGAN: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

While attending a department training, Brenda heard a story about a member who was suffering from cancer and had expended all she had. Brenda stepped in and convinced her to apply for a grant from the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

Later, Brenda received a surprise letter from that same member stating she had been given the grant. Brenda's entire team was overcome with emotion. What an amazing experience to be able to see our Auxiliary Emergency Fund in action.

Please welcome our Auxiliary Emergency Fund National Chairman Brenda Collins.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Thank you, Madam President Janet.

The Auxiliary Emergency Fund was established in 1969 because Auxiliary member Helen Colby Small of Burlington, Wisconsin was a visionary. She saw the need for a fund to help our members who had tried every avenue to raise financial aid and she set -- this bequest was set up from her estate to form the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.

This year, we have seven given disaster grants and 90 financial grants given to our members. These grants totaled over \$115,000.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Thank you.

American Legion Auxiliary Hutchinson Unit 96 in Hutchinson, Minnesota -

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: -- held a spaghetti supper every month for ten months to raise funds for the Auxiliary Emergency Fund this year.

Oak Orchard Riverdale Unit 28 in Millsboro, Delaware held a dinner dance featuring a local entertainer who had been highlighted in Las Vegas. This special event draws a packed house. And along with their silent auction, the proceeds from the event were in excess of \$2,000 to be sent to AEF.

Northcut Laker Unit 292 in Dillsboro, Indiana held their --
VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: -- held their annual yard sale to raise funds for AEF. Individuals and companies donated items to be sold. The unit collected \$1,167 to send to the program for their Auxiliary sisters.

Guadalupe G. Ramirez Unit 77 in Logan, New Mexico has been the largest contributor to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund in the Department of New Mexico for 12 years. This year was no exception raising \$847. Each year, they have an AEF wall. The members have their names on the stars on the wall and this has been a great project for them.

Loyal Service Unit 37 in McAllen, Texas, the AEF Chairman Kate McConnell was the recipient of a grant from AEF seven years ago. And she wanted to give back. When asked, businesses and individuals donated items to help with the silent auction. The unit was able to raise \$1,700 to send to AEF.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: In March of this year, we were able to get the AEF Facebook page online. Members will be able to post messages and we can keep our members informed of natural disasters when they occur and how they affect our members.

A few years ago, I made AEF my charity. We may not have the need for AEF at this time, but we should donate and we should donate often to make certain that the fund is still there should we find ourselves in need.

On behalf of the AEF Committee, I would like to thank each one of you who donated to AEF this year. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Each year, one unit over all others is honored for the largest per capita donation to the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. This year, that unit is Unit 4 from Indianapolis, Indiana --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: -- Liz Refhus, AEF Chairman. Their donation was \$2,542. Would Unit 4 and all of the Department of Indiana please stand?

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Good job, ladies, and I thank you.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Brenda. And do you have any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: No, ma'am, we do not.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Auxiliary Emergency Fund, that was an awesome chairmanship and I bet you --

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: It was.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- enjoyed it.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: And I loved it. I loved it.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Members helping members --

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- what's better? Congratulations.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you for doing a good job.

While serving as National Security Chairman this year, Susan has focused increased attention on e-mentoring military spouses, the sending of boxes to the troops and the return of identified remains of POWs, MIAs arriving home to the United States for burial. The vast array of activity under this committee has proven to be an inspirational and fulfilling journey in so many ways.

Please welcome to the stage our National Security Chairman Sue Britton.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: I've been waiting to do that all week.
Good morning, everyone.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Madam National President and members of this delegation, has your faith, your family or your freedom been tested this past year? President Janet's theme rings true for what our troops go through as they are tested at every turn. Let's take a look at what you have done to make life better for our military, their families and our communities.

Following an urgent appeal from the Department of Kansas, we were requested to send boxes to the troops in Iraq who were deployed and in desperate need of supplies. Thanks to you, Sergeant Horsley who received our packages estimates that nearly 1,200 packages arrived. Great job, ladies.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: In Texas, Units 297 and 626 were asked by the family readiness officer to supply secret support to returning special operations servicemembers and 50 packages were delivered on the day of their arrival. Texas members also collected holiday items for the Dallas, Fort Worth USO.

Maine Unit 39 sent 31 packages including to ten of their own active-duty Legion post members.

And the Department of Minnesota prepared airport bags.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Unit 139 in Florida even made sure the canine military dogs received their own packages of felt blankets.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: That was a great project.

Our Juniors have been busy supplying packages to our troops as well. Unit 14 from Nevada received recognition from the National Guard for their participation and Unit 41 of Maine Juniors sent 80 stuffed holiday stockings to the deployed.

Fund raising efforts for programs such as Operation Comfort Warriors included Unit 626 in Texas raising \$7,000.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: And the Department of Rhode Island raised almost \$1,700 as Legionnaires dressed as women and competed in evening gowns and swim suits.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: The event was titled Guys Will Be Dolls. Unfortunately, no pictures were available.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Recognition events for law enforcement --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- and firefighters were held such as Unit 108 in Michigan presenting certificates of appreciation to those who strive to keep our communities safe.

Emergency preparedness and cert training was a major part of this year's activities. Unit 197 in California --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- sponsored a fair providing life-saving tips including a suggested bug-out bag containing important documents, extra medications, extra glasses, et cetera, in case of a natural disaster.

New York Unit 789 and the high school Army JROTC hosted a citizen preparedness training program.

And the Department of Georgia partnered with Department of Homeland Security and held a disaster preparedness awareness day.

Members are taking an increased interest in e-mentoring military spouses and both myself and National Chairman Lisa Williamson personally met our e-mentor proteges this year.

The new family ready -- military readiness action guide was rolled out so our members have a trustworthy online resource for accurate information on where we can direct servicemembers for needed services.

Blue and gold star banners continue as a show of appreciation and recognition to families whose members are currently serving and those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. The Department of Washington alone presented 552 blue star banners.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Unit Number 1 members of the District of Columbia asked for support by shining our porch lights towards the moon. Talking to the moon was how a boy named Darren and his father showed their love for each other during the father's first deployment.

On the first anniversary of his father being killed in action, gold star son Darren wanted his father to know that he still loved him and asked all of us to join him in shining our porch lights towards the moon.

The Manufacturer Coupon Program netted a total of over \$20 million of coupons sent to the troops. Good job.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: The Department of Florida promoted the program this year and alone clipped and sent nearly \$11.3 million in coupons.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: I saw a 60 Minutes broadcast last fall with Anderson Cooper entitled A Forgotten Corner of Hell. The piece focused on the updated identification process of remains of POW, MIA servicemembers. And it was the quest of a volunteer to bring them home.

I wanted to focus some extra attention this year on the welcoming home of POWs and MIA remains and many departments assisted in this project.

The Department of Massachusetts laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery Private First Class Arthur Richardson missing for 63 years.

And the Department of New York welcomed home Private First Class Bernard Gavrin. Both were awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: While in Washington, D.C. this past February, it was an honor for me to pay my respects at Arlington to both of these POWs and MIAs.

It is my pleasure to announce the winners of the Military Support Award to a unit in each division with the most outstanding overall program serving and support military families.

In the Central Division, Ehrig-McTurk Unit 127 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- Department of Iowa, Jeannie Position (phonetic), Chairman.

In the Eastern Division, Fredonwarell Unit 17 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- Department of New Hampshire, Juanita Merrill, Chairman.

In the Northwestern Division, Faibault Unit 43 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- Department of Minnesota, Louise Flom (phonetic), Chairman.

And in the Southern Division, Edward H. White, the II Unit 521, Department of Texas, Heather Reed, Chairman.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: And, lastly, in the Western Division, McCulloch-Wagner Unit 109 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: -- Department of Arizona, Linda Lee Smith, Chairman. Congratulations to each of the winners.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Notable statistics are shown in your Convention book under this committee report, but your nearly 440,000 volunteer hours reported amount to volunteer time valued at almost \$10 million.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Your efforts show the generosity and dedication this organization is famous for. Your show of faith, commitment to family and continued support for freedom ring true. And you are to be commended.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: No, Madam President, there are not.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Thank you, Sue, so much for what you've done all year for National Security, especially your efforts in helping us to honor our fallen heroes when they're brought home. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BRITTON: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It is the grass-roots members and their commitment to supporting veterans and their families through legislative advocacy that really inspired Trish Ward. As exemplified by Vernel Warren, Legislative Chairman for American Legion Auxiliary Unit 583 in Eatonton, Georgia, who made it her mission to prioritize communication to members and build relationship all while keeping the local press informed. It was a win for her unit, a win for the community and most importantly a win for veterans in Georgia.

Please welcome to the stage Legislative Committee Chairman Trish Ward.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN WARD: Madam National President, whether hand in hand with The American Legion to assure the World War Adjusted Compensation Act for veterans became law in 1924 or standing steadfastly by their side in 2015 to encourage VA reform and end veteran homelessness, the American Legion Auxiliary's legislative mission remains as relevant today as it was over 90 years ago.

Steeped in tradition and charged with the noble and necessary purpose, the American Legion Auxiliary's members make a positive difference every day through legislative reform and grass-roots activism. Encouraging dialogue, inspiring advocacy and armed with knowledge and information, members rang their legislative bells across the national landscape in support of veterans and their families.

The team rallied around providing best case practices for social media and e-mail etiquette while reinforcing the foundational concept that only those priorities identified by The American Legion fall within the sphere of the Legislative Program.

We encouraged opening lines of communication and urged members to build positive relationships with those whose vote can and does develop and define policy. Members got creative and innovative in their methods and due to hard work and hands-on activism, positive change took hold.

Personal passion became policy for the Department of Indiana who advocated --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN WARD: -- for the Jacob Sexton Military Suicide Prevention Act sponsored by Senator Joseph Donnelly and signed into law by President Obama in December 2014.

The Hoosier state's American Legion Auxiliary members submitted over 100 letters for passage of this legislation which is aimed at protecting the mental health and ultimately the lives of our men and women who serve our country in the Armed Forces.

Setting the stage for excellence in National President Janet Jefford's home state of Connecticut, well done and bravo to Unit Number 28 in New Hartford who supported dual member Jackie Evonshon (phonetic) as she spoke in favor of Senate Bill 904 that would require the State Department of Veterans Affairs to establish an outreach program for women veterans.

Thanks to great grass-roots advocacy in Connecticut, this important bill was signed by Governor Dannel Malloy in May 2015.

Getting down to business, in Delaware Oak Orchard Riverdale Unit Number 28 in Millsboro sponsored a candidate's forum to inform the public about legislative issues. Attended by 24 candidates at the local, county and state levels with more than 135 in attendance, this unit received great media attention while performing a necessary service for their community.

And the work didn't stop there. A big shout out to California's Unit Number 716 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN WARD: -- in Los Alamitos who got it done by lending their voices and pens to critical legislation. Due in great part to their efforts, a much needed veteran cemetery in Orange County has moved from vision to reality.

Thanks to many units across the country who called, e-mailed and contacted their elected officials, we must take a moment to recognize our organization's collective efforts in supporting the passage of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act.

This act signed by President Obama in February 2015 directs the secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide for mental health care and suicide prevention for our nation's military, a huge win for our veterans and active-duty military.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Whether it was a small success like keeping Wyoming state representative Marty Halverson active with Unit Number 46 in Alpine, Wyoming, population just 836, jumping on the bus with Cambria Unit Number 401 in Wisconsin for a trip to the state capitol or advocating one on one with Representative Pedro Peirluisi's office in Washington for a much

needed Fisher House in the Department of Puerto Rico, American Legion Auxiliary members remain steadfast in their commitment to effect positive change on behalf of those we serve.

We answer the call with pride, passion and purpose and respond with promise and resolve to assure the priorities of The American Legion are first and foremost on the agenda of every elected official. Using the concepts of faith, family and freedom as their springboards to success, members ignited their passion and found their voice to help move critical legislation off the desk and into policy that defines a better future for our nation's heroes.

The Legislative Committee would like to recognize the Department Legislative Chairmen for the Legislative Council Participation Award for reporting the highest percentage of participation ratio to elected officials in the Legislative Council in each membership category.

I would invite all departments to stand for recognition upon announcement of their award.

In membership category A, the Department of Minnesota, Sandra Fredrickson, Chairman, with 70 percent participation.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Membership category B, the show me state of Missouri, Janice Musgrove, Chairman, with 80 percent participation.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Great job, Vermont and Chairman Sharon Corey, in membership category C with 100 percent participation.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Well done, Alabama and Chairman Martha Arnold, in membership category D with 22 percent participation.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: And our first of two ties in membership category E, the Departments of Alaska, Lori Fruwirth, Chairman, and Delaware, Jeanette Havel, Chairman, with a hundred percent participation.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: And, finally, in category F, our second tie, congratulations to the Departments of Nevada, Jerrilyn Karwacki, Chairman, and Rhode Island, Karen Panzarilla, Chairman, with 50 percent participation.

Congratulations, award recipients.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN WARD: Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, Trish.

Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN WARD: There are not.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Very good. And thank you, Trish, for everything you've done this year and for all the bright and innovative ideas that you've brought to this organization. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN WARD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Membership Program works to ensure the future growth and prosperity of this organization by developing strategies to retain, recruit and engage members.

Here with her report is Membership Committee National Chairman Anita Biggs.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You get music.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: That's pretty good. It's not that loud. Who wants to be a millionaire?

VOICES: Yay.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Everybody does, right?

VOICES: Right.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Well, who wants to be one in a million?

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: We all do. To quote our National President Janet, it can be done. One million members is goal one of the Centennial Strategic Plan and by attaining a million member -- members by 2020, we will ensure the future of this great organization to assist veterans in every neighborhood.

The National Committee began our year with bells on by singing our theme song One In A Million. No, I'm not going to sing. We adopted our mascot M&M's candy which stands for million and member. We began a National Facebook page which currently has over 700 members.

Members rang the bell with M&M sightings all over the country while on the way to earning monthly milestones. Monthly milestones help departments stay on track of their annual goal on a monthly basis. Most departments embrace this additional tool to help keep ringing their bells on time.

The department monthly milestone winners met the target by the end of their convention month and earned \$250. Congratulations to the Departments of Alaska.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Arizona.

VOICES: Yay.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: District of Columbia.

VOICES: YAY.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Florida.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Kansas.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: And South Carolina.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: The divisions battle for top spot all year with the Northwestern Division in the lead while early on and they still lead all divisions in renew, rejoins. Great accomplishment.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: The number one Eastern Division --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: -- took the overall lead and they never looked back. The Southern Division team spirit Facebook page --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: -- let happiness ring with virtual happy hours and membership Wednesdays encouraging members to post pictures and positive images while working membership.

The Central Division freedom bells also started a Facebook page dedicated to membership information.

We had 43 silver brigade winners this year. These women recruited more new members and we congratulate them all.

Kendall Madsen, Chairman of Newport Harbor Unit 291 --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: -- in the Department of California recruited 221 new members.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: This is Kendall's third time earning the silver brigade having recruited at least 300 members twice before.

Good job, Kendall.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Crane Ottman Unit 207, Chairman from the Department of Wisconsin recruited and renewed members by going door to door, being visible in the community and involving Juniors.

Chairman Sandy Werner recruits new members any and everywhere. She sometimes bargains to dance the Polka to get a renewal. She also keeps a diary of personal stories from her visits that she shares at unit meetings. She earned the silver brigade by signing up 48 new members.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: The District Chairman was so impressed, she created a new award, the Super Sandy Traveling Trophy, it's a gnome, to honor this special woman.

Ole Semling Unit 135, Department of North Dakota, invited female veterans to join and hit the jackpot with Vickie McPherson, a post Legionnaire and a retired Army specialist fourth class. Vickie is currently employed as a lab technician and she was so appreciative of the invitation to join that she quickly involved herself by volunteering for their unit's blood drive.

Vickie's father served under General George Patton during World War II. Her son served in Iraq. Also her sister, Judy, and brother-in-law are currently Army officers. What a great military family and a wealth of potential members.

(Ringing of the bell.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Yes. Carl Ross Unit 16, Chairman Mary Adommi (phonetic) from the Department of California recruited 20 women veterans for the honor female veterans incentive, the most of any unit in the country.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: This was accomplished by talking to friends and coworkers who have relatives that are active-duty and military veterans. Mary says we talk to them about our events. How can we -- how can they help veterans and how can we help the families of military who are currently serving? We walk the walk, talk the talk and sign them up.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Speaking of honor female veterans --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: -- what an amazing gift we receive by inviting women veterans to join the Auxiliary. We do not deny that we can increase our membership with this incentive of waiving their first year's dues. However, more importantly, we get to honor these women up close and personal.

Last year, we had 44 new female veterans in the entire country. This year as of July 31st, 2015, you --

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: -- have recruited 728 female veterans. Ring the bell.

(Ring of the bells.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: My own Department of California leads the way with 160 new female veterans.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Congratulations to all the departments who honored female veterans with the gift of membership. We must do everything in our power to keep these members engaged and renewed. It's really important.

There are four departments that have increased their membership from last year. We want to congratulate these departments. And you can stand. Department of Arizona.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Department of Colorado.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Department of Connecticut.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: And the District of Columbia.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: And now the 100 percent National Achievement Award goes to the top department. As of July 31st, 2015, Washington, D.C. has earned 101.49 percent.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: They are currently at 104.48 percent and is our only gold department.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: That's okay. Congratulations to the Department of Washington, D.C., President Barbara Rich who's also the Membership Chairman. Outstanding job. Congratulations, ladies.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: I don't think Barbara could make it. She had to work, I believe, so we want to give her the best.

Thank you all for working so hard to increase and retain members. There are so many wonderful unit success stories and we wish we could tell them all. And although no department earned the 95 percent renew, rejoin achievement, there are seven with over 90 percent.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Delaware is leading with 91 percent and closely followed by Nebraska.

VOICES: Woo.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Great job. Vermont, you're there. I see you. You go, Vermont.

But remember, ladies, do everything you can to keep pushing for 2015 renewals. Those are women and we need them back. So connect, communicate, sound the alarm and ring the bell for veterans. Always celebrate faith, family and freedom and we will make our way to one million members.

Thank you, Madam President, for this amazing appointment and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: No, there are not. But I do have some special guests.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You got them here with you?

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: Yes, I do.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Bring them on.

CHAIRMAN BIGGS: We would like to please welcome with a big round of applause and a standing ovation our attending silver brigade winners.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. I don't know -- I don't know if we can get a picture. Can we get a picture of the bracelets that everybody has on or that we have on? Okay. These are from Brighton Company and on the back, they say I love America. So that's what all our silver brigade winners received.

All right. Now, I know Kendall is behind me. So, Kendall Madsen, would you please come forward? This is our like top recruiter here.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Kendall, you never fail to impress us. Every year, you recruit hundreds of members and we are all amazed with your efforts and awesome recruiting skills. Please accept this citation for all you do to further the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

MS. MADSEN: Awesome. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And she has this awesome boat sitting out there in Long Beach that she's going to take me for a ride on some day, right?

MS. MADSEN: Yes.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay.

MS. MADSEN: It's Newport.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, Newport. Sorry. Newport. You know, I'm not really good on geography in California.

Thank you, everyone, and continue the good work because Sharon wants to see you all back here next year on the stage.

Thank you, Anita.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, Anita has had so much enthusiasm, but her whole committee -- their whole committee was awesome this year and I want to again publicly thank every member of that committee, every member of your Department Membership Committee, your Unit Membership Committee. It's so important that we keep this great organization alive and well for the next 100 years.

Thank you, everybody.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Now, it is my pleasure to ask our National Secretary and Executive Director Dobbie Buckler to come forward for her report. She's only got like about 25 pages.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you, Madam President.

Well, before I actually get into my report, I've been asked -- I was approached this morning by a few people to discuss something that was in -- does this look familiar to anybody? It says what's the big deal at National Convention this year.

Okay. This is your first test. How many does that message even ring a bell because it was sent out to everybody? All right. This is lame. How many read it?

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Honesty is the best policy. How many did not read it all? Okay. Well, one of the reasons that we do this is try to highlight some of the things that are going to be happening at Convention.

So one of the things that I've been asked to address is or to speak on is it will be part of next year's budget, so it will be a matter of business -- a business item for the National Executive Committee meeting and that is for the National Junior Meeting.

For the last several years, there have been many, many discussions and many forums about our declining participation in the National Junior Meeting and the issue of holding one very expensive meeting that's become more poorly attended over the years right before Labor Day.

And we've learned from talking with some of the girls and the parents over the years that the timing is barrier to participation because in most school districts, the girls have already gone back to school and the cost to attend a meeting at National Convention is not inexpensive.

Even with a registration fee of over a hundred dollars, it still costs over a thousand dollars per girl for the National Junior Meeting. And right now the average attendance, and this is with some great Junior Activities Chairmen and our great Junior Activities coordinator, Kristin Hinshaw at

Headquarters, beating the bushes each year to try to get girls to attend, the average attendance is about 60.

So -- so here's another interesting factor. In 2010, how many remember 2010, it wasn't too long ago, Juniors comprised 11 percent of our membership, 92,000. Today Juniors are 52,000. That's a 40,000 drop in just five years. That's 40 percent drop in the Junior membership.

We celebrated -- we're -- we have celebrated achievements with membership. We've listened to reports. We listened to a report at this Convention. None of us have the answer and there are things we need to try, things that we need to try again, things that we maybe need to look at in a different way.

So it has never been an intention because some people are saying that they've not heard about this, it was never an intention for this to be a surprise that next year there is not a National Junior Meeting planned for National Convention.

Next year, the plan is to have five National Junior Meetings, one in each division in concert with, at the same time as the Mission Trainings. The goal being to allow more girls to participate because the meetings would be centered across the country in five divisions. There would be five of them closer in geographic proximity.

And the hope is that more girls will participate because you don't have the expense. You don't have the timing because it will be on a weekend as opposed to having to be taken out of school.

The big question that I'm getting asked is, well, how will they elect their national officers. So two words, social media. And these are very tech savvy girls. And the reason that there are no details announced is because those are going to be worked out with the girls as my understanding at these division National Junior Meetings.

So it's been talked for -- since I've been here, it's talked about in the National Finance Committee meetings. It was talked about at the Department Leadership National Conference. It is in the 2015-16 Plan of Action which has been on the website for a few months now.

And it supports several of the Centennial Plan strategies to invest in training, remove barriers to developing leaders, opening up opportunities so more can participate, create multiple pathways to serve and invest in opportunities to attract, engage and retain members.

So just as we've been talking about our issues with Senior members, we have to take a good hard look at what our situation is with our Junior members. So I'm not up here advocating one way or another. I want you to understand what the discussion has been over the last few years.

And if this is news to you, it was not intended for it to be news to you. It is why I include information like that in this what's the big deal at Convention. So there will be people who you can ask questions of who are, you know, more intricately involved in the details than I.

But the five division meetings -- the divisional meetings will occur at the Mission Trainings and those all conclude by the end of January. So there will be ample time to look at how it worked and make any adjustments. Just

as we talked in our Centennial Plan breakout session, some things work, some things don't. You recalibrate. You move on.

But what has been clear to many people is the declining attendance at one National Junior Meeting is not fostering a way to engage more Juniors in our membership. And the numbers just speak for themselves.

So I was asked to address this and -- and I have. That -- did I do a good job? Okay.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh, no. Janet just --

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I asked -- I did ask Dubbie to address this issue because I wanted everyone also to understand how important it will be to bring your Juniors to those divisional meetings in those -- when you go to Mission Training. So I wanted everybody to know that so they'll bring their juniors with them.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

All right. The American Legion Auxiliary's five-year Centennial Strategic Plan is mission critical and everything that we do at National Headquarters is geared toward achieving the five goals.

We're all in this together to make sure we're around for another generation. We hope for another hundred years. But looking at the numbers, we've got to be around for another generation.

We know that it takes about ten years for a paradigm shift in any organization. And we also know that because the American Legion Auxiliary is a really big organization, it takes about three years for a concept to catch on.

Your departments are sizeable corporations and so is your National Headquarters. And we're all doing what's needed to achieve the five goals in addition to the daily whirlwind of being a big business.

So, again, I'm very proud to report that "60 Minutes" did not show up on our doorstep. Our external audits again earned us the highest marks on our national finances --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- our National Headquarter financial process, our federal grant compliance, our Foundation finances, our benefits and the magazine. Proudly your National Headquarters received stellar findings and no criticism from any regulatory agency or watchdog group.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Your National Headquarters is a big corporation and business to support and improve the membership experience so that our mission can be delivered. That constantly requires big projects to function, stay relevant and to improve.

Big multi-year project achievements this year include the members only section on the national website, alaforveterans.org, which now has over 2,000 resource documents. So there is information out there.

The most popular are the membership and scholarship applications, the ALA department operations guide. And we hope more members are becoming aware of the PR tool kit, branding guide, the new Poppy Program Guide, new ALA Military Family Readiness Action Guide, the updated

VA&R Guide, expanded Foundation resources and the many new branded marketing resources such as a banner signage templates that can be downloaded and customized for local printing.

Our magazine, *Auxiliary*, is one of the most expensive benefits we provide to our members and we were super thrilled this year to have received our first ever Folio awards. Those are the Oscars of the magazine industry. We received an Eddie Award for the Mission Matter -- Mission Matters articles over four issues in the 2014 magazines. And --
(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we received an Ozzie for the February 2014 cover featuring two of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival Gold medalists.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And I want to do a shoutout to our communications team. A little editorial comment. We do this -- if you include me which you -- I really shouldn't be included. If you include me, we have six people who do this and that's compared to 40 some that The American Legion has. So we're a small but mighty team that works on these things which makes us very, very proud of this.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we're planning to increase the magazine count to 68 pages for each edition the coming fiscal year. So each -- each addition -- each magazine will have eight more pages.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I'm also proud to share that I received a call from a retired general who serves on the POW-MIA Council. He commented on the feature we recently did about POW-MIAs. I hope -- I hope you all have read that. And he said it was one of the best written features on this subject he's ever read and asked if we would convert it to a promotional piece that they can use to widen the circle of awareness with the public and students. So we're going to be doing that.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And what is the Auxiliary's most recognized symbol of the sacrifices of our military?

VOICES: The poppy.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Yes, the poppy. And what has been the bane of our existence for about the last six years?

VOICES: The poppy label.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: The poppy label. It's had more attention sometimes than the actual meaning of the poppy. So I with the help of Monique Batiste, she's going to lend a hand to demonstrate something. And we've been talking about this with emblem sales and we now think we have a great solution.

Label on, label off, three little holes punched which you probably can't see. Even with my arthritic hands --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- label on, lays flat, looks good. So even though I don't have the authority to do this, can we have sort of a voice vote? Is this better than glue sticks and gluey labels?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. I think we have a winner. And I want to thank Monique for lending a hand to this demonstration.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Oh, not that we have any eager ones in this crowd, I'm hearing of shouts of when. As soon as possible. How's that?

I do want to do a shout out to Kevin Carothers at Emblem Sales because he is the director of Emblem Sales and we've had many conversations about this. Glue dissipates. I don't care how much you pay for these sticky labels. Even in ideal situations after a period of time, the glue dries up. It just -- it's the way it is.

So he's the one who came up with the idea of, well, how about just threading it through. So it's got three little holes. And even if you miss one of them and only hit two of them, the label still stays on. So it's foolproof, practically foolproof.

Well, anyway, thank you. We're kind of excited about that. So I really don't know the answer to the question about when, but we wanted to make sure that this was something that you all thought was a good thing to do. So we'll go back and get on the drawing board with this and we'll let you know when we have more information about when the new labels will become available.

Now -- oh, and can we thank Monique for literally lending a hand to this?

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Now, our American Legion Auxiliary AmeriCorps VISTA called the Service Corps is now in its sixth year and we have eclipsed the 4 mill -- 4.3 million now mark in grants to the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

So in six years, we've now placed 250 VISTAs across the country at National Headquarters, at about a dozen departments, even in a unit, in a Legion department, plus 41 external consortium organizations.

As the broker of these resources, we've greatly expanded national awareness about the American Legion Auxiliary, who we are, what we do and why we matter. One organization we helped is Americans for the Arts or AFTA. Our ALA call to Service Corps assigned a VISTA to AFTA to help them help us expand art therapy to more veterans.

AFTA was so impressed with our involvement in the Veterans Creative Arts which we've been doing since 2000, and a shoutout to Kris West who was the first National President to bring that project to our attention, and a shout out to Kris West who was our first National President to bring that to our attention --

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- AFTA was so impressed with that that they presented the American Legion Auxiliary its prestigious AFTA Award recognizing our sustaining support of art therapy for veterans.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Janet was thrilled to accept the award on stage in an awesome black tie event in New York City and she looked gorgeous. Can you tell in the picture she looked gorgeous?

Well, you know, Janet was on stage to receive the award. There were a lot of A-listers there. So while she was backstage, there were only two of us there. One of us had to go to Ben Stiller and explain what the American Legion Auxiliary is all about.

Janet, I'm sorry you were backstage.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And you could have taken me with you.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: You were backstage being prepared to present the award on stage. But now you have to admit I did try to find him afterwards so that I could get Janet's picture with him, now didn't I?

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You did.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I did try. He -- he slipped out. But it really was an awesome event. And the point that I'm making is we won this award because of our American Legion Auxiliary Call to Service VISTA project. VISTA members are available to departments and they will be a terrific resource for strategic plan and mission outreach support.

So there's information on the website. I have a few information sheets up here. But if you've thought about it, never really looked into it further, please do because you never know where it's going to lead.

Now, everything in the Centennial Plan requires technology in some way. A big ta-da this year was the launching of alaforveterans.org as a responsive website now available on all your smartphones. Better than an app, you can access everything on your smartphone simply by tapping the ALA icon and going directly to the website. It's all there.

And members like it. Thank you. My one fan. Now nearly 25 percent of our website access comes via smartphone or tablet mobile devices and that's steadily increasing.

We also now have twice the number of members' email addresses as last year. Now, last time I checked, we're closing in on a hundred thousand email addresses. So that's huge. And we have nearly 840 units online and that's a 33 percent increase over last year.

The ALA Management Information System, ALAMIS, serves an ever-growing number of users at the department, district and unit level. So the website and the ALAMIS is pretty much -- ALAMIS is a three-person shop and the website is a one-person shop.

So we think we're being pretty remarkable and making big digital strides with a very small but mighty staff. And I want to do a shout out to them because they do a great job.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Now, we do stay connected. At National Headquarters, we handle over 90 electronic mailboxes, 900 mail

contacts and some 30 email distribution groups. Now, if that doesn't mean much to you, let me put it this way.

Every day at National Headquarters, we average over a thousand incoming emails every day. And in 12 months, Marta and I alone receive about a quarter million emails.

So every year, I make the statement if you email me, I don't intentionally not respond. I try to respond to all of them. I'm only human. With that kind of volume, things can get lost in cyberspace and I'm human. I can overlook one.

So if you feel -- if you have a question and you feel like I didn't get back to you or Marta didn't get back to you, in the spirit of Goal Two and goodwill, please don't assume it's intentional. Please assume it's just high volume and contact us again or place a phone call to us.

We thrive in a digital world and we will be showcasing at Convention that memberships can -- that members can now pay their membership renewal dues online.

VOICES: Yay.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: This is all about empowerment and convenience. And after years of hearing why can't we pay our dues online, ta-da, you now can as of today. In fact, those of you with smartphones could sit there right now and pay your dues in less than a minute.

So here's the scoop. Why renew your dues online? It's convenient, saves time and hassle. I don't know about you. I seldom write checks. It takes me longer to find where I put the checkbook than it does to write the check and deal with it. And then you've got to find an envelope and a stamp.

I do all of my business online. And I know an awful lot of our members do. So no checks to write or get lost in the mail. Yes, we deal with a lot of phone calls and emails about payments that were made that were never received. No postage to pay.

The member enters her own dues payment information into ALAMIS. That -- when she's paying her dues and that saves the Department Membership Clerk and the Department Secretary time, the member's credit card information is secure. Once that payment is tendered, no one else can see it.

How many of you shop on Amazon? Okay. This is the audience participation part. How many of you shop online, on Amazon or online?

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. That's an awful lot of you. So you know that when you make a payment online, you go to that little -- there's a little S up there. You go to a secure site. Your payment is tendered and -- and it's gone.

Same thing with us. So we can't see -- at National Headquarters, we cannot see your credit card. We don't know what your -- how you paid it. We just know that the dues shows up as paid.

The member's dues payment is processed immediately and the member gets an immediate payment acknowledgment plus her temporary membership card. There are no doubts about the payment status.

So what are the benefits to departments? Less time is spent by department staff processing those payments. The more we pay them ourselves, the less time somebody else has to enter all of those. Less time is going to be spent on department bookkeeping reconciliation. Less time spent handling bad checks or waiting for checks to clear. And I know if there's not any audible groans, there are some quiet groans out there because that takes a lot of time.

Once the payment is tendered, the money will be electronically transferred to departments. Departments can view their payment reports, and they -- and those who work on these know that those are called the e-dues reports, at any time on ALA MIS. There's going to be timely cash flow. National Headquarters electronically transfers payments to departments via EFT, electronic funds transfer, within one to four weeks.

And the reason we say one to four weeks, if it's high volume, you're going to get the payments weekly. If they're just trickling in, you know, in the non-busy times, you know, we'll scoop them up until we've got enough to make it worthwhile to send a payment to you.

But in the high volume times, it's going to be at least week -- week -- week -- take three -- at least weekly. And we're not going to charge departments for the electronic transfer of funds to the department.

So how does it work? The member pays her total dues, that's national plus department plus unit, for her current or next membership year. Now, as you -- as the process currently works, the system blocks paying previous years to avoid dues payment mistakes.

A slight catch. Right now it has to be MasterCard or Visa. We're not set up to accept Discover Card or American Express. MasterCard or Visa. As soon as the payment is made, the membership dues show paid and a member would be happy.

The department and unit portions will be timely electronic transfer -- electronically transferred to departments. Reports will be provided to the department showing who has paid the department and unit portion and how much, very similar -- for those who work this, very similar to how the current PUFL distribution works.

Now, speaking of PUFLs and IR1 --

VOICES: Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: -- PUFL members -- so I wanted to test this out so I was the first pain in the neck. I don't see it. Duh. If you're a PUFL member, you're not going to see your online dues payment option because you've already paid. So it eliminates our paying our dues twice.

So I think the screen is going to show here -- here's -- it's easy. So see the screen? See the arrow? When you go to -- so you log in to alaforveterans.org, go to the members only section, member section. See in the middle there, there's a pays -- pay dues option. Click that. It already has your dues information calculated. All you have to do is enter your payment information. Your exact dues amount is already there.

So all you have to do, you come down and you click which -- which card you're using, what type card. You put in your payment information just

like for any other online purchase you make. Then you're immediately going to get an e-mail that says thank you for your payment. So you have instant -- instant acknowledgment that the payment has -- has been transmitted.

And you'll notice that what you see is your transaction number. You don't see your credit card number. I want to continue pointing that out. You see a transaction number, not a credit card number, and you see the amount. Member paid \$45, transaction number was this and her ID number was entered in because she had to enter it in to get into the member section anyway.

You're going to get immediately a temporary membership card that you can print out on the spot if you want. You'll also get your regular membership card later, but you'll -- but if you want for those of you who just can't wait, you can print one out right then.

The member -- so then the questions we get, does -- will the members show up on the paid roster and what if she loses her electronic receipt? Members paying online will show up in the ALA MIS paid dues roster for the unit, department and national.

National Headquarters will also have reports available listing which members have paid. We will have -- National Headquarters will have a secured record of all payment acknowledgments. Remember I just showed you that. It doesn't have your credit card information on it.

So we can forward the member a duplicate copy of her payment acknowledgment if she loses hers. Again, no credit card numbers can be viewed. The unit will still be responsible for giving the member her official membership card.

So when will you be able to start doing this? Right now. Renewal e-notices for the 2016 membership year will be emailed tomorrow to probably some 90,000 members. Notices will be mailed in September and will mention the option of paying online.

The dues payment option is now on the website and with no national announcement, no news going out, right now today over 105 members have stumbled on it and paid their dues already.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: They found the option while they were in the member section and they did it.

And can I announce, Madam President?

I'm proud to report that I got a very excited phone call recently, guess what I just did? Our National President paid her dues online. Took her less than 60 seconds to do it. And -- so we're very proud. Let's give a round of applause to our National President for doing that.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: We are so glad she's paid up.

And we have already because members have stumbled on it and made the payments, National Headquarters has already made distributions to 16 departments. So we're already sending the -- we're good. We're already sending the money back out.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. I can read your minds. When can we join new members online? Some day. It will happen some day. But for those of you who have been listening in to some of the conversations, there are some legal and IRS issues we need to resolve regarding verifying eligibility online.

Yes, we know the Legion now accommodates this and it took an act of Congress. The Legion is helping us with this because it will take another act of Congress literally. So stay tuned.

So you like that?

VOICES: Yes.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. Okay. So I'm making sure that I get back where I was. So still on the subject of dues, in your convention guide and annual report, you have a report from National Treasurer Marta Hedding. And I'm going to take a minute and ask Marta to stand up. I told her she was going to have to do this.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Come up here. Marta has been with National Headquarters 21 years.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And we are a great team and part of a bigger team. Are many of you familiar with Briggs Myer -- how are we --

TREASURER HEDDING: Myers-Briggs.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Myers-Briggs. Always get them in reverse order. Myers-Briggs disc profiles, the kind of things to do. Well, Marta and I are similar in all of those things. There's only one difference. One of us is an extrovert and one of us is an introvert.

TREASURER HEDDING: Who knew?

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Can you guess which one? Anyway, I just want to acknowledge what a wonderful, wonderful job you do with -- for us at National Headquarters because she's -- she's happy to sit there and be quiet.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: But she talks a lot at National Headquarters. I can tell you that.

So on the subject of dues, Marta has a report in the convention guide that in fiscal year '12, dues cover just 53 percent of our member and program services. In fiscal year '13, after the dues increase went into effect, dues still only covered 66 percent of member and program services. And in fiscal year '16, they're projected to be just 58 percent.

And as we just learned today, the amount of our dues is not a factor in membership steadily declining. What we learned is behavior is. So I want to address -- I just want to point that out because at some point in time, that dreaded topic is going to have to come up again. That would be the dues increase topic.

ALA National Headquarters and ALA departments are important service organizations and business centers requiring knowledgeable

management that comes with the continuity of an executive management team.

Another problem that I just want to bring -- shine a little spotlight on again is the continuing problem that negatively impacts department organizational effectiveness and that's the high turnover in department secretaries. It's over 60 percent in the last couple of years.

Department secretaries are a part of your department leadership team. They are your headquarters executive. The frequent office management turnover is costly to the department and it's costly to National Headquarters because we end up by default doing a lot of training. And it's costly overall to our reputation.

The Centennial Plan is all about where we need to be by 2020 to sustain our mission. With the cost of national meetings and events rising some 15 percent per year and more members wanting online, on-demand resources, we just need to start looking at more cost-effective ways to engage and support members.

We must foster an internal culture of goodwill if we are to turn this organization around and be here for future generations. To make a difference, you have to behave differently. You have to do things differently. We have to try new things.

Members will renew only if they find personal fulfillment and belonging or because they are so proud of what they see the organization doing that they want to financially support it. Good will is the key to our success.

And so now with some heartfelt goodwill, I'd like to extend my congratulations to Janet for a successful year of ideas and intense focus on the goals in the Centennial Plan. Every year as I'm working alongside a new National President, it's always a joy to learn and share the things we have in common.

So, Janet, it's been a delight sharing you -- with you the things that we both love. We both love ice cream. We both love watermelon. We both love details and we both love gas. Now, let me explain the last one.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: When she was in Indy for her visit as National Vice President over Veterans Day, we were driving from point A to B to C. We were deep in discussion about all the serious problems of the American Legion Auxiliary, all the things that we need to solve. And as we were waiting at a stoplight, we looked over and we saw a gas station and the gas had dropped to below \$3.00. It was 2.99 and we go uh, look at that. Totally lost our train of thought.

Then when she was at National Headquarters right before Christmas, the Christmas present of all Christmas presents, gas had dropped to below \$2.00 a gallon. So we were out and about. Oh, my gosh, look, it's 1.99.

And then I think on Christmas Eve, I texted her a picture of a -- literally I texted her a picture of me getting gas on Christmas Eve and looking up and the price of gas was something like 1.67 a gallon. I spent so much money on that present to Janet, that text message to her.

Janet, I can also attest that you care about the American Legion Auxiliary's future. We're all in this together and we all have things that bring us together. We're all in this room today because we care deeply about the organization.

Janet and I have discussed many things over the past couple of years. And, of course, we don't always agree, but we have never been disagreeable. We may have different ideas about how to get to the future, but we all agree there won't be one if we don't aim in the same direction.

So I want to thank you, Janet, for caring. I want to thank all of you for caring. And I want to end on this note. Thank you for caring enough to be here. Thank you for showing up in your units and your districts and your departments. Thank you for serving our mission because if you look at the convention guide on pages 10 and 11, and I hope you do look at those two pages, collectively our volunteer impact of our 10 million service hours serving our mission this past year is worth if we were paid \$3.1 billion.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Even with all the things that we're trying to resolve, we're still leaving a \$3.1 billion footprint in service to our veterans and military families. So thank you all for what you do. Janet, thank you. It's been a great year. And this, Madam President, concludes my report except for one thing.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: It's been a great year. Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, I have to say thank you, Dubbie. We've had -- she talked about conversations and talking over things. And we -- we did our pretty good talking over a glass of wine, you know, and just --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And she has corrupted me.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Yeah. But, you know, it's learning to have difference of -- differences of opinions and listening to each other and not taking them personal, you know. Because I have a different opinion than Dubbie, that doesn't make Dubbie any less of a person, you know, in my eyes or in anyone's eyes, that we need to hear from each and every one of us. We need to have our -- be free and feel able to voice our opinion without somebody saying something bad about us or making us feel very small. And -

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And we've done that. And it's that we've had -- we've had a great year. Many nights, I don't know why I was on my iPad like at 12:30 in the morning, but I'd get an e-mail from her like, you know, 12:44. And I'd say this is your boss. Go to bed.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And I ignored her.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And she ignored it. Thank you so much, Dubbie. I don't know if I've ever given you one of my coins, but --

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: -- it's not enough to say thank you. Thank you.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I appreciate it. Thank you, Janet.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: This organization is really lucky to have Dubbie as our National Secretary.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wait a minute. Can I ring the bell for her?

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay.

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I did -- I did that on purpose because she told me she -- where she's sitting when I ring that bell, it really hurts her ears. No, I was being nice. I wasn't being bad.

All right. Now, would Janet Young from the Department of Connecticut please come to the podium and present the National President's scrapbook.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Wow. That's beautiful.

MS. YOUNG: Good morning.

VOICES: Good morning.

MS. YOUNG: National President Janet -- National President Janet, that is really something big. This is something I will always treasure forever. It is an honor and a privilege for being a National Scrapbook person this year. Enjoy and God bless. I have several other ones later.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I bet she does. Thank you, Janet, so much. Oh, it's beautiful.

MS. YOUNG: It started with your --

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So it starts as Vice President and I'm sure -- how many books? Just a few others.

MS. YOUNG: Right now there's seven.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Seven books. You know, Janet wears a tee shirt that says smile -- smile, you're on Janet's camera because -- and, you know, we give her a hard time sometimes on her taking the pictures.

But we have all in Connecticut enjoyed having you do that. And I am so happy and privileged that you took this job this year. Thank you, Janet.

MS. YOUNG: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

MS. YOUNG: You take care.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: All right. Now it gives me great pleasure to introduce the members of the very hardworking Resolutions Committee. First, we have Karen Thompson who is Chairman of the committee followed by Laura Santino who is a member and Rita Barylski, Vice Chairman. Please give them a round of applause.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Karen, are there any resolutions? I've been asking this all day and everybody says no. Are there any resolutions?

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Yes, Madam President, we have two resolutions plus some courtesy resolutions.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. You may proceed, please.

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: First resolution submitted by the Department of Maryland. Subject, advance notice of proposed national appointments.

Whereas, the national organization has made electronic application for national appointments available to any member who chooses to apply and,

Whereas, if the department has no knowledge of the appointment, it may not have time to make arrangements for courtesies normally extended by the department to national appointees and,

Whereas, departments are no longer requested for insight or recommendations concerning applicants that may come from their respective departments and, therefore, the national organization may not have firsthand knowledge of the applicant and,

Whereas, national appointments are considered prestigious and are generally offered to members who have proven records of service to the organization and this record is best known by the leadership in the department to which the applicant belongs,

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the American Legion Auxiliary and National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland August 31st to September 3rd, 2015 that the national organization advise each department of intended national appointments to be made from its membership at least 30 days prior to the offer being made.

This resolution was presented at the Pre-Convention Resolutions Committee and could not be considered because there is a written opinion from the Council General that the resolution if adopted would be illegal.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair rules this resolution out of order. So that the convention body understands the reasoning behind this ruling, the Chair will read the pertinent standing rules and the letter from the Counsel General.

Standing Rule 2 National Convention 583, Committee on Resolutions states: The purpose of the Committee on Resolutions is to receive resolutions and refer them to the proper pre-convention committees and to formulate such National Convention resolutions not within the jurisdiction of the other established pre-convention committees as listed in this section.

This committee shall meet in advance of other pre-convention committee meetings to allow ample time to properly assign the resolutions to other pre-convention American pre-convention meetings, American Legion Auxiliary National Constitution & Bylaws and Standing Rules Committee prior to their convening. Excuse me. There's a little something left out here, but this committee has no authority to take any action on a resolution other than to refer it to the appropriate pre-convention committees unless there is a written opinion from Council General that a resolution is illegal and can cause the organization, its officers, its National Executive Committee members, appointees and other members to become liable.

In such an event, the Committee on Resolutions shall report said action to the National Convention delegates.

And I do have the letter from Council General and it reads: The Department of Maryland wants to impose a 30-day advance notice requirement on the appointment of a member of the department to a national office. This cannot be done.

First, the members are members of a unit in the American Legion Auxiliary. A department is a state organization for administration, but it is the post that oversees its membership. See Article 5, Section 2, last paragraph and Article 6, paragraph 6 of the National Constitution.

It is the right of any member to seek office when she determines to do so. The department or post cannot control or interfere in this without violating the principles of the organization and the National Constitution as well as the rights of members.

In addition, the decision as to who to appoint lies with the appointing authority as confirmed by the National Executive Committee. For a department to attempt to interfere or control the process violates the rights of both and the resolution even if adopted is void ab initio. I guess that means it would not apply.

So, Karen, do you have another resolution?

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Yes, Madam President, we do.

Submitted by the Department of Maryland, the subject is deletion of electronic renewal advice from dues notices.

Whereas, the national organization is encouraging electronic dues payments directly to them and,

Whereas, this is currently the practice in The American Legion with many problems reported and,

Whereas, bypassing unit and department membership chairmen will make it difficult for them to keep an accurate record and,

Whereas, even though reports will be available online, many unit membership chairmen do not have electronic access or expertise and,

Whereas, although the national organization will issue a receipt that serves as a temporary membership card, individual members may not be able to receive key cards and other post privileges until the unit has received her dues payment and,

Whereas, this practice will cause a financial hardship on units as well as the departments since the funds will have to be transmitted from National to department and then to the units which will cause a cash flow problem for them and an additional burden on the Department Treasurer who may have to write numerous checks to reimburse the units,

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the American Legion Auxiliary and National Convention assembled in Baltimore, Maryland August 31st to September 3rd, 2015 that the national organization allow departments electing to do so to opt out of the electronic payment of dues directly to the national organization by eliminating references to electronic payments on dues notices sent to members of those departments.

This resolution was presented at the Pre-Convention Resolutions Committee meeting and could not be considered because there is a written

opinion from the Council General that the resolution if adopted would be illegal.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Chair rules this resolution out of order. The same standing rule applies as previously read and Counsel General's letter concerning this resolution reads:

A department has sent in a proposed resolution providing it could opt out of having members have an option to pay their dues by credit card through the National Headquarters. The Department of Maryland has sent in a resolution to this effect. It cannot. The department cannot opt out.

The American Legion Auxiliary has two classes of membership. Juniors are minors but still have rights. It is my understanding that their parents or other maternal figures usually pays their dues. Seniors are adults. Each Senior member has the same rights as other Senior members. This includes paying for Juniors.

If a department attempts to opt out of an option available to its members, there now would be different rights for members depending on the member's department. This would violate the basic concept of the American Legion Auxiliary as expressed in the National Constitution & Bylaws.

Hence, the department cannot opt out. Such a concept or option even if passed at the National Convention is void ab initio.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Karen, would you like to proceed with the courtesy resolution?

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Yes, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam President.

Whereas, delegates, alternates and guests enjoyed a successful and fun 2015 National Convention,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that by our applause, the Convention body extends its appreciation to the National Convention city of Baltimore, Department of Maryland, National Convention Chairman Patricia and her committee along with the National Secretary and National Headquarters staff.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: Madam National President, whereas, delegates, alternates and guests enjoyed a successful 2015 National Convention,

Now, therefore, be it resolved that by our applause, the Convention body extends its appreciation to the honored guests who by their appearance contributed to the success of this Convention.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN THOMPSON: My resolution, whereas, Janet Jefford has just completed a year of service as the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary and,

Whereas, she has promoted the importance of the American Legion Auxiliary's service to our veterans, military and their families and,

Whereas, having exceeded all her personal expectations with regard to her goal embodying faith, family and freedom and,

Whereas, Janet has represented the American Legion Auxiliary with distinction and pride,

Whereas, the members thank the Department of Connecticut for loaning Janet to the national organization for 2014-15,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Convention body assembled in Baltimore, Maryland give her much thanks and a standing ovation for all she has accomplished.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you so much, Karen, Rita and Laura, and thank all of you. Thank you so much. Please be seated.

NARRATOR: The American Legion Auxiliary proudly presents the National President's Award for Excellence. This exclusive honor is awarded to the best of our best. The award epitomizes the service by recognizing efforts in planning and implementation of our programs. Here to present is your National President, Janet Jefford.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The National President's Award for Excellence gives me the opportunity to highlight five units and one department that are doing amazing things in order to carry out the mission of our organization.

This year, I wanted to show that units of all sizes can win this award. You don't have to have 500 members to make a difference. To me, it's the quality of the volunteer work that matters, not the quantity of membership.

So I decided to pick a winner in every membership size category. Hopefully after seeing this year's winners, units of all sizes will be excited about nominating their unit for the National President's Award for Excellence.

Before we get to today's winners, I would like to recognize all of the units and departments working on the Auxiliary's mission and programs every day. Your hard work day in and day out is what keeps our organization alive and able to carry out its mission. And I applaud you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I thought we'd do something different. So here today to help me bring you the highlights of everything these award winners accomplished this past year are our Divisional National Vice Presidents, Western Division National Vice President Sue Diaz.

No, no, just stay there, Sue.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Central Division National Vice President Laura Mosby.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Northwestern Division National Vice President Lori Skallerud.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Southern Division National Vice President Sue Heil.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And to get things started our Eastern Division National Vice President Sandra Neylon.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Actually was a good time to give them another round of applause.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT NEYLON: Thank you, Madam President.

It gives me great pleasure to announce the first winner of the National President's Award for Excellence. Representing the units with 65 members or less, please put your hands together for Homer Unit 290 in Homer, Illinois, Unit President Lori Rushing.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT NEYLON: What this unit lacks in numbers it definitely makes up for in enthusiasm and creativity. Just in this year, they made business cards displaying the unit name and contact information to distribute to the community, made a Facebook page that keeps the community up to date on volunteer opportunities, were actively involved in the buddy basket and quilts of valor projects, collected over 600 pounds of donated items worth over \$7,000 and collected nearly \$1,500 in cash during their annual veterans' supply drive.

They also started a Trips for Troops Program where they encouraged community members to collect hotel size toiletries when they're on business trips or vacation and then donate them to the unit. Members used these items to make toiletry bags for the homeless veterans shelter.

Unit 62 is definitely small but mighty. I think Vice President Kim Graham said it best when she said whether it's a bottle of shampoo or coffee and doughnuts on their birthday, the smallest gesture can produce the mightiest of results. I couldn't agree more. Congratulations, Homer Unit 290.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Congratulations. And I wanted to show everyone. We wanted to get something that you can use at your unit, not just keeping it. So you bring it out for all your events and put some nice flowers in it.

VOICE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Congratulations on all you do. Thank you. And now Western Division National Vice President Sue Diaz will present the next unit winner.

Sue.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DIAZ: Today I have the privilege of announcing the second unit to receive the National President's Award for Excellence in the category of 66 to 100 members. Let us put our hands together for Liberty Unit 289 in Strasburg, Illinois --

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT DIAZ: -- Department President Cinda Held. This unit has under a hundred members, but as a team, they've learned to follow four simple rules to ensure success.

The first rule is civility. Be inclusive, not exclusive. This group of women invites the entire community to be part of their service projects. They are able to serve more veterans this way and have even picked up a few members along the way.

Unit President Cinda Held explained everyone is welcome to be a part of who we are and what we do and why we matter. Including someone -- excluding someone is like saying the mission has been fulfilled and there's nothing left to be done. And we all know that's not true.

The second rule is brand recognition. At every Unit 289 event, each member must wear an Auxiliary shirt. This creates visibility in the community which leads to brand recognition. Very smart, ladies.

The third rule is to get creative. This past October, the ladies of Liberty Unit 289 created a trick or treat event where they went door to door in the community collecting toiletries for the local VA. This creative idea yielded over 25 boxes of items delivered to the veterans in need.

And their final rule, take advance of the free stuff. These ladies recommend getting familiar with all the free resources supplied by the National Headquarters at the ALA website. One of the most must-haves for this unit is the free new member kit. They give one to all new members and have a couple on hand as a refresher for all current members.

Unit 289, I am definitely taking your four rules back to my unit. Thank you so much for sharing them with us today and congratulations on such a successful year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Congratulations and great job this year.

VOICE: Thank you.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you very much.

VOICE: Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT DIAZ: And now let's welcome our Southern Division National Vice President Sue Heil to the stage.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT HEIL: Okay. So I get the honor of announcing the third National President's Award of Excellence winner from the 101 to 150 member category. Please put your hands together for Downey Weaver Unit 34 in Chinook (phonetic), Rhode Island, Unit President Brenda Peloquin.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT HEIL: Looking for something to do, want to get involved, interested in volunteering? Do you have a pulse? Well, stop by Downey Weaver Unit 34 where there's a spot for everyone.

While other units watched their membership decline, Unit 34 continues to grow in size and is now the second largest unit in Rhode Island, although according to Unit President Brenda Peloquin you still need a GPS to find them if you're an out-of-towner.

So why is this unit growing while others continue to decline? One word, civility. Let me explain. First, every unit meeting is conducted at a roundtable discussion. Every member is invited and has equal voice to the national officers. The unit is a family. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is accepted. Everyone's opinion matters.

Second, everyone is invited to participate in their service events. According to Unit President Brenda Peloquin, everyone is welcome to further our mission. We can find a place for everyone. It's this kind of attitude that allows them to recruit 15 new members this year, give over 3,000 volunteer hours and donate \$13,000 in cash and goods to those in need.

Thank you, ladies, for having faith in this great organization, treating everyone like family and continuing to serve those who fought to protect our freedom.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Congratulations for a job well done and another shout out to little mighty Rhode Island.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT HEIL: And now please welcome Central Division National Vice President Laura Mosby to present the fourth unit award.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT MOSBY: From the 151 to 300 member category, the fourth unit to receive the National President's Award for Excellence is North Strand Unit 186 in Little River, South Carolina --

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT MOSBY: -- Department President and Unit 186 member Anne Parker. At a time when -- when everyone is struggling with membership, this unit managed to recruit many new members. So what's their secret? Well, they have two big ones. The first is brand recognition.

Much like our previous winners, Unit 186 concentrated on increasing brand recognition by ordering badges from emblem sales, wearing ALA shirts at all community events, displaying their honoring their service buttons and ordering new ALA shirts to ensure that new members would immediately feel like part of the family.

And the second is together, we can do better. This year, Unit 186 encouraged other small organizations to join them in their Backpack Buddy Program, a program that sends underprivileged elementary school children home with a backpack filled with supplies.

Asking other organizations to join in the unit's project helped them to increase visibility in their community and help over 900 children in need. This unit understands that working as a team, being inclusive rather than exclusive and building brand recognition in the community is the key to membership growth and success.

Ladies of Unit 186, you truly are a model of service, not self, and I thank you for teaching the lessons of civility.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Congratulations, Anne, for a job well done this year. Thank you for all you do.

PRESIDENT PARKER: Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT MOSBY: And here to present the fifth and final unit award is our Northwestern Division National Vice President Lori Skallerud.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKALLERUD: From the size category of 300 or more members, the winner of the fourth National President's Award for Excellence is John J. Morris Unit 62 in Peoria, Arizona --

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKALLERUD: -- Unit President Amy Hankins Brown. Like all the other units we honored today, Unit 62 accomplished so many amazing things this past year. Operating under their mantra, communication, invite and engage, the members of Unit 62 found a way to keep their current members, pick up a few new ones along the way and get involved with their community.

Let's take a closer look at how Unit 62 used their mantra, communicate, invite and engage to help them grow their membership and work the mission. Communicate. They do this through the use of regular Facebook posts, monthly e-newsletters, a local newspaper, stories, billboards and occasionally they can even do local television ads.

Invite. This unit welcomes everyone in the community to participate in their flag ceremonies they held on all patriotic holidays. They give gift memberships to all local female veterans inviting them to join the unit and invited a World War II veteran to participate in an honor flight compliments of the Unit 62 members.

Engage. By bringing so many mission-related projects into the community, Unit 62 is able to engage members, non-members and the entire local veteran population. Here are just a few of their projects.

Collecting bedding and cleaning supplies for the local homeless veterans shelter, Christmas gift drive and a party of the Prescott VA, volunteering at the veterans crisis center and made over \$30,000 worth of lap robes that were distributed across the United States.

Members of Unit 62, it is my pleasure to honor you and your -- for your achievements with the National President's Award of Excellence. Thank you for all you do. I know I'm going to take your mantra back to my unit and hope others do the same. Congratulations.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Amy, it is my pleasure to present you with this award. I hope you and your unit members keep up the good work. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HANKINS: Thank you.

(Ringing of the bell.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKALLERUD: Now to present our final award, please welcome back our National President Janet Jefford.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. So now for the most that I've been waiting for. It's time to celebrate the department recipient. This department has achieved so much this year. They embrace faith, family and freedom in ways I never imagined possible.

It is my absolute pleasure to announce the 2015 department recipient of the National President's Award for Excellence is the Department of Arizona, Department President Jane Shoemaker.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The Department of Arizona achieved so many great things this year. Let me share just a few with you.

They increased their renewal rates by 10 percent, formed a diverse strategic planning team to begin working on their department's strategic plan, communicated with members and the community via Facebook, Twitter, e-newsletters and local newspaper stories, were instrumental in getting the Tucson VAMC to bring a new Fisher House facility to the state.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And they sponsored two honor flights for World War II veterans just to name a few.

The Department of Arizona, to all of them, to all their members, I am thankful for all your efforts and for being passionate, active and engaged members of the American Legion Auxiliary. You have much to celebrate. Congratulations.

PRESIDENT SHOEMAKER: Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

(Ringing of the bell.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Got to ring the bell.

You know, it's difficult because we're limited by time, so it's very difficult to share all the amazing accomplishments of these unit and department winners. But there's some good news. You'll be able to read the full story on our National President's Award for Excellence winners on our website.

So let me encourage all of you to consider joining these units and the Department of Arizona on the path to excellence by planning now to submit your application for next year's awards. Our National Headquarters team created a system that allows members to apply for this award online.

It takes a matter of seconds to upload your entire report with pictures. So there's really no excuse to not enter. I'm already looking forward to the celebration that we'll have with Sharon in -- where -- Cincinnati next year.

So let's give all of our winners one more big round of applause.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Before we proceed to the last part of today's meeting, is there any other business to come before this Convention?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Is there any business to come before this Convention?

(Whereupon, there was no response.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Very good.

Okay. I guess it's hard to stand up here and believe that my year as your National President is over. It has been tiring, energizing, interesting, fascinating, motivating, amazing and most of all humbling.

Witnessing the great work of you, the hardworking members of the American Legion Auxiliary has truly touched me in ways I can never forget. Leading this great organization has been an honor and a privilege.

So with that in mind, I ask you to join me in watching a video, but first I'm going to ask if the officers will leave the stage or is there something I -- I'm getting these signals here.

Oh, we have to do announcements first. Oh, good, then I can stop crying. Announcements.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. I'll try to make this quickly. That horrible death to die is always right as I'm walking up here. Okay. I've got that part down.

You know, we live in an age of technology and so people have been texting me do you have any Vista sheets, Vista information sheets. So I'm going to put a packet of -- I have a few of them and I'm going to just lay them right up here at the edge of the stage if anybody wants to come and get information on that.

(Laughter.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: How's that for efficient?

Yesterday I announced that lost and found in the Convention Center, you dial 7055. And in illustrating that, I said that the -- that Karen Boehler lost the National Historian pin. I do know she's a National Chaplain. It's the National Chaplain's pin she's lost. So I apologize for that mistake yesterday.

And I also want to just say real quick, and I'm going to say this on behalf of Janet because Janet and I have talked two or three times during the course of this convention how nice it is that Karen has incorporated the prayers that were submitted for her prayer book to honor you, so I would just like to -- I think that was really a nice thing to do, Karen.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And since Janet and I often think the same things at the same time, I knew she was getting ready to say that.

Following this session, would the 2015 National President's Award for Excellence winners, the Membership Award recipients please come backstage for a few photos to be taken by the National Headquarters staff with National President Janet?

Now, getting backstage, the easiest way is to just literally go out the door and come around the outer hallway and come back where you see the DG sign and come in that way.

At 1:30 p.m., there will be a meeting for the 2015-16 national officers in the Headquarters office which is in Hall G. And that's sort of that way and down the lowest level.

The state's dinner head table reception starts at six p.m. in Room 307 and that's here at the Convention Center. The state's dinner begins at seven p.m. in Halls A and B.

And for those departments that brought their department flags for the state's dinner, you may post them between 3:30 and five p.m. today in Hall A. Your flag cases may be stored in the VIP room outside of Hall A. And the flags must be picked up immediately following the banquet.

I've been asked about tickets. There are still tickets available in the office downstairs in Hall G. Any other bartering you have to do among yourselves.

I do want to make a quick announcement about security. Some of you may have heard on the news this morning that there are six police officers here in Baltimore who are being charged regarding a shooting incident which -- well, in which a prisoner died in the back of a -- of a police vehicle. And there is picketing going on. There have been a couple of arrests and we're monitoring the situation.

And as of this moment, you're just asked to be very careful. The courthouse is a few blocks inland from the Renaissance Hotel and I know some of you are staying there. So just be careful going back. None of this has spilled down to where we are, but just be aware of that.

There's a lot of tweeting going on and I just thought it would be better -- the Legion has been texting also and we just thought it was better to just address it, that there's no riots going on. There is picketing. There have been a few arrests and just be careful. Walk in groups as you go back to your hotels.

And, finally, we are being live streamed. Now, how many remember that for those who couldn't be at National Convention, they're able to watch the live streaming of this Convention?

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: So house lights are going to come up and this is our opportunity to say a big shout out to those of us who are watching. So when I give the big sign, let's everybody say American Legion Auxiliary rocks.

VOICES: American Legion Auxiliary rocks. Woo.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Now, Madam President.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Okay. Okay. So these are all so mixed up right now. Okay.

All right. So now I will ask the officers and everyone on stage to go. I think there's some seats up front here. We'll just give them a minute to get down into the audience.

Leading this great organization has been an honor and a privilege. And with that in mind, please join me in watching the screens.

(Video follows.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Telling a story - whether it's through reading a good book or told by one person in front of a crowd - it's important. Telling our story provides American Legion Auxiliary members the opportunity to show each other how we live and breathe our motto, service, not self.

Even more importantly, sharing our stories allows us to show non-members the passion we have in carrying out our 95-year-old mission of serving veterans, the military and their families.

Let's take a look back at this year and see how you shared the American Legion Auxiliary's story.

When we begin our preamble with for God and country, we reaffirm our individual beliefs and our faith in those currently serving in harm's way, our servicemembers, as well as the leaders we elected into office.

Our faith that the American Legion Auxiliary needs to remain a strong and vibrant organization over the next 100 years has encouraged us to work tirelessly on our Centennial Strategic Plan. A tremendous amount of development and hard work by ALA volunteers and National Headquarters has gone into the Centennial Plan's initiatives and lead us into the future.

We have encouraged departments to develop their own strategic plan to ensure their successes. Faith allows us to place our trust in others. We should remind ourselves daily that we all need to have faith in each other and extend nothing but charity and good will toward one another.

We enforce your loyalty and faith in our mission, our members and those we serve. Keep the positivity going. In essence, be nice.

They say there's strength in numbers and The American Legion family definitely shows that. Together with The American Legion National Commander Michael Helm and Sons of the American Legion Commander Mike Moss, we placed a strong emphasis this year on the Legion family.

Whether we were traveling together or independently on our visits, we encouraged members to work membership and on mission together as The American Legion family, a family that will hopefully soon measure more than four million strong.

Family also means the community in which we live. This year, we were encouraged to be more visible and vocal in our community so that everyone could hear the story about who we are, what we do and why we matter.

I have heard many stories in my travels about how community service events became excellent public awareness opportunities. Be sure to keep wearing your American Legion Auxiliary-branded shirts, tell your stories of why we do what we do and you might just recruit some new members.

The United States of America is the greatest country in the world. We have the freedom to be who we want, to say what we want and to worship as we want. Many young men and women died at war so that we could enjoy these freedoms.

Auxiliary members this year continued our great history of paying respect and honor to the fallen at ceremonies and memorial tributes. We presented many thank yous to those who previously served and are still serving.

We made a difference in our veterans' lives as we visited them in state and VA hospitals and facilities and worked with them in homeless shelters and transitional housing units.

My term as president has allowed me to visit with our heroes as they told their stories about those days gone by when they wore the uniform. Seeing those troops and meeting these veterans this year reminded me that American Legion Auxiliary members must never waver in our commitment to serve, help and meet the needs of our nation's veterans, military and their families.

Freedom also means patriotism. All generations should remain proud to show their love for our country. The younger generation including our Junior members and ALA Girls State attendees look to us to instill patriotism, respect for the American flag and faith in our country and leadership.

As we continue in our mission, let's be an even bigger presence in our community. Wear your Legion family shirts, continue being proud of who you are, continue to teach our youth patriotism and what our flag stands for, continue to advocate for strong national security and defense.

And so to everyone, thank you for making my travels fun, rewarding and an eye-opening adventure I will never forget. I made lasting friendships and new memories that are now a part of my life forever.

Thank you to Commander Helm and Commander Moss. Thank you to National Headquarters' staff and especially thank you to all American Legion Auxiliary members.

Please continue telling your mission-related stories to everyone you meet so everyone knows exactly who we are, what we do and why we matter. I've said many times this year it's all about the why, why we do, what we do.

Mark Twain said there are only two important days in people's lives, the day you were born and the day you figure out why. I believe your journey as American Legion Auxiliary members has helped you find your why. May God keep you and your family safe. May God bless our men and women in uniform and may he continue to bless this country that I am so proud to call my home. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, everybody. Thank you, everyone. Going to make me cry. Thank you.

I guess I'm kind of like at a loss for words, but, you know, I can't remember who said it. It was a member. And I was telling them about how lucky I was to be serving as National President. And she looked at me and she said you're not lucky, you're blessed.

And I am blessed. I am so blessed to be able to have this year serving as National President. It has -- I've been to so many places and seen so many things I thought I'd never get to see, the Grand Canyon, South Dakota, Mount Rushmore. Been to the Philippines, Okinawa, Taiwan, Korea. Serving Thanksgiving dinner to the troops at Korea was amazing. Being in Pearl Harbor with the Pearl Harbor survivors, you saw one of the pictures, that's something I'll never ever forget.

You know, I've seen so many things. I've been to so many places. I've done so many great things. But what I think I'll remember most are the people I've met. It's really that's the people I've met during this incredible

journey like those Pearl Harbor survivors, like the survivor from the Arizona who told us his story about his burnt hands, about the women you saw in that picture.

They were all like in their 90s and served in World War II and they brought along their pictures of them when they were in the service. And they were just so cute. One of them -- most of these women were in a blind rehabilitation unit and one of them went sky diving last year. And this year, she's going hand gliding, you know.

And I said to her aren't you afraid and she goes, heck, I can't see anything anyway, why should I be afraid.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know, and so they were awesome. And we're talking and I said can I take your picture so I could put it on Facebook. And one of them looked at me, goes, yeah, maybe some guy will see it and I'll get an invitation.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I laughed. And the other woman goes I've already had three husbands, I don't want any more.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I'll remember that. The -- the veterans I've met in the hospitals, playing bingo with them, doing crossword puzzles, singing and just hearing their stories, meeting the members that I got to meet and I am still -- I am totally amazed at what you do out there.

I mean, there is no group of people that are more generous, I think, than members of the American Legion Auxiliary and our whole Legion family.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I have -- I have witnessed somebody coming up and saying, you know, this person needs this, we have to do this. And all of a sudden, there's like, you know, hundreds of dollars collected and the need is taken care of. It is just truly amazing what you do.

I heard this story just here this weekend New York raising \$69,000 to put a screen porch on a house for a veteran who lost their legs at their hips down and he wanted a way to sit outside. What a marvelous thing to do.

Many people have asked me as I traveled what -- what will you remember most? What's the one place you've been at, the one thing you've seen, the one thing you've done? And it's a really, really hard question to answer.

But I think of all of them, I'll have to say it was walking on that beach, Omaha Beach on D Day. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful, beautiful beach. And I've told this story before and see the crosses, those thousands and thousands of crosses, each one standing for not just the soldier, the American that's buried there but for his parents, his wife, his children, the community in which he lived and for everybody who felt that loss.

And the guide we had, she would stop at a cross and she told us the story about the person that was buried there. And she made it so personal. But the thing I'll never forget is what statement she left us with.

And she was saying how grateful she was to the Americans that were buried there and she looked at us and she said, you know, it's because of them that my children get to play on that beautiful beach today. And for me, that says it all. That said it all.

So just know that what you do, what you do every day as members of the American Legion Auxiliary really, really matters, know that you are making a difference in people's lives every day. I've heard the story. I've shared your stories and I ask you to share your stories with others.

I can't think of a better gift to give to others than to ask them to join us in our mission, join us in making a difference in people's lives every day, join us to be part of this great family, a family I am so privileged that I belong to. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

So as we end one administration and move to another, I know for certain -- the one thing I know for certain is that this organization is in good hands under the leadership of our incoming President Sharon Conatser.

Come out, Sharon. Come out here.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Sharon will help guide all of us as we strive to meet our five strategic goals. And as I always said have fun while we're doing it, right?

VICE PRESIDENT CONATSER: Right, absolutely.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So, please, over the next year, give her your love, your support and a can-do attitude as we move closer to our goals that will hopefully help us serve better those we serve.

Thank you. I love you all. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: So I hope to see all of you at the state's dinner tonight and then tomorrow morning at eight a.m. for our installation ceremony.

Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, at 12:16 p.m., the above-entitled conference was adjourned.)

**INSTALLATION CEREMONY
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2015**

(Music.)

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to the Installation Ceremony for National Officers of the American Legion Auxiliary. Please welcome your National President Janet Jefford.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: The meeting of the 95th Annual National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will now come to order.

We are assembled this morning for the installation of the 2015-2016 newly elected National Officers. What a very special day and time it is for the Department of Illinois, and of course for our great organization as it once again is ready to record another year of its long and storied history with the installation of another corps of National Officers.

I am so pleased to see so many members of our American Legion Family here to witness this once in a lifetime experience for our newly elected officers and particularly for incoming National President Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT JEFFORD: It is now my honor to introduce the installing officer for the ceremony, Past National President Peggy Thomas from the Department of Virginia. Peggy?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, Madam President, and good morning to all.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: This is a very special privilege and it's with a great deal of pride that I welcome all of you to the installation of Sharon Conatser from the Department of Illinois as your National President.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And the National Officers and the Department Presidents who will serve with her this year as we begin a new year of service for God and country.

Today marks a day of extreme pride for the Department of Illinois as we witness the installation of the fourth National President from that department. It was at the 1935 National Convention that Ada Mucklestone was installed as the National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. It was at the 1949 National Convention when Marie Sheehe, another member from Illinois, was installed as the National President. Then at the 1970 National Convention Rae Shaw was the third person from the Department of

Illinois to be installed as the National President. History is being made today, as we witness yet another National President from Illinois being installed.

Participants in this morning's program are the following: Sergeant at Arms for the Installation are Ann Flanagan and Sandy Kirby; Color Bearers for the flags of the Department of Illinois are Linda Oakley and Deb Lewis; Vocalists for this morning are Sharon's nieces Sara Helmus and Ami Stephens from the Department of Illinois; the installing Chaplain is Past National President Kris Nelson from Minnesota; Past National President Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan from the Department of Wisconsin will be sharing a special reading with us; the MC for remarks and presentations from the Illinois American Legion Family will be Pam Ray, campaign chairman and sister of Sharon Conatser. Please stand as the Sergeant at Arms and the Color Bearers present the colors of the Department of Illinois. Please rise.

(Presentation of Colors.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Will the Sergeant at Arms please escort the 2015-2016 Department Presidents to their seats?

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Please join me in welcoming President-elect Sharon's family and other distinguished guests who are already seated on the platform.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: The Sergeant at Arms will present the Officers-elect and the Division National Vice Presidents escorted by their predecessors. Please join me in welcoming these new officers and thanking the retired officers for their service.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Please join me in welcoming the new officers and thanking the retiring officers for their service as they come in.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Let us greet the National Vice President-elect, Mary Davis from the Department of Washington, escorted by her husband Dale Davis.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And now, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the lady for whom we have been waiting, the National President-elect Sharon Conatser, escorted by her husband Past National Commander Marty Conatser.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Everyone, please remain standing for the opening prayer to be given by Past National President Kris Nelson, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bailey and Addison, Sharon's grandchildren. Kris?

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT NELSON: Good morning. Let us pray. Please bow your heads and join me in prayer. Dear God, as we begin a new Auxiliary year, help us focus on keeping the promise. Guide us to always serve those who are in need with integrity and dignity. Remind us in our actions to treat each other with respect and communicate with truth. Grant President Sharon and her team a year of blessings rich with opportunities to serve others and memories of a job well done as the year will conclude. You have blessed us, oh God, with the gift of friendship with Auxiliary sisters across the world, the bonding of persons in a circle of love. We thank you for such a blessing for our members and friends who love us who share our sorrows, who laugh with us in celebration, who bear our pain, who need us as we need them, who weep as we weep, who hold us when words fail, and who give us the freedom to be ourselves. Bless our members and our friends with health, fullness, life, and love as we begin a new year. And please guide our leaders throughout the coming year of keeping the promise to veterans, military, and their families. In your name we pray, amen.

ALL: Amen.

MS. RAY: Please join Addie and Bailey from the second row in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ALL: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: You may be seated.

Thank you Kris for a beautiful opening prayers. Bailey and Addison, thank you for leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. We will now have a reading by Tanner Malloch, Sharon's grandson. Tanner?

MR. MALLOCH: Congratulations to my Grandma. Now, let's take a moment of silence for the ones who served and who are currently serving right now.

(Moment of Silence.)

MR. MALLOCH: Honor our military. Let's honor our military for the men and women who served our, who served dedication to our country does not falter, halt, or swerve. Let us respect them for their courage. They are ready to do what's right to keep America safe so we can sleep better at night. Let's support and defend our soldiers whose hardships are brutal and cruel, whose discipline we cannot imagine, who follow each order and rule. Here's to those who choose to be warriors and their helpers good and true. They are fighting for America's values and they are fighting for you and me.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: It's a well known fact that I have been a friend and mentor to Sharon Conatser for many years. It goes back to her first chairmanship under Elsie Bailey. Elsie would be so

proud of Sharon standing here today waiting to be installed as National President. I am sure she is looking down on us with a big smile on her face, saying, congratulations, Sharon, well done.

Sharon has the dedication and ability to be a great President. She has a dream of making things better for our military, our veterans, and their families. It is called Keeping the Promise. And I know she will do everything in her power to make that dream a reality.

Sharon, I have great faith in you. You are a beautiful person, inside and out.

To our new National Officers today represents a great achievement for you and a significant commitment for you. Each of you enters a position which has been held by 94 women before you. You are committing your efforts to furthering the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary and to perpetuate the legacy which it has built. Would the newly elected National Officers please rise to take your oath of office?

The members of the American Legion Auxiliary have entrusted you with great responsibility. You have been elected to provide guidance in the activities of our organization. You will familiarize yourself with the duties of your respective offices. Always remember that the welfare and success of this organization depends on you. Every American Legion Auxiliary member assumes the obligation of preserving the integrity of both the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary, contributing to the aims and purposes of this organization. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me, giving your name where I give mine.

I, Peggy Thomas --

VOICES: I (indiscernible) --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- promise to perform faithfully --

VOICES: -- promise to perform faithfully --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- all the duties of the office -

VOICES: -- all the duties of the office --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- I am about to assume.

VOICES: -- I am about to assume.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And I further pledge --

VOICES: And I further pledge --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- that I am not a member of --

VOICES: -- that I am not a member of --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- and do not subscribe to --

VOICES: -- and do not subscribe --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- the principles of any group --

VOICES: -- the principles of any group --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- opposed to our form of government.

VOICES: -- opposed to our form of government.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you. You may lower your hand and be seated.

And now the newly elected Department Presidents, please rise. President Sharon, you have to come forward.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Would you give the oath of office to these Department Presidents who will be serving with you this year?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please raise your right hand, giving your name where I give mine.

I, Sharon Conatser --

VOICES: I, (indiscernible) --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- promise to perform faithfully --

VOICES: -- promise to perform faithfully --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- all the duties of the office --

VOICES: -- all the duties of the office --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- I am about to assume.

VOICES: -- I am about to assume.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And I further pledge --

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PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- that I am not a member of --

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PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- and do not subscribe to --

VOICES: -- and do not subscribe to --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- the principles of any group --

VOICES: -- the principles of any group --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: -- opposed to our form of government.

VOICES: -- opposed to our form of government.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You may lower your hands.

Congratulations. I look forward to us being a team this year. Please be seated.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: We're going to go out of order just a little bit because I would like to recognize the Past National Commanders in the room. I sent them all an invitation and many of them have come this morning to witness this. And I want to say thank you to all of you for being here. And I know that some of you may have to leave to go back to your session but would all the Past National Commanders in the audience please stand to be recognized?

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, Madam President. You may return to your chair.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: She's so fast.

You, the members of the American Legion Auxiliary, have chosen outstanding officers to lead you this year. I have charged them with a serious responsibility and I likewise charge you. Would all the members of the American Legion Auxiliary please rise and raise your right hand and repeat after me?

I solemnly promise --

VOICES: I solemnly promise --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- to renew my pledge of service --

VOICES: -- to renew my pledge of service --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- to the American Legion Auxiliary --

VOICES: -- to the American Legion Auxiliary --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- and to give wholehearted support --

VOICES: -- and to give wholehearted support --

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: -- to these newly elected officers.

VOICES: -- to these newly elected officers.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, and please remain standing as I ask the rest of the audience to rise for a prayer by our installing Chaplain Past National President Kris Nelson.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT NELSON: Please bow your heads and join me in a closing prayer. Dear God, as we go forth to begin a new year of Keeping the Promise, please let us always remember to embrace the Auxiliary's value of Service Not Self. Guide us as we work together in harmony and help us to serve with joy as we strive to make life easier for our veterans, military, and their families. Protect President Sharon and her officers as they travel and keep them out of harm's way.

I would like to close with a prayer that was submitted for the 2011 prayer book by Marlene Schrader, a Past Department Chaplain from Illinois.

Outside my window a new day I see and only I can determine what kind of day it will be. It can be sunny, laughing, and gay, or boring, cold, unhappy, and gray. My own state of mind is the determining key for I am the person I let myself be. I can be thoughtful and do all I can to help, or be selfish and think just of myself. I can enjoy what I do and make it seem fun or gripe and complain and be tough on someone. I can be patient with those who may not understand or belittle and hurt them as much as I can. But I have faith in myself and believe what I say and I personally intend to make the best of each day.

As we go forward for keeping our promise, please try to make the best of each day, and please, God, guide us as we go forward. In Your name we pray, Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: You may be seated. Thank you, Kris, for another beautiful prayer. Please join me in welcoming Sara Helmus and Ami Stephens to sing, American Honey.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. HELMUS & MS. STEPHENS: (Singing.) She grew up on the side of the road where the church bells ring and true love grows. She grew up good, she grew up slow, like American honey. Steady as a preacher, free as a weed, couldn't wait to get going, but wasn't quite ready to leave. So innocent, pure, and sweet, American honey. There's a wild, wild whisper blowing' in the wind, callin' out my name like a long lost friend. Oh I miss those days as the years go by. Oh nothing's sweeter than summertime and American honey. Get caught in the race of this crazy life. Trying' to do everything can make you lose your mind. I just wanna go back in time to American honey, yeah. There's a wild, wild whisper blowin' in the wind, callin' out my name like a long lost friend. Oh I miss those days as the years go by. Oh nothing's sweeter than summertime and American honey. Gone for so long now. I gotta get back to her somehow, to American honey. Ooh, there's a wild, wild whisper blowin' in the wind, callin' out my name like a long lost friend. Oh, I miss those days as the years go by. Oh, nothin' sweeter than summertime and American honey, and American honey.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Weren't they great?

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: At this time I would like to introduce to you or present to you the leading candidate for the National American Legion Commander, Dale Barnett from the Department of Georgia to bring greetings.

(Applause.)

MR. BARNETT: Thank you all. Thank you all. It is absolutely a privilege. I was so honored when Sharon said, please Dale, can you come and be with us? I said, I'm not elected yet! She said, I want you here. But what a great group of ladies that you have. And to your Officers and to your Past Presidents here, you know, you do so much for the American Legion Family. And I will tell you that Sharon and I are very dedicated to making sure we work as an American Legion Family. And if you look at your shirts, you'll see Duty, Honor, Country. I want you to see those words with your eyes. I want you to live those words with your heart. And I want you to execute those words with your body and soul.

We're going to have a great year. I hope you join us. One of the initiatives I'm going to do is awareness walks. And I want the American Legion Auxiliary there. I want the SAL there. Because I want us to share with America the good news of why it is so great to be a part of this American Legion Family.

Sharon, I thank you. Your great husband, who was my Commander, you know, and the leadership of your family. I got to meet them when I was a Department Commander and what a great family that you have. And I hope

you join us this year and share the spirit of Duty, Honor, Country. Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And now we will hear from the leading candidate for the SAL Commander from the Department of Alaska, Mike Moss -- Kevin Collier, wrong year.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MR. COLLIER: That's all right, Peggy.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: I've got, Kevin.

Actually in the script it is Kevin Collier.

MR. COLLIER: Okay.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: I'm glad to meet you, Kevin.

MR. COLLIER: Well I'm glad to meet you again, Peggy.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: It's all yours.

MR. COLLIER: All right. Well thank you very much. Thank you very much, Sharon, for inviting me to be part of your installation. That's a great privilege and honor, and I'd like to say thank you very much.

I look forward to working with the American Legion Auxiliary, as you guys are, excuse me, you gals, ladies, are Keeping the Promise the Sons of the American Legion along with the, are going to be working side by side with the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary. And our theme is ROCKED, R-O-C-K-E-D, Remembering Our Commitment Keeping it Every Day. So somehow we just all got on the same page and it all weaved together.

As Sharon and I were talking after we were officially announced as leading candidates, or as National Vice President for Sharon's case, and we were sitting down going through our themes, and they just all meshed. Which means we're meant to be together, to work side by side together with the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and of course our Junior Auxiliary, and the Riders.

I'd like to also congratulate Maggie, if she's still here, as the National Honorary Junior National President. I'll get that straight. It's always a long stretch.

But you guys have -- again you guys. You ladies have --

(Laughter.)

MR. COLLIER: -- elected a wonderful lady to lead you this coming year and I look forward to working with each and every one of you. We're going to have a banner year, outstanding. Remember Our Commitment Keep it Every Day, as we Keep the Promise to serve our country, serve, working on the four pillars, and as Dale said Duty, Honor, Service, Country. What's greater than that? Rock On and we'll see you down the road. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: I actually know who he is.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And now I'll follow the script.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: We will now have Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan to read a special something that she has for Sharon.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT PULVERMACHER-RYAN: This reading is titled Portrait of a Friend.

I can't give you solutions to all of life's problems, doubts, or fears, but I can listen to you and together we will search for answers.

I can't change your past with all its heartache and pain, or the future with its untold stories, but I can be there now when you need me to care.

I can't keep your feet from stumbling, I can only offer my hand that you may grasp it and not fall.

Your joys, triumphs, successes, and happiness are not mine, yet I can share in your laughter.

Your decisions in life are not mine to make nor to judge, I can only support you, encourage you, and help you when you ask.

I can't prevent you from falling away from friendship, from your values, from me, I can only pray for you, talk to you, and wait for you.

I can't give you boundaries which I have determined for you, but I can give you room to change, room to grow, room to be yourself.

I can't keep your heart from breaking and hurting, but I can cry with you and help you pick up the pieces and put them back in place.

I can't tell you who you are, I can only love you and be your friend.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, Jan. That was both beautiful and very moving.

The retiring officers will now transfer their pins and ribbons of office to their successor. Will the retiring officers please come forward and present the newly elected officer to the assembly after they transfer their ribbons? As the outgoing officers return to their seats, Past National President Janet will present them with their ribbons and pins. We will begin with the National Chaplain Bird Derrick.

(Music.)

MS. BOEHLER: I am so honored to announce your new National Chaplain for the American Legion Auxiliary 2015-2016, Mrs. Bird Derrick, Department of Idaho.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. BOEHLER: Bird, would you give us a few remarks, please?

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you for staying with us all week. This event may appear to be a changing of the guard, but I also see it as the continuation of the relay race that we're running together. And my prayer is

that our outgoing officers will continue to run with us until we have a firm grip on that baton. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. GRAY: It is my honor and privilege to present to you the newly installed National Historian Debbie Noble from the Department of New Jersey.

(Applause.)

HISTORIAN NOBLE: Thank you, Rani. Good morning. All letters are starting to form, all words are coming together, and so our story begins. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. MOSBY: It is my honor and privilege to announce the new Central Division National Vice President Lynda Lancaster from the Department of West Virginia. Thank you.

VICE PRESIDENT LANCASTER: Good morning. President Sharon, thank you again for allowing me to have the privilege to serve with you. We served together as Department Presidents back in 2000-2001. I am indeed humbled and honored to serve as Central Division National Vice President. I would ask if those from West Virginia, if they would please stand?

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT LANCASTER: Thank you all for your continued love and support. And if the members from the Central Division would stand?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT LANCASTER: I look forward to working with you and visiting with you and achieving the goals with the Legion Family. God bless you, God bless our veterans, and God bless America. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. HEIL: I present to you Southern Division National Vice President Flora Jean Craig.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT CRAIG: Will the Department of North Carolina please stand?

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT CRAIG: There's some of you out there. And now will the entire Southern Division please stand?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT CRAIG: Madam President Sharon, we pledge to you our support, our efforts to have a wonderful year for you and for the American Legion Auxiliary. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

MS. SKALLERUD: I am very proud to introduce from the beautiful Peace Garden State of North Dakota our new Northwestern Division National Vice President Judy Twete.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT TWETE: Thank you. Thank you. A brother, Tom Patterson, the Korean War, may he rest in peace. My husband, Curt Twete, a Vietnam Veteran. My son, a Commander in the United States Navy and graduate of the wonderful facility just down the harbor, the Naval Academy. Thank you for my eligibility through these three veterans that I love so much. And thank you to the Department of North Dakota for putting your trust and confidence in me to serve as the Northwest Division Vice President. Would the Northwest Division please stand and be recognized?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT TWETE: Thank you.

(Music.)

MS. NEYLON: It is my honor to introduce the Eastern Division National Vice President Helen Skelton from the Department of Delaware.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKELTON: Hello, everyone. Today is a wonderful day for me and the it's my beginning of my journey. Would the Delaware please stand, please? They have done so many things for me this year.

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKELTON: And I want to thank them very much. Also the delegates from the Eastern Division, please stand so I can honor you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT SKELTON: Thank you for all you've done. God bless.

(Music.)

MS. DIAZ: I am honored to present your Western Division National Vice President Linda Workman.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT WORKMAN: Would the Western Division please rise?

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

VICE PRESIDENT WORKMAN: President Sharon, the wild, wild women of the Western Division will keep going this year. Thank you.

(Laughter.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, ladies. And thank you, Madam National President. We also have two members on stage who are officers of the American Legion Auxiliary who serve behind the scene and will be nominated to continue their service at the National Executive Committee meeting which will take place immediately following the close of the installation. They are National Secretary Dubbie Buckler and National Treasurer Marta Hedding.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: During the course of the year ahead our National President and the remaining National Officers have numerous opportunities to meet our members and individuals from the general public. They have opportunities to instill drive, desire, and enthusiasm for our organization. They have the opportunity to demonstrate care, understanding, and support for our members. Among your travels and opportunities you will encounter people who will become your friends. Would the National Vice President Mary Davis from the Department of Washington please come forward along with National President Sharon Conatser?

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Congratulations, Mary. What a special day this is for you and for the Department of Washington. And now you will receive your pin and ribbon from our newly installed National President Sharon Conatser.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Thank you, National President Sharon. First I wish to thank my mother for her steadfast support. Her service as a WAC, my dad's service in the Army Air Corps, and my husband's career in the Army, as well as my son's Air Force service, has made my membership possible and led to my determination that my service will be through the American Legion Auxiliary.

Would the members of Washington Legion Family please stand?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

VICE PRESIDENT DAVIS: Members of the Washington Family have likewise been a constant support throughout my Auxiliary years. Thank you for your continued support.

Sharon and I have been steadfast friends since we worked Membership together. She is truly committed to this organization and a great model for me and every member. Thank you, Sharon.

And thank you to the national staff and to all my fellow Auxiliary members across this great country who have so graciously supported me throughout the years. Your support and your friendships mean the world to me. Most importantly you all inspire me.

When I first joined the Auxiliary I received my initiation in Unit #72, Cheney, Washington. That evening I received a copy of their unit bylaws, a small American flag, my first pin, and heard the American Legion Auxiliary Preamble for the first time. I repeated the Preamble, thus making my first promise to keep the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. As I have worked throughout these past 38 years I have endeavored to have my life's work live up to that promise. I am honored that you have elected me to serve as your National Vice President. My promise to you today is to continue to work for the American Legion Auxiliary and its mission, to spread our message to those who do not know of us, and to support the President.

Sharon and unit members, to the best of my ability, I will do my best. Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, Mary. Past President Janet and President Sharon, please come to the podium so that Past President Janet can present President Sharon with her pin and ribbon.

(Music.)

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Sharon, would you join me at the microphone?

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: National President Sharon, I present to you this gavel, your symbol of authority. May you use it in a fair manner, always remembering that justice is a cornerstone of our organization and fairness is a premise upon which our nation was founded. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my extreme pleasure to present to you our National President Sharon Conatser. Madam President?

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Wow! I'm so happy and proud to be serving as your National President. I have a few thank yous before I get started. Central Division, would you please stand?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Legion Family members, too, not just the Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you. You may be seated. Would the Past National Presidents from the Central Division please stand?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And then would the other Past National Presidents please join them?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to all of you for your advice and friendship over the years. With your advice, support, and love of our organization we will continue to move ahead. Thank you to all of you from the bottom of my heart.

Now -- I heard it fall. Would the Department of Illinois American Legion Family please stand?

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I feel very blessed that I have had them by my side every step of the way. And in Illinois, it is a complete family affair with emotional and monetary support and just always being there. Thank you to each and every one of you is not enough, but just know that it is from the bottom of my heart.

There is a group here, or a couple of people here, who we all know they are the non-American Legion Family friends. And sometimes they would say, you're gone again? They'll say, you can't meet for two weeks? Not really, it's all in fun. But I want to thank Diane Hoffman. Stand up. And Carol Phillippe, and her husband Bub is over at the Legion. But please thank them for being here. Thanks for making the trip. Love you both. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: My eligibility is through my dad, Clay Lofton, an Army World War II and Korea veteran; my husband Marty, a Vietnam era veteran; and our son Rick, a Desert Storm veteran. My mom, Irene Lofton, is a Past Central Division National Vice President and was installed here, in Baltimore, in 1989.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: My parents are always there when I'm happy, when I'm sad, when I'm glad, and when I'm mad. Thank you for everything and I love you both very much.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to our sons and their families. Our son Richard, wife Patsy, granddaughter Kayla; our son Rick, son Tanner, daughter Addison; our son Brian, and his daughter Bailey, and mom stayed home with our one-year-old grandson Grayson.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you to all of you for your support and your love as we travel yet one more year. And the grandkids are the hardest part of being gone, I hope you all know that. I will miss you all but Gram will be home soon. And for the little girls, Addie, I love you to Pluto and back, and Bailey, I love you to the moon and back. That's not cool for Tanner or Kayla, they are too old for that you know.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: My husband Marty Conatser, Past National Commander, shows the true meaning of an American Legion Family. We looked in the history books, talked to the historian, and we

believe we will be the first husband/wife team to serve as National Commander and National President.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I am serving as your President because I believe in the mission and want to share my time and talents across this great nation. Thank you to Peggy, my mentor and friend of many years. I've called you many times for advice and will continue to do so. One thing I do want to add here is I first met Peggy in a limousine in Las Vegas, Nevada.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I was the new kid on the block and they told me I had to go get a taxi to take us all from a region Auxiliary meeting. It was my very first one. And they said go get a cab. Well, this newbie did great. This rookie got them a limo.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm glad I didn't run under the bridge and get, I wouldn't be standing here if not, Peggy. Peggy, you continue to inspire me. Thank you so much for the beautiful installation, and you are the best, my friend. Thank you so much.

My friend Kris, we've come very close in the last few years. Without your guidance, your faith, and your friendship I would not be able to do this. Thank you for everything and I look forward to your continued friendship and support.

Jan, my friend of many years, being from the Central Division we met many years ago at the region five meetings. When we found out that you and Marty would be serving together, it seemed like a natural fit for that to have happened. We have had lots of good times and look forward to many more, and thank you for your continued friendship.

In advance I want to thank our national staff. They are wonderful and I am looking forward to working with each of them.

I also have some very special angels that will be watching over me this year. Just a few short weeks ago, I lost a mentor and a friend of many years. I know that JoAnn Shafer will keep me flying straight. I miss you and I love you, JoAnn, but I know you are there everyday.

I hope that by now you all know the five goals of our Centennial Plan. My challenge to each of you is to support them and work towards our American Legion Auxiliary of the future and grow membership. Everyone complains about membership but we are a membership based organization and we need it to survive. We are here today because we love the American Legion Auxiliary. Let's start showing it by sharing who we are and why we need to be here in the future. We need you to be part of the resolution, and I know that you are all up to the task. Let yourself believe in your eligibility that gave you the right to belong to this awesome organization. Show it by sharing who we are and what we're going to do.

To all of you, the plan for the year is to push even harder the Centennial Plan by empowering our goal champions to make it happen. I want to thank all of those goal champions for stepping up and making a

difference in our organization. If there are any of our goal champions in the audience, would you please stand so we can thank you?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I'm asking each department to dig deep. Membership is everyone's job. The membership goals were set three years ago and are in place so please continue to dig deep and meet those goals. We need to focus on stopping the slide, retaining members, and growing membership not the number. We have had goal champions, strategy captains, and members on Goal One. We can do this together. Goal One of a million members will take care of itself if we work as a team, have a positive attitude, and be nice.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: My friend, Vice President Mary, do you like that? Congratulations to you and to the Department of Washington. Your family and friends are so proud and know that you will be great. When we started out ten years ago, who would have thought that we'd be serving together as President and Vice President? I look forward to your advice and sharing this year with you.

Mission Training will add a new aspect this year. We will have a Junior meeting at each location. We are hoping to touch more Junior lives and preserve our future. Please take your Juniors to this meeting and encourage them to participate. Our goal is only 20 Juniors at each location. That would almost double the number of Juniors touched in the last few years. Attendance has declined and your leadership is trying something new to improve your return on your investment of our Juniors.

This year we will be Keeping the Promise. This will be the theme for our organization for this year. I spent hours making lists, crossing off themes, adding themes, and phone calls to several. Keeping the Promise can mean many things. Abraham Lincoln promised our soldiers that they would always be taken care of. We as an organization are keeping that promise by remaining a vital organization. Keeping the Promise to our values, to our American Legion Family, to each other, and most importantly to ourselves, will be priorities.

Keeping the Promise to our unit members will be very important. This year we want to concentrate on the unit member. We are all unit members first. Keeping the Promise to our unit member includes good communication, sharing, and a culture of goodwill. We may not always agree, but remember our eligibility fought side by side for our freedoms and we need to work side by side to support them.

The special focus for this administrative year will be the Auxiliary Emergency Fund. When a tornado hit Gifford, Illinois I met so many American Legion Auxiliary members personally affected. I was proud to present their Auxiliary Emergency Fund grant checks to them and see the joy and the tears in their eyes. Our Auxiliary Emergency Fund does a lot of good. After presenting these checks this unit received several new members. Members helping members, let's do this.

Once again this year Commander Dale Barnett and SAL Commander Kevin Collier have committed to work as an American Legion Family to move all of our organizations forward. Please do your part in your communities.

I look forward to the visits to your departments and I would love to meet the unit members, veterans, and participate in any way that you feel promotes our mission.

As you can see, my pin is very simple. The American Legion Auxiliary emblem front and center in supporting goal five of our Centennial Plan. The stars represent you, me, and every unit member as we continue to serve. Keeping the promise of the American Legion Auxiliary is important to me and I hope it's important to each of you.

I plan on serving this year with one thought in mind. The thought is I have carried with me throughout my life. Many of you remember from Illinois Past National Commander John Geiger. He always wanted to see this day and I know that he is smiling. He always said ask yourself is your decision good for yourself and the American Legion Family? If it is, then go for it. Or is it only good for you personally? If it's only going to benefit you personally and not be good for our organizations then we should not be doing it.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Before I close I want to invite each of you to join us in Springfield, Illinois for Homecoming October 22nd, 23rd, and 24th. Information was available on your chairs and it will be on the Illinois website, right Angie? Got it. I forgot to ask her that ahead of time. No. So you can go to the Illinois website.

New this year, now listen up, 2015-2016 Department Presidents and 2015-2016 Department Secretaries and National Chairmen, when we, when Janet reaches the back of the room after she has adjourned the Convention, you need to go to one of the tables over here on the side and there will be a gift for each of you. You may not pick up a gift for someone else. National Executive Committeewomen, we have not forgotten you. You may pick your gift up at a table outside the National Executive Committee meeting room.

There's a party today. Buses will run from both the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary headquarters hotel, which is the Hyatt Regency Inner Harbor and the Hilton. Beginning at 3:30 the buses will pick up for a joint party with Commander Dale and Commander Kevin. The hours are four to six and everyone is invited. The address is on the screen. My wish for each of you is a year filled with great successes that support our great American Legion Auxiliary. I want you to remember that it's the little things that make successes possible. I hope that each of you will do the little things in your unit to build successes.

And I'd like to close with this, called Three Little Things In Life. And I stole it, so I'm already going to tell you that up front. Anger, greed, unforgiveness, three things that will destroy a person and an organization. Sincerity, hard work, compassion, three things in life that make a good person. Success, dreams, fortune, three things in life that are never certain.

Love and kindness, friends, self-confidence, three things in life that are most valuable. Hope, peace, honesty, three things in your life that you should always have. Time, words, opportunity, three things in life once gone never comes back.

May God bless each of you and keep you safe. I love living in America. Thank you to our veterans, our active duty military, for all you do to keep us safe. And may God bless each one of you. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Madam President, thank you for those words of inspiration and guidance. And it's been a long road from Las Vegas to here.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Now please welcome back Sara and Ami singing a favorite of Sharon's family, The House I Live In.

(Music.)

MS. HELMUS AND MS. STEPHENS: (Singing.) What is America to me? A name, a map, or a flag I see? A certain word, "democracy?" What is America to me? The house I live in, a plot of earth, a street, the grocer and the butcher, and the people that I meet. The children in the playground, the faces that I see, all races and religions, that's America to me. The place I work in, the worker by my side, the little town or city where my people lived and died. The "howdy" and the handshake, the air of feeling free, and the right to speak my mind out, that's America to me. The things I see about me, the big things and the small. The little corner newsstand and the house a mile tall. The wedding in the churchyard, the laughter and the tears, and the dream that's been a-growing for more than 200 years. The town I live in, the street, the house, the room. The pavement of the city or a garden all in bloom. The church, the school, the clubhouse, the million lights I see. But especially the people, that's America to me.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you, Sara and Ami. As we move forward toward the centennial anniversary of the American Legion Auxiliary, we must remain mindful of the founding purposes of our organization and continue to build upon the legacy of those who have preceded us. There are many people who shared in building and perpetuating that legacy who are not with us today. I can think of some within your immediate family and your Legion Family who would be bursting with pride at your ascension to the office of National President, Sharon. The first people who come to mind are your parents, Clay and Irene Lofton, who are both steadfast members of the American Legion. Then there are so many, but to name a few, Sherry, JoAnn, and me, who each have played a role in developing your leadership within the American Legion Auxiliary Department of Illinois at your accomplishments. Joining us today -- we jump ahead.

I think we have a wonderful team for the year ahead. National President Sharon, there are a number of people with us today from your home

department who wish to share their well wishes with you. It is my pleasure to introduce the campaign chairman from the Department of Illinois, Pamela Ray, who will introduce the special guests that are with us today.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Thank you, Past National President Peggy. What a beautiful and memorable morning this has been. I am honored to be standing on this stage today to introduce the Illinois American Legion Family and our family, and I promise only one picture, Sharon, only one. One.

Everyone has been working so hard and looking forward to this day. As I said in my nominating speech, who would have believed it? Growing up had its bumps in the road as it does for all siblings. But I'm so proud of Sharon and I know she will be a great National President. The closeness that comes with adulthood is so precious. Sharon and I have a bond that only grows stronger the more mature we become. I can tell you that when we were younger we would have never been able to make a trip together and we have made two very successful trips together.

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: My first introduction this morning will be someone who has supported Sharon throughout her Auxiliary career. He has encouraged her, listened to her when she needed to vent, and loved her through everything. I would ask Marty if he has anything to say, and trust me he always has something to say. Marty?

MR. CONATSER: Well I haven't known her her entire Auxiliary career, but I've known her for the last 25-plus years so I guess that's the important part of it anyway. But I just wanted to say I couldn't be prouder. Couldn't be prouder of her for her keeping her promise to herself, till when things didn't go just the way we would have liked them to go she just worked harder. She stayed focused and she worked through everything to get here today. Her promise to you is 100 percent, and I'll guarantee it. There will be no doubt.

I think our son is going to say something later? Okay. But beyond, on behalf of the family, we couldn't be prouder. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: This morning there are some members of the Illinois American Legion Family who would like to bring Sharon best wishes. The first will be our National Executive Committeeman for the year 2015 through -- what? Oh, they switched up on me, sorry. Paul Gardner is the Department of Illinois American Legion Commander for the year 2015-2016. Paul, please come forward and bring your best wishes and greetings to this group.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

COMMANDER GARDNER: Good morning. I bring you greetings from the American Legion Department of Illinois.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

COMMANDER GARDNER: You know, it's said that diamonds take thousands of years to form. Here in Illinois, and of course we're not in Illinois but we may as well be, it only took us 40 years and we have that diamond. Right there.

(Applause.)

COMMANDER GARDNER: Everybody who knows Sharon knows that she is a Legion Family person. And that's, just look at her wonderful family. Every one of them represents something. And that in itself should tell everybody in the room where we're going to go next year and how it's going to get accomplished. So that being said I'm going to get off because I was told I can't talk anymore than a couple of minutes. So I'm getting off. Sharon, thank you. God bless you.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Thank you, Paul. The Department of Illinois American Legion Auxiliary President for 2015-2016 is Kathy Cisna. Kathy served as a Gold District President when Sharon was Department President. How fitting that she now serves together with Sharon. Kathy?

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

MS. CISNA: Madam National President Sharon -- I get to be one of the first people to say that to you. I would like to say that this is familiar. About 15 years ago on a much smaller version of a stage like this Sharon was installed on that day. I was supposed to bring greetings when she was installed as Department President. I was going to bring greetings that day on behalf of the 19th District, Sharon's home district. However, my husband had a stroke that day and I spent the day at the hospital instead. So first thing, Tommy, shout out, are you okay down there?

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

MS. CISNA: Okay, good. And the second thing is I was also told I had about, a couple of minutes. But I banked those minutes from 15 years ago. So I have those two minutes, plus today's two minutes, plus 15 years worth of interest. So Paul, I'm going to be up here an hour and a half or so.

(Laughter.)

MS. CISNA: Several years ago while having dinner with some very dear friends our conversation turned to the Auxiliary and I was asked my thoughts on how Sharon would be as a National President. We chatted about several different things, but at the end of the conversation I looked at my friend and said, when it comes to love of this organization and love of our veterans, Sharon is second to none. And if that's what the national organization wants for a National President then Sharon is the person for the job.

So Sharon --

(Applause.)

MS. CISNA: I pledge to you that the members of the Illinois American Legion Auxiliary will support you the entire year; will do whatever you need or ask from us. We will keep the promise while we give perfect service to our veterans.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Thank you, Kathy.

The Sons of the American Legion play an important role in Illinois. They work with the Legion and Auxiliary on every level to enhance the lives of our veterans. The 2015-2016 SAL Detachment Commander is Bill Geary and he is here to bring greetings. Bill?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. GEARY: I'm going to follow the lead of our Department Commander and keep it brief. I bring a greeting from the Detachment of Illinois Sons of the American Legion and I wanted to let Sharon know that the Detachment of Illinois will be 110 percent behind her. We did well this past year in membership and we're going to do it again this year. And in addition to that our theme this year concerns the four pillars of service of the American Legion, the slogan, "Our Pillars Our Purpose." We're going to build our membership and we're going to work on donating and raising funds for our programs and working many, many hours on those programs. And we will keep that promise. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Thanks, Bill.

Wayne Wagner will begin serving a two-year term in 2015-2016 as the NEC for the Department of Illinois American Legion. Wayne, we've asked Wayne here this morning to bring a few words of greeting.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MR. WAGNER: Thank you. I too bring you greetings from the Department of Illinois. And as family you are welcome there anytime.

I've known Sharon for a few years, I mean Madam President for a few years. Probably a few more than what we realize. But I know that she will work for you as a national organization as she has for us in Illinois for these many years. You can go to an event someplace that's throughout the State or wherever that may not be as well organized as others, and if you needed something at the last minute Sharon was always there to get things going and get things organized and everything went off smooth like you didn't know anything else had happened. So it's to congratulate her for her position that she's earned and a well deserved position for her. And congratulations, Sharon, thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. WAGNER: Ann Flanagan has just finished her year as Department President of Illinois. She is now NEC for the American Legion Auxiliary. As luck would have it, she is also one of Sharon's best friends. So I am so happy to ask Ann to bring greetings as the NEC of Illinois. Ann?

(Music.)

(Applause.)

MS. FLANAGAN: Good morning, everyone. I don't remember the date or year I first got to know President Sharon. You were cool. But I know it was at an Illinois Department Convention and Bill and Marty were already friends. We hit it off right away and have been through a lot together. That includes the time Sharon was Department Vice President and was working on getting her Department chairman positions filled. We were taking a walk and she asked me to be her Junior Activities Chairman and I said, no. She looked at me and said, what? I said, no. I'm probably one of the few people to tell her no when she asked them to do something but we've still become really good friends and I can't think of another person who might be able to make a better National President for the American Legion Auxiliary. She is dedicated, intelligent, hard working, and friendly. Sharon will be a great leader for our organization and a great mentor. We the Illinois American Legion Family are very proud of Sharon. We will gladly lend her to you all for the coming year. But I think after that we'd like to have her back home in Illinois.

President Sharon, my friend, congratulations and we all wish you the best. Have a successful, enjoyable, unforgettable year, and safe travels. Love you, girlfriend.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Thank you, Ann. Father Gary Gummersheimer is the new NEC for the Sons of the American Legion. He is unable to be with us today but he sends his best wishes and he knows Sharon will do a wonderful job.

These next young men are pretty special to Sharon, and also to me. They are part of the American Legion Family but they are also part of Sharon's family. I know you heard their names earlier but now we're going to put names with faces. Her son Richard, his wife, Patsy, and their daughter Kayla.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Son Rick, and his kids Tanner and Addie.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Last we have Brian, and his daughter Bailey.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: She really is back there, I promise.

(Laughter.)

MS. RAY: Sharon told you that Brian's wife and son are at home. He is just a little guy. So I have asked which one of the boys was going to speak. It took them two days to get back to me to tell me which one. But it's Brian. Brian, do you want to come up?

(Applause.)

MR. BRIAN CONATSER: All right. As she said, I'm Brian, Sharon's youngest son. There's a lot of other family and friends here, as you noticed, too many to acknowledge that haven't already been acknowledged. I just want to say we're very proud of you, congratulations. It's well deserved.

And everybody out here already knows you're going to make a great National President. We all know it requires a lot of hard work and sacrifice to get to this point. Obviously you're going to miss the grandkids more than us. We understand that.

(Laughter.)

MR. BRIAN CONATSER: But we also understand that you are going to do whatever it takes to make your guys' year a great success. Again, you're very deserving of the honor. You represent the American Legion Auxiliary and the whole American Legion Family very well, I have no doubt. So good luck, we'll support you in whatever you need, and have a great time. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: You've heard them talked about all morning, but we really would like to give special recognition to our Mom and Dad, Clay and Irene. These two people are totally responsible for the women that Sharon and I are today. They exemplify kindness and love, dignity and grace. They just celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary and we love them with all our hearts. Our parents, Clay and Irene.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Also with us today, my husband Butch, as many of you know. He just finished his year as National Chaplain for the Sons of the American Legion.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Our oldest daughter Sara and her husband Jonathan.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

MS. RAY: Uh-oh. Do you want to come up here with Nana? Okay. Our youngest daughter, Ami, and my beautiful Chloe.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Grandson Ben is home with Daddy. Sharon and I are so blessed to have the support of so much of our family, and here to celebrate with us are our Uncle Mel and Aunt Liz.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: Uncle Mel is Mom's brother. Past National President Peggy, thank you for the opportunity this morning to introduce our American Legion Family team that will be sharing Sharon with you for a year. We want her to enjoy this year to the fullest but we expect her to come back and join us again as we continue Keeping the Promise to our veterans, active military, their families, and communities. Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

MS. RAY: I forgot, there's a lot of people watching back home in Illinois and I just wanted to give a shout out. Thanks for watching, guys, and getting up early.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you so much, Pam, and all your wonderful members from Illinois. I'm sure you're bursting with pride as this special lady begins her memorable year as National President.

It is my privilege and honor to welcome Past President Janet Jefford into the ranks of Past National Presidents and to thank her from the bottom of our hearts for this very special year of service and for everything she has accomplished. It was indeed an incredible year of service and one that leaves us with rich memories of that service.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Past National President Janet, if you would please come forward there are some special presentations to be made to you. Presenting Past National President Janet with her Past National President's pin will be Past National President Jenny Hobbs.

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT HOBBS: Madam Past National President Janet, it was one year ago that you went into office in Charlotte, North Carolina. Throughout this year you have led us with grace, humility, and humor. You have celebrated and caused us to celebrate your theme of Faith, Family, Freedom. What a wonderful job you have done and what great pride your Department of Connecticut has taken, your Legion Family, and our organization in what you have done, the manner in which you have always been personable. You have had fun and made us have fun with you. It is my extreme honor to pin on you your pin as a Past National President, one which we hope you will wear with pride. And each time you put it on that you will look back upon the wonderful year of service you've had for our organization.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT HOBBS: And notice I'm making sure I put the bubble on, because I don't want you losing one like I did.

Also it is my pleasure to present to you your ribbon, signifying also your service as National President.

Madam Past National President, Sunday there were a group of us that got together, the Past National Presidents. And in that meeting we decided that we are welcoming you with open arms.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT HOBBS: That we know what you've done and we love you.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I love you.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT HOBBS: And no one will be happier to see you get home than Jeff, Chris, Carlin, and especially Morgan and Lucas as they welcome their Babchi back home.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you, honey.

(Music.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: And now Past National President Kris Nelson will present our colors to retiring National President Janet Jefford. Kris?

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT NELSON: Janet, please join your pages for your presentation of colors.

Janet, one year ago you took the oath of office to serve as American Legion Auxiliary National President. In your installation speech you challenged the members to celebrate our accomplishments and recognize the people that are doing the good work. As you traveled across the country you shared that you were inspired and humbled by the service of our members. You also shared that Faith stands for the belief and trust we place in each other. You went on to state, "our brave servicemen and women must have faith and trust in each other as they continue to defend our freedom everyday. They need it to survive." Janet, you and your sons witnessed that faith firsthand as you traveled on goodwill tours to the Far East and Europe and personally were able to thank America's military.

Janet, as you stand between these beautiful flags, I know you will remember, not only in your mind but also in your heart, many members, veterans, servicemen and women, that you were able to spend time with as American Legion Auxiliary National President, sharing with them your message of Faith, Family, and Freedom.

Janet, you challenged us at your installation to get out in our communities, become good partners, and become visible. At this Convention we heard many stories of how our members accomplished your challenges of celebrating Faith, Family, and Freedom. May you always cherish those memories.

One year ago, Janet, these beautiful flags were entrusted to your care to guard wisely for a year. They stand for, as they have for years, patriotism, for an unrelenting love of country, and service to a cause greater than all of us. May they always hold a place of honor in your heart and in your home.

You represented us, Janet, with dignity and pride as you journeyed beyond our shores to foreign lands as our ambassador of goodwill not only for the American Legion Auxiliary but also for the United States of America. You, too, answered our nation's call to serve us during this incredible year. You challenged all of us to share our knowledge and commitment to the American Legion Auxiliary, to celebrate Faith, Family, and Freedom, and to embrace the five goals of our Centennial Plan, to grow the capacity of our mission and our membership.

When you took the oath of office one year ago the road of your presidency stretched before you with its limitless possibilities and now it has come to a close with many chapters written, with memories to be cherished, and wonderful fulfilling moments to be treasured. You have lived your dream. When you arrive home your colors will be waiting for you.

The American Legion Auxiliary carries, the American Flag carries American ideals and ideas, American history, and American feelings. Although it is only pieces of material sewn together to form a design, every color, every thread, every star, and every stripe means liberty and justice and

stands for our unrelenting quest for fairness and equality. We cherish in our hearts an unquenchable love and devotion to the unseen which it represents. The stars and stripes are our dreams and our labors. They are bright with cheer, brilliant with courage, firm with faith. As a symbol of our nation our Flag is as much a thing of spirit as it is a thing of cloth.

And then there is our own Auxiliary scarlet and gold banner symbolizing our organization, our members who serve with conviction for God and country. It represents our mission and purpose, our ideals and ideas for the future. It symbolizes our past, present, and the reality of our organization's future.

Janet, I am honored to express the appreciation of all American Legion Auxiliary members for your year of service. Thank you for the courage, wisdom, diversity, and dedication you showed while you challenged each of us to make a difference everyday as we celebrate Faith, Family, and Freedom.

Please take with you the heartfelt thanks of every member of the American Legion Auxiliary. Cherish your memories and cherish your friendships you made on this journey. On behalf of the members, Janet, we thank your family for sharing you with us for a year. May God grant you many blessings, continued good health, and safe travels home. And Janet, as you take your seat you will also take your place as Past National President of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: Thank you all for your beautiful presentations. Past President Janet, you can now take your seat and your place in our history as a Past National President of the American Legion Auxiliary. The color bearers may return the flags to the standards and be seated.

There are two announcements before National President Janet closes her Convention. First, a reminder that the NEC meeting will commence immediately following the close of this Convention in Rooms 327-328 in this building. Second, please show your courtesy by remaining in your seats until the official close of the Convention and the recessional of the retiring officers. No presidents pins will be available until after the official close so if you leave early you will miss getting a pin.

Madam President Sharon, would you please return the gavel to Past National President Janet so that she can close her Convention?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I waited for you to call me this time, did you notice that?

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: I noticed that.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: You're so good.

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT THOMAS: All right. So where is Janet?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Madam Past National President Janet, I return this gavel to you to close your most successful National Convention here in Baltimore, Maryland. Congratulations.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. And congratulations to you, Sharon.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I think we'll go a little out of order. I'm going to save my little remarks for a minute. Will the Sergeant at Arms and the Department Color Bearers please retire the Department of Illinois Colors, followed by the installing officers, platform guests, Sharon's family, and the newly installed officers? Then National President Sharon, escorted by her husband Marty.

(Retiring of the Colors.)

(Recessional.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Hand salute.

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Let's give them a hand as they leave the auditorium. Go this way.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Here you go. Lead then down the aisle.

(Music.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: I know. They didn't rehearse this part. All right. Everybody down the aisle, and let's give them a hand as they leave.

(Applause.)

(Music.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Please be seated. You know, I wanted this Convention to be a time of celebration and thanks to all of you it certainly was. I hope you've all enjoyed this Convention. You have made it very special for me.

(Applause.)

(Cheering.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I never can say thank you too many times so I need to say it once more. Thank you to all the Department Presidents, the NECs, to all my wonderful officers, and to every member who has shared this year with me and who has continued our service to this organization. Thank you.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And a special thank you to the Department of Connecticut that's sitting here. Thank you not just for the support of this year but for the support all those many years that we've

been friends and that we've been together. Thank you for that and thank you for what you do for the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And one last thank you to the staff. You know, the national staff. This looks like everything goes off so easy, but it's not. It's a lot of work and they've done such a great job, not just here at this Convention but all year long. And a special thank you to our Executive Secretary, I don't know where she went to, Dubbie. And if you'll allow --

(Laughter.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Oh, there she is. She loves making the entrance. And, and I have to take this time to thank Tamara Shumate. Tamara has been my Executive Assistant. She has helped many of us through our year as President. And without her, I don't know what I would have done. Every time I'm nervous, okay, where do I go now? What am I doing? She's just really calm on the phone, and she'll say, it's taken care of. Don't worry. And it was always taken care of. So Tamara, thank you, thank you so much for what you've done for me this year and what you do for the American Legion Auxiliary.

And --

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: And I want to say a special thank you to my friend Jerry over there. Thank you for your love and for your support.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you for taking me to the airport on those early mornings and for those late night pickups. And thank you for taking care of my home. And I told my department yesterday all my plants have lived through this year and I'm so excited.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: You know this is, I said last night this is an incredible journey, and it has been. It's a journey that started probably I think back in 1942 when my father joined the United States Army. And it's through that service that I and my Mom have been able to be members of this great organization. And I know my Dad and my Mom are probably up there somewhere with my good friend Kathy Reardon and looking down on me. And I hope, Mom and Dad, I've made you proud. And I hope I've done the same thing for each and every one of you.

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Please, please help me to continue this journey, this journey of this great organization. We'll go back to our departments. I know I'm just, I'm going back and it's going to be good to be a unit member again and a member of the department. Because as Sharon said in her speech, this organization needs to grow and to survive for the next 100 years.

There's been lots of memorable things that have happened to me during this Convention. But I just want to mention a couple that have really made my heart swell. And that was at the memorial service when I heard the Texas Tenors begin to sing God Bless America, and everybody stood up and joined hands. And I think many of us cried for our love for this country and the pride that we felt. And yesterday at the States Dinner at the end, when that band played, I'm Proud to be an American. And again, we all stood up and joined hands. So I can't think of a better way to end this Convention than for all of us to recite those words of that song yesterday. So join me.

I am proud to be an American because at least I know I'm free and I won't forget the men who died who gave that right to me. And I'll gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today. Because there ain't no doubt I love this land. God bless the USA.

God bless you all.

(Cheering.)

(Applause.)

PAST NATIONAL PRESIDENT JEFFORD: Thank you. Please remain standing as National Chaplain Karen Boehler will give the benediction. Upon completion, the National President's pages will retire the Colors, which will be followed by the retiring National Officers and the National President and her escort. With the departure of the National President from the platform, the 95th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will be adjourned.

(Applause.)

MS. BOEHLER: And to our President Janet, Vaya con Dios. I love that Spanish phrase, go with God. And now would you bow your heads and pray with me, please?

Gracious heavenly Father, as this Auxiliary year ends and a new one begins, we look forward with hope and renewal in our lives. We praise you for the grace and mercy you've given us. And as America will welcome new leadership soon, we ask that you guide a new President, officers, and chairs in this organization honestly and in the best interests of you, Father, and of our country, and for our veterans and military. Help us to overcome our concerns and to share instead our joys and strengths. And we pray this in Your Name, Father, Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

(Retiring of the Colors.)

(Music.)

(Recessional.)

(Adjournment.)

(Whereupon, at 10:05 a.m. on Thursday, September 3, 2015, the above-entitled meeting was concluded.)

**POST-CONVENTION
NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2015**

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Is there still a line at the table out front?
Can someone tell me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, there's not.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. This National Executive
Committee Meeting will now come to order.

(Bangs gavel.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Please disable all of your electronic
devices or place them in the silent mode at this time.

Please rise and remain standing for the opening ceremony.

National Chaplain Bird Derrick will lead us in our invocation and
moment of silence for our fallen heroes and those serving our nation today for
the protection of our freedom.

Following the prayer, Americanism Chairman Brenda Collins will
lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem, followed by
Constitution and Bylaws Chairman Martha Lee Thatcher leading us in the
Preamble.

Bird?

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you. An encouragement from First
John, Chapter Four, before I pray. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love
is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not
love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was
manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten son into the world
that we might live through him. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to
love one another."

Let's bow our hearts together. Father, thank you so much for your
faithfulness to bring us together to this place, Lord.

It's a new day. It's a new day, with a new slate of officers and plans
and goals as we move forward, Lord. I pray your presence among us today at
this meeting, that you would grace us with every mercy and every bit of love
that you have given us so that we can extend your grace and your love to
others.

Give us listening hearts today, Lord, and minds that are attuned to
one another. And I just pray this in your Holy Name, as we bow and bring a
remembrance to those who have sacrificed that we might be here today.

(Moment of silence.)

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Father, to you be the Glory.

Amen.

ALL VOICES: Amen.

CHAIRMAN COLLINS: Join me in the Pledge to the Flag, and the
National Anthem.

ALL VOICES: I Pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States
of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God,
indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

(Pause.)

ALL VOICES: (Singing.) Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star-spangled banner yet wave,
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

CHAIRMAN THATCHER: For God and country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations during the Great Wars;

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to our community, state and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy;

To participate in and contribute to the accomplishments of the aims and purposes of the American Legion;

To consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: (Bangs gavel.)

This meeting of the National Executive Committee is convened.

I look forward to serving with the National Executive Committee of Women this year. And I look forward to a year of success, and I want to thank the past national presidents, once again, for their continued support.

Before we begin our business, I want to take a few minutes to welcome you in your new role as the 2015-2016 National Executive Committee. Those present who are eligible to vote, at the subsequent NEC meetings are the NEC members.

NEC members include, and are limited to, the National Executive Committee women from each department; the five Division National Vice Presidents; the National Chaplain, and the National Historian; the National Vice-President and the National President.

Those allowed to be present at the NEC meeting, with voice but no vote, are the past National Presidents and the National Treasurer and National Secretary.

We welcome our visitors and remind you that you may listen to the discussion, but are not permitted to participate in debate, nor the vote.

I would also like, at this time, to impress upon the members of the National Executive Committee that you are now serving in a national role as the Board of Directors with fiduciary responsibility to the National Organization.

As a member of the NEC, you no longer have the interests of your department as your primary focus. You are serving as a national representative and the National Organization, and you must be making decisions and casting your votes according to what is in the best interest of our National Organization.

For future meetings, you will again, receive information in advance, and you will be expected to have read those materials in preparation for the next meeting.

This is an important role and we appreciate your diligence in attending to your duties thoughtfully and responsibility on behalf of our National Organization.

Now, to get to the business at hand. The Chair asks that those wishing to address the meeting make your way to the microphone in the center aisle as this is the only way your remarks can be heard for recording by our professional court reporter for the transcripts of the meeting.

(Pause, due to noise.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I don't know where it went, but -- also, please be sure that in making remarks, you address the Chair. Attendance at previous NEC meetings was each member's responsibility.

However, thanks to our convention team and National Headquarters Office, we are now tracking your participation electronically, so be sure you got your name checked in when you came in the room.

Serving as Parliamentarian for this meeting is Chris Dickey, professional registered Parliamentarian. Thank you, Chris. For this meeting and future NEC meetings, the minutes will be approved by a Minute Approval Committee.

The Chair appoints the NECs from Connecticut, Washington and Arizona, as the Minutes Approval Committee, responsible for approving the minutes of this year's NEC meetings. Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Yay, let there be light.

(Pause, indiscernible voices.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Our next business in order is the confirmation of the National Secretary and the National Treasurer.

One of the first responsibilities of the National President is to present the National Secretary and the National Treasurer to the NEC for confirmation.

The question is on the confirmation of Mary "Dubbie" Buckler for the Office of National Secretary for the 2015-2016 administrative year.

(Pause.)

Change to make our Department of Arizona, I move that, Dubbie Buckler, in our Finance Treasurer, be approved for the incoming 2015-2016 year.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Indiscernible comment.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor of Dubbie Buckler for National Secretary, in favor, say “aye”.

ALL VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You have confirmed Mary “Dubbie” Buckler your National Secretary for the 2015-2016 administrative year.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: I am very pleased to present for confirmation Marta Hedding for the Office of National Treasurer for the 2015-2016 administrative year.

The question is on the confirmation of Marta Hedding for the Office of National Treasurer. I have a new motion, now. She corrected me. Sorry.

All those in favor, say “aye”.

ALL VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: You have confirmed Marta Hedding as your National Treasurer for the 2015-2016 administrative year.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Congratulations, and I look forward to working with both of you, and we thank you for your service to our organization.

Could I please have all of our National officers at the head table to please stand and be recognized?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: There’s not enough room back here, in case you couldn’t tell. We’re right up with our backs against the wall.

Thank you, ladies.

Would all past National Presidents please stand and be recognized at this time?

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: And as I have said several times this morning, thank you for your continued service to our organization.

The next item of business is the confirmation of the standing and special committee appointments for 2015-2016 administrative year and Foundation Board appointments.

You have received a copy of the appointment list. Please take a moment to review it.

(Pause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. So the question is on the motion to confirm the complete list of appointments to standing and special committees for the administrative year for 2015-2016, and Foundation Board appointments, as presented.

Is there any discussion?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Indiscernible)?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Oh, yes, I had forgot that. You're right. Thank you. No, go ahead.

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Indiscernible comment.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Debra Noble is currently listed as an appointment, and so, we will reappoint that one later. Okay?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: (Indiscernible)?

PRESIDENT CONATSER: She is a member of the Americanism Committee, so that one needs to be -- she was elected as National Historian, so I am thinking we need --

(Off the record discussion.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Okay. When we make the new appointment, that will go out to the NEC for electronic confirmation. Okay?

Are you ready for the question?

ALL VOICE: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: All those in favor of the -- say "aye".

ALL VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The motion to confirm the complete list of appointments has passed. Congratulations, and thank you for your service.

Please now welcome our Finance Committee Chairman, Nicole Clapp, to present the proposed FY16 budget of our American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Good morning.

ALL VOICES: Good morning.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Congratulations, Mary and Sharon. We are looking forward to an exciting year --

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: -- under your leadership.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: As the incoming National Finance Committee Chair, I am very honored to have the opportunity to present the 2015-2016 Fiscal Year Budget for the American Legion Auxiliary for you, the NEC's, consideration for adoption on behalf of the entire Finance Committee, who includes Vice Chairman Jenny Hobbs, Committee members Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan, JoAnn Cronin, and welcome our newest member, Peggy Thomas.

I need to thank the Headquarters staff as we start this morning and the National Chairmen, for their input, their guidance, and ideas to make sure we are able to develop what we consider to be a very comprehensive, yet realistic budget.

We need to continue on meeting our goals, our obligations and our expectations of providing services for you, to the members, our veterans and their families, while being able to balance the governmental mandate of comparing ourselves to other national benchmarks for not-for-profits, as we share with you today, I (indiscernible), I choose to acknowledge to Tim

Bresnahan, our comptroller. He has spent countless hours preparing these documents for our review, which he and I will go over them together with you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Can we dim the lights once again, so we could, hopefully, not have too much glare on the screen for you? So we will start by going through what is considered the narrative of the budget. The narrative is really a summary document for you to understand.

Now, this is the fifth budget year since the \$4 per year dues increase in 2011, which went into effect in 2013. So with that, we realized the organization's continued commitment to budget wisely, so that we can meet our mission goals, and serve the community over the next 12 months.

So we looked, I mean, you've just been (indiscernible), here, we will look at, once again, we are not going to have any .15 cent per capita (indiscernible) Rehabilitation Assessments. All right?

We were able to increase the awards in the budget process by a renewal target in the membership milestones. Key to the Centennial Plan from the session at the Resolutions, we are able to continue with the Department to continue their development of their own plans.

We were able to continue too with ALA-5 Mission Trainings that are opened up through the Department, and then you get to the specific training. We've heard about addition of the Junior meetings, as well as being able to continue to fund three department representatives coming for the DLNC, the Department Leadership National Conference.

One thing that many people don't realize is the National Creative Arts Festival. Not only do your donations come in, but we have an organizational commitment of \$120,000, as being a sponsor for that program.

Also, we were able to reinstitute, a couple of years ago now, the visits by the National Division Vice Presidents, and, also, the authorization for those to continue to participate in the Division Vice President visit, as well as the National Leadership Conference.

So also in the Centennial Plan, as you look, we will be looking at our reserves. And that will come here on the next page that we'll discuss. Those are the main points on how do we get to this budget.

The next section are the key proposed budget items. You'll see 7.5 million dollars is proposed for programs and member benefits and member services. Obviously, that's our mission. That's what we're here to provide.

Then, obviously, we have overhead costs, and that is in our administrative area, in staffing, as well as in our support of the Foundation and realizing that and the Foundation have a separate budget, that Linda Boone will be presenting as Foundation President. But the Finance Committee is in support of the Foundation's budget that has been presented to use.

Moving on down, you'll see that the Foundation -- I'm not going to steal Linda's thunder -- but in the summary, you will see, as she articulated earlier, at her platform remarks yesterday, a grant opportunity for those who will, again, be continue to occur in the coming year.

So then, the last piece, of course, is the Reserve Relief, so if we could flip to the next page, we will see the reserves. Many of them remain constant.

This is -- as you heard me say, our savings account. This is our rainy day fund. We are upping some categories that we have learned, as we see trends in our past history, the Professional Service category, for example.

Traditionally, we've had about \$75,000 in that area for unexpected legal or auditing or tax services expenses. We are upping that to \$182,000. We are not anticipating anything, but you never know. So we'd rather be prepared.

We're also marking our 100th anniversary. We are now going to be resourcing from (indiscernible) up to \$100,000, available, if necessary, for us to prepare for our 100th anniversary.

And from there, those were the main differences. So you will see and you'll understand. Designated funds are ones that have a specific purposes, and undesignated funds are ones that could be released to be used for anything we identify that's appropriate at the time.

So our rainy day fund is a strong sustainability for our organization, but we know we can't tap into that on every day things.

So as we will continue through the proposed budget, we'll go into more details for you. This is one of my favorite slides that we put together. This is how the money is budgeted, how it's spent by programs. So as you look across the budget, Member Services; Youth Education; Magazine and PR, so Public Relations; Veterans and Military; Management, in general; and fundraising.

So I kind of want to cut to the chase. We'll head down here to the pie chart. We have spent -- 86 percent of our budget is planned for member and program services. Ten percent on administrative, management in general, and just four percent on fund-raising, under the administrative category. That is an area we need to continue to grow, and that's why we have the Foundation.

So you'll see how that compares to FY15, hardly any difference in the distribution percent earlier. But we are staying true to our course, when it's made us successful, and it has.

Any questions on this slide?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: All right. Now, we'll go to what is considered the detail. At the top is our revenue, so our cash flow coming in. As you see the number, the activity number set aside, these are the categories.

So for example, Girls Nation. Everything on 117 goes to Girls Nation is into that line-item budget. So we try to group them so it's a better understanding. Prior to my experience on the financing, there were two budgets with about 1,000 line items. They were hard to understand, a lot more paper, a lot more reading, so we really tried to streamline this process so that you are comfortable in understanding what goes into those categories.

So you'll see that our projected budget is 8.6 million in revenue, down a little bit from this past year, nine million, and we'll get to that in a few minutes.

And then, if you want to move down to expenses, obviously, there is a cost of doing business. And realizing that, you have our scholarships in there; you have our publication, and then, ultimately, you'll see the difference there.

And on the second page is where you'll see the footnotes, as well. So the footnotes kind of explain what's in each of those categories. And we'll show you in quite a few minutes about membership and dues, what we're paying into there. Plus, you will see that we are, once again, putting funding into the daily budget, and it's not as negative as it has been in the past, thank you to the dues increase. But we know we are still on that trend, until we address that in the future.

But I did want to make you aware we were having a budget plan to earn \$156,000, compared to this fiscal budget going at a negative \$27,000.

Questions on the detail?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: All right. Hearing none, we'll move on to Exhibits A, B and C. Exhibit A is our VISTA Grant. We have two VISTA Grants, and I think the most important thing for you to realize is at the very bottom of page. You have the in and outs of the grant. We are a grantor, so we are the managing body for the grant. But this is the important pieces.

We had 103 VISTAs in service, so 103 individuals that contributed into that Resource Department for us, at one point, 2 million. Four VISTAs are at National Headquarters, and so that total cost, we are able to help a program, nationwide.

So there are two VISTA Grants. This is the first event. The second one, you'll see, has even more participation. So if we look to that for the fiscal year, we have, now, 23 additional VISTAs in the National -- AmeriCorps National Service in, again, \$284,000 that would have been spent in human resources. So for us, the VISTAs are vital to our success. And I know Dobbie chaired the (indiscernible) yesterday, that many of you picked up the flyers. So we appreciate that.

And then, the last piece is our second year of the Centennial Plan. That is your Exhibit C. You will see that -- I mean, you'll recall that when we did a resolution, departed money for the first year with a total of \$294,000 that we didn't spend in fiscal year '15, so that money is being carried over.

So there's just an additional \$486,000 -- \$96,000 -- right there that we will be releasing for reserves, as need be, so approximately about a million dollars, combined, for fiscal year '15/'16.

Questions on the reserve release or the Centennial Plan?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: All right. Then I would like to show you a slide that is not in your packet, and I wanted to have this slide here, so you can just have the initial -- well, we can put a little shock value, as well.

At the Finance Committee, every year, I'll be very honest, we struggle with what are going to say is our revenue from dues, because we know, we're not going like this; we're going like this.

But at the commitment for the Finance Committee to the Centennial Plan, we are hoping to contribute by stopping that slide. And so, I want to show you, this is where we were in '14. This is dues' revenue. So we had budgeted six million. We made pretty -- we were pretty close, okay?

Then we budgeted 6.4 million. We dropped \$200,000 for '14 and '15. This is still projected, and we've still got time. And this year, we are trying to reverse that trend.

So we are projecting 6.7 million. Now, realizing if we would have put that lower number, we would have a positive budget, because we wouldn't have anticipated how much revenue there was going to be, because we wouldn't have those (indiscernible) to specify that.

So realizing that if we try, we will hope to get there, but that means we're in this together. So we are hoping to recapture where we were in 2014.

Does that make sense?

VARIOUS VOICES: Yes.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Okay. So we're committed to this, and we hope you are, as well, as we know where we want to be by 2020.

So, then, if we scroll down a page, you'll see it actual in members. Okay. So 682,000; we hit 651. \$700,000 down to \$631,000. So you can see that that's about 20,000 numbers, which makes sense that our dues is right in there at \$9, you round to ten, just to -- for number's sake. And then realizing that we're going to try to, hopefully, project that back up to 659. This does not include any junior members, these numbers.

These are such a small portion, that it's the senior members that, obviously are going to drive our success. But we did want to share this with you that we are committed to this, and hopefully, we've have some sound numbers to share with you when we are in D.C. in February. Think positive.

The thing to always remember is, when we get to D.C., the numbers usually look pretty good, because we've got dues revenue coming in, and we haven't had outrageous expenses of the year yet.

So that concludes my report, at this point. Are there any questions?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: We did not get any received when we sent the packet out this year, so I didn't know if there is anything -- any questions from any of you this morning, or.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: If not, Madame President, I move the adoption of the 2015-16 Fiscal Budget for approval.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Since the motion comes from a committee, a second is not required.

The question is on the approval of the proposed FY '16 budget as presented.

Is there discussion?

(No Response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are you ready for the question?

ALL VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the adoption of the FY16 budget as presented.

All those in favor say "aye".

ALL VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The motion to approve the proposed FY16 budget has passed.

Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN CLAPP: Thank you, everyone.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Our Foundation Board President, Linda Boone, will now present the Foundation Budget.

And I just want to give a heads up, ladies, that Doug and I may be swinging out of here pretty quick. The American Legion is running way ahead, so I need to get there, and -- your wonderful Vice President will take over.

I wanted to give you a heads-up in case we had to sneak out.

FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: Good morning.

ALL VOICES: Good morning.

FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: So the Foundation Budget, just to -- you have that sheet. Just a reminder that Nicole pointed out is that we get -- we don't have any staff dedicated full-time to the Foundation, so we share staff with the American Legion Auxiliary. So they cover a lot of those expenses, and which helps us deal with -- spend more money on grants and those kinds of things.

And for FY15, the total budget is the \$266,408 in the revenue accepted, and expenses are the same. And it -- our -- you know, it's a very small budget and a lot to do with fund-raising these events.

Of that, inside that number in terms of our expense, will be our projected annual grant to the American Legion Auxiliary from the Endowment Investment Income. And this -- this year, we had projected about \$7,400. Tim tells me that it's probably closer to ten, year-end.

And next year, we're projecting \$13,200 for our annual grant to American Legion Auxiliary to help pay that.

So are there any questions about the Foundation budget?

(No response.)

FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: Okay. Okay. All right, Madame President, that concludes -- I am moving to adopt the Foundation Budget that was distributed.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the approved -- excuse me -- the approval of the proposed FY16 Foundation Budget, as presented.

Is there discussion?

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Are you ready for the question?

ALL VOICES: Yes.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The question is on the adoption of the FY16 Foundation Budget, as presented.

All in favor say "aye".

ALL VOICES: Aye.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Opposed, no.

(No response.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: The motion to approve the proposed FY16 Foundation Budget has passed.

Thank you very much.

FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: I'll just give you an update on the Giving Tuesday, you know, we've been collecting. We are only about \$3,500 away from the -- from the \$10,000 match, so wow. That's fabulous.

(Applause.)

FOUNDATION BOARD PRESIDENT BOONE: So go home and send that money in.

(Laughter.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you, Linda.

Is there any other business to come before the NEC meeting?

Hearing none, the Chair now calls our National Secretary Dubbie Buckler for announcements.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: I'm always getting up here about the time the (indiscernible) part comes on. First off, if you did not attend the NEC 101 meeting, please see Sara -- Sara is in the green, waving her hands at the back of the room -- to receive your packet.

The packet contains documents that you must sign before you leave today, and I'll just give you a quick refresher. There's confidentiality agreement, conflict of interest acknowledgment, and then, throughout the year, if you have a conflict that arises that you need to disclose, there is a form in there, also, for that.

We go through that in our training, but I just want to remind everybody that that's -- if you have not done that in some meeting yet, you -- we need you to do that before you leave today.

I would like to announce that Janet Jefford is now a Past National President.

(Cheers and applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And in my official capacity, I wish you safe travels, fond memories -- Peggy says we're ugly when we cry -- and our sincere gratitude, as you join the ranks of Past National Presidents.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY BUCKLER: Okay. Peggy always makes me laugh so I've got a grip now. To Sharon, Madam President, safe travels as you embark on your journey of a lifetime as the ambassador and chief of the American Legion Auxiliary, spreading the message of who we are, what we do and why we matter to the World.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

SECRETARY BUCKLER: And to the NEC and all in the room, safe travels and sustain commitment to all of the five goals and always representing the organization in the spirit of go to with an attitude of good will. So safe journeys to everyone.

Madame President, thank you for your service.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

PRESIDENT CONATSER: As we close the first meeting of the 2015-2016 National Executive Committee meeting, I leave you with these words: Let service in the community, state and nation be ever a main objective of our American Legion Auxiliary and its members.

Let us be watchful of our organization and of ourselves that nothing shall swerve us from the path of Justice and Freedom, Loyalty and Democracy.

Please stand as our National Chaplain, Bird Derrick, offers her benediction.

CHAPLAIN DERRICK: Thank you.

Let's bow our hearts. Father, if your presence does not go with us, we dare not step foot from this place.

You have created so many opportunities before us, Lord, and I ask, now, that you would dismiss us with your blessing, walk us safely through the 365 days that are ahead of us, Lord, to accomplish these goals that we have set forth.

Father, let your hand rest upon each one of us. Grant safety in our travels, Lord, every mercy that is needed for our health and strength and our trust and confidence being in you.

Thank you, Holy One. Amen.

ALL VOICES: Amen.

PRESIDENT CONATSER: This concludes the first meeting of the 2015-2016 National Executive Committee, and this meeting is now adjourned.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, at 10:56 a.m., the above-entitled Convention was concluded.)

Appendix A



SUMMARY OF MOTIONS / RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

BY

**AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY NATIONAL
GOVERNING BOARDS FOR 2014-2015 AND 2015-2016
AND 2015 NATIONAL CONVENTION DELEGATES
CONVENED AUGUST 28 – SEPTEMBER 3, 2015,
IN BALTIMORE, MARYLAND**

2014-2015 NEC MEETING AUGUST 29, 2015

**2015 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 3, 2015**

2015-2016 NEC MEETING SEPTEMBER 3, 2015

###

**American Legion Auxiliary National Executive Committee 2014-2015
Final 2014-2015 NEC Meeting Held Pre-National Convention
in Baltimore, Maryland
August 29, 2015**

Summary of Motions/Resolutions Adopted

M/S/C = Moved/Seconded/Carried

M/S/C to approve the items on the Consent Agenda, as circulated in advance in NEC board packet emailed 8/20/16:

- Charter cancellations – 124 charters canceled, as listed in NEC board packet enclosure
- National Finance Committee Policy Renewal – ALA Solicitation & Acceptance of Donations Policy
- National Finance Committee Policy Renewal – ALA NHQ Business Credit Card Policy
- National Finance Committee Policy Renewal – ALA NHQ Purchasing Policy
- National Finance Committee Policy Renewal – ALA NHQ Reserve Funds Policy

M/S/C that the ALA Girls State Program & Operations Guide be updated to specify that the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State and ALA Girls Nation programs will mirror their State Government Constitutions and the U.S. Constitution for offices elected and appointed at ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation; and include provisions that participants of ALA Girls State and ALA Girls Nation be citizens or legal inhabitants of the United States with proper documentation from the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) obtained prior to girls being selected to participate in ALA Girls State and Girls Nation for those who are not U.S. citizens; and that the ALA Girls State Program and Operations Guide include updated information addressing copyright, trademark, and trade name issues; and that the updated Guide be duly posted on the national ALA website, with copies provided to ALA Department Secretaries and to the ALA Girls State Directors at their next leadership conference, and that all departments utilize the Guide and operate their ALA Girls State programs in accordance with the Guide to minimize the Auxiliary's exposure to risk and liability so that the Auxiliary can continue the ALA Girls State programs for the future generations of girls who will become America's leaders (see pg. 15 of this publication).

M/S/C to work with The American Legion to solve federal IRS issues negatively impacting units and posts including the IRS' refusing to accept filings for newly reinstated subordinate units under the ALA National Group Exemption, and the IRS' limiting membership without authority (see pg. 16 of this publication).

###

**American Legion Auxiliary National Convention 2015
in Baltimore, Maryland
September 1, 2015**

Summary of Motions/Resolutions Adopted

M/S/C = Moved/Seconded/Carried

M/S/C to amend the American Legion Auxiliary National Standing Rules to rename the National Cavalcade of Memories Committee to National History Committee and add the National Historian as ex-officio member (see pg. 98 of this publication).

###

Note: The American Legion 2015 National Convention adopted the new Membership eligibility wording, found in the American Legion Auxiliary National Constitution Article III, Section 1, Eligibility, as adopted at the 2013 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention as part of the ALA Constitution & Bylaws and Standing Rules Revision, under a proviso that delayed enactment until The American Legion adopted corresponding changes to its governing documents. The updated wording, as printed on page 6 of the 2014 printed edition of the American Legion Auxiliary National Constitution as proviso wording, is now duly adopted and reads as follows:

“Membership in the American Legion Auxiliary shall be limited to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of members of The American Legion, and to the grandmothers, mothers, sisters, wives, and direct and adopted female descendants of all men and women who were in the Armed Forces of the United States during any of the following periods: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918; December 7, 1941 to December 31, 1946; June 25, 1950 to January 31, 1955; February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975; August 24, 1982 to July 31, 1984; December 20, 1989 to January 31, 1990; August 2, 1990 to the date of cessation of hostilities as determined by the Government of the United States; all dates inclusive, or who being citizens of the United States at the time of their entry therein, served on active duty in the Armed Forces of any of the governments associated with the United States during any of said periods, and died in line of duty or after honorable discharge; and to those women who of their own right are eligible for membership in The American Legion.”

###

**American Legion Auxiliary National Executive Committee 2015-2016
First 2015-2016 NEC Meeting Held Post-National Convention
in Baltimore, Maryland
September 3, 2015**

Summary of Motions/Resolutions Adopted

M/S/C = Moved/Seconded/Carried

- M/S/C to confirm the continuing service of Mary “Dubbie” Buckler as National Secretary for the 2015-2016 administrative year (see pg. 248 of this publication).
- M/S/C to confirm the continuing service of Marta Hedding as National Treasurer for the 2015-2016 administrative year (see pg. 249 of this publication).
- M/S/C to approve the complete list of appointments to American Legion Auxiliary national Standing Committees, Special Committees, and Foundation Board for the 2015-2016 administrative year (as circulated onsite on a list distributed to every meeting attendee)
- M/S/C to adopt the proposed 2016 fiscal year Auxiliary budget, as circulated in advance to the 2015-2016 administrative-year NEC members in the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters and ALA Foundation Inc. FY16 Budget Proposal Packet, via email on 8/18/15 (see pg. 254 of this publication).
- M/S/C to adopt the proposed 2016 fiscal year American Legion Auxiliary Foundation budget, as circulated in advance to the 2015-2016 administrative-year NEC members in the American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters and ALA Foundation Inc. FY16 Budget Proposal Packet, via email on 8/18/15 (see pg. 255 of this publication).

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Appendix B



**AWARDS PRESENTED
DURING NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 28 – SEPTEMBER 3, 2015**

*(Visit www.ALforVeterans.org
to see a full listing of 2014-2015 awards.)*

MONDAY, AUGUST 31, 2015

LIAISON TO CHILD WELFARE FOUNDATION COMMITTEE

AWARDS:

Excellence Award - Department of Wyoming
Meritorious Achievement Award - Department of Wyoming
U.S. Udie Grant Award - Department of Florida
Garland M. Murphy Jr. Award – Department of Florida

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

PAST PRESIDENTS PARLEY COMMITTEE AWARDS:

Salute to Active-Duty Servicewomen Award

United States Army: Spc. Jessica Arent, Florida
United States Navy: Petty Officer 1st Class Jessica Buffum, Illinois
United States Air Force: Staff Sgt. Jackie Snider, Texas
United States Coast Guard: Lt. Amanda Denning, North Carolina
(Auxiliary members did not submit a Marine to be considered for this award.)

Unit Member of the Year

Connie Kullander, Seward Unit 5, Alaska
Arlene Montgomery, Alley White Unit 52, Arkansas
Brenda Boyd, Hawthorne Unit 314, California
Judy “Cricket” Schauer mann, George Beach Unit 4, Colorado
Susan Boutwell, Seicheprey Unit 4, Connecticut
Melinda Tomaino, Kenneth H. Nash Unit 8, District of Columbia
Carol Kandravl, Oak Orchard/Riverdale Unit 28, Delaware
Suellen Smith, USS Tampa Unit 5, Florida
Beatrice Carmona, Barrett-Davis-Watson Unit 233, Georgia
Patsy Eike, Pocatello Unit 4, Idaho
Sharon Wilson, George L. Giles Unit 87, Illinois
Marilyn Million, Floyds Knobs Unit 42, Indiana
Marcia Sackett, Ray Unit 376, Iowa
Loveta Medliln, Cole-Smith Unit 350, Kansas
Jane Casher, Hardin Unit 113, Kentucky
Marshall G. Francis, Raymond Stafford Unit 513, Louisiana
Vickie “Tammy” Hardy, Federal Unit 19, Maryland
Kathy Niles, Eugene M. Connor Unit 193, Massachusetts
Sue Jankowski, Northeastern Unit 459, Michigan
Joanne Hoekstra, Silver Star Unit 428, Minnesota
Paulette Corley, Hovious Grayson Unit 112, Mississippi
Marsha Hunter, Creve Coeur Memorial Unit 397, Missouri
Sheila Kankelburg, Butte Unit 1, Montana
Noreen Anderson, Fred F. Sturdevant Unit 34, Nebraska
Barbara Trahan, Littleton Unit 68, New Hampshire
Kim Flaherty, John H. Gertz Unit 310, New Jersey
Donna Sue Milson, Roy Unit 33, New Mexico

Florence E. Parrella, Manhasset Unit 304, New York
Barbara Graybill, Edward G. Bond Unit 40, North Carolina
Mary Ann Michel, Clarence McCormick Unit 195, North Dakota
Lizanne Cox, Mount Washington Unit 484, Ohio
Shirley Torrey, Harney County Unit 63, Oregon
Robin Drace, Souderton Unit 234, Pennsylvania
Xennia C. Ayala, Unit 3, Puerto Rico
Bessie Fowler Emery, Riverside Unit 10, Rhode Island
Florence P. Creasy, Jesse C. Lynch Memorial Unit 71, South Carolina
Ronjie Tocholke, Hilton Stone Unit 279, Tennessee
Mary Johnson, Donald N. Thompson Unit 655, Texas
Cindee Setterberg Clawson, Sandy Unit 77, Utah
Arlis Fuglie, Harry N. Cutting Unit 59, Vermont
Juanita Whitmer, Buck Keyes Unit 28, Virginia
Michele Thompson, George Baldrige Unit 43, Washington
Frema Wilson, Huntington Unit 16, West Virginia
Mary L. Judy, Wolf River Unit 391, Wisconsin
Carla J. Browne, John Donald Garbutt Unit 7, Wyoming
(Not all states submitted names to be considered for this award.)

Woman of the Year:

Presented to Nesse Godin

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2015

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE AWARDS:

Department Monthly Milestone Achievement Award

Department of Alaska

Department of Arizona

Department of District of Columbia

Department of Florida

Department of Kansas

Department of South Carolina

National Achievement Award

Department of District of Columbia

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE:

Homer Unit 290: Homer, Illinois

Liberty Unit 289: Strasburg, Illinois

Downey Weaver Unit 34: Shannock, Rhode Island

North Strand Unit 186: Little River, South Carolina

John J. Morris Unit 62: Peoria, Arizona

Department of Arizona

